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December 16, 2009

The Honorable Daniel R. Elliott III
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 F Street, S.W., Suite 1149
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Chairman Elliott,

Congratulations on your appointment to the Chairmanship of the Surface Transportation Board this summer. During your confirmation hearings, you expressed a commitment to quickly and fairly addressing shipper's disputes with rail companies. As part of that commitment, we write today to encourage you to make an expeditious and fair ruling on the future of the Siskiyou Line, currently pending on Finance Docket No. 35175.

As you know, the Coos-Siskiyou Shippers Coalition has been engaged in a disagreement over adequate service with the Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad (CORP) for over two years. In January 2008 CORP reduced rail service to two days a week and began rerouting trains to avoid the Siskiyou Summit, making service less reliable, and in May 2008 CORP raised their rates. The reduction in service and increased rates forced shippers along the Siskiyou Line to switch from rail transportation to trucks, which is more expensive than rail service.

Reliable and affordable railroad service is critical to the well-being of rural business and economies in Oregon. Often rail is the only affordable transportation option for timber, manufacturing, and industrial businesses in our state. The continuing uncertainty surrounding the future of the Siskiyou Line also creates difficulties for businesses in the region to plan for the future.

The Board's most recent decision in this case gave the shippers that make up the Coos-Siskiyou Shippers Coalition until March 31, 2009 in which to submit supplemental information to prove that CORP's service is inadequate. It has been nearly nine months since the Coalition submitted the requisite information to demonstrate the inadequacy of that service. We urge you to move as quick as possible to rule fairly on the Coos-Siskiyou Shippers Coalition's petition. We also ask that you provide us with an update on the status of the docket. Thank you in advance for your response. We look forward to working with you on this and other matters of importance to Oregon in the future.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Peter DeRazis
United States Representative