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October 14, 2020

Ann D. Begeman, Chairman
Martin J. Oberman, Vice Chairman
Patrick J. Fuchs, Board Member
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairman Begeman, Vice Chairman Oberman and Board Member Fuchs:

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the enactment of the Staggers Rail Act. We write to urge the Board to maintain the balanced underlying economic framework that has been the bedrock of your decisions and ensure that no actions you take undermine the ability of freight railroads to reinvest in the rail network.

Any action inhibiting freight rail investment would threaten economic development and quality of life in our communities, precipitate job losses in the rail supply and contracting sectors, and undercut safety, efficiency and productivity across the rail network, affecting all railroads, small and large.

As you know, the Staggers Act established a visionary approach to regulation that sparked a freight rail renaissance and continues to provide measurable benefits to businesses, consumers, taxpayers and our economy.

This landmark, bipartisan legislation was necessary because decades of rigidly prescriptive federal overregulation had decimated the U.S. freight rail network. Bankruptcies were commonplace, rail rates were rising, safety was deteriorating, and rail infrastructure and equipment were in increasingly poor condition because railroads simply could not earn enough to pay for basic upkeep, let alone innovation and improvements.

Since the implementation of a balanced system of economic regulation under the Staggers Act, which protects rail customers while allowing railroads to manage their assets and pricing, U.S. freight railroads have invested hundreds of billions of dollars in the rail network. Rail traffic has doubled, rail productivity has more than doubled, rail rates are down more than 40 percent, and recent years have been the safest on record.

Freight railroads' massive, post-Staggers investments in infrastructure, equipment and technology transformed a failing rail system into a high-tech, highly efficient, interconnected network that links American communities, businesses and consumers to markets across the country and around the world.

This is important to us and to our country. Every ton of freight moved by rail promotes economic development, mitigates pollution, eases worsening highway congestion and saves taxpayers money. Railroads are four times as fuel efficient as other modes of transport and emit 75 percent fewer

greenhouse gases. Additionally, railroads do not require the significant public spending that subsidizes other modes.

Railroads are in the midst of revolutionary technological innovation as they adapt to meet changing customer demands and maintain their status as the safest, most efficient way to move freight over land.

We implore the Surface Transportation Board to preserve the delicate regulatory balance created by the Staggers Act, allowing freight railroads to innovate, adapt and reinvest in the rail network. Our communities, our businesses and our employees depend on it.

Sincerely,

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Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce
Yakima, WA

Hon. Pam Roach
Councilwoman, District 2
Pierce County
Sumner, WA

West Virginia

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Executive Director
Cardinal Institute
Charleston, WV

City of Beckley
Beckley, WV

Hon. Steve Williams
Mayor
City of Huntington
Huntington, WV

Becky Sullivan
President
Fayette County Chamber of Commerce
Oak Hill, WV

Fayette County Commission
Fayetteville, WV

Huntington Area Development Council
Huntington, WV

Chase Gunnoe
Sales Manager
Kanawha River Railroad
Belle, WV

Sprague Chamber of Commerce
Sprague, WA

Mariya Frost
Director of the Coles Center for Transportation
Washington Policy Center
Olympia, WA

Hon. Curtis King
State Senator, District 14
Washington State Legislature
Yakima, WA

Rick Handley
President
Mason County Commission
Point Pleasant, WV

Hon. Lloyd Adkins
Commissioner
Nicholas County
Summersville, WV

Garrett Cole
President
Nicholas County Commission
Summersville, WV

Hon. Lyle Neal
Commissioner
Nicholas County
Summersville, WV

Hon. Timothy McCormick
Commissioner
Ohio County
Wheeling, WV

Hon. Everett M. Ehrlich
Former Under Secretary of Commerce
President, ESC Company
Charles Town, WV

Jim Shaffer
President
Public Policy Foundation of West Virginia
Wheeling, WV

Putnam County Commission
Winfield, WV

Raleigh County Commission
Beckley, WV

Town of Fayetteville
Fayetteville, WV

Hon. Kenneth Adkins
Commissioner
Wayne County
Wayne, WV

Hon. Jeff Maddox
Commissioner
Wayne County
Wayne, WV

Hon. Robert Pasley
Commissioner
Wayne County
Wayne, WV

Hon. Michael Angelucci
State Delegate, District 50
West Virginia Legislature
Farmington, WV

Hon. Robert Beach
State Senator, District 13
West Virginia Legislature
Morgantown, WV

Wisconsin

City of Chilton
Chilton, WI

Hon. Donna Boley
State Senator, District 3
West Virginia Legislature
St. Marys, WV

Hon. Scott Cadle
State Delegate, District 13
West Virginia Legislature
Letart, WV

Hon. Gary Howell
State Delegate, District 56
West Virginia Legislature
Keyser, WV

Hon. Larry Kump
State Delegate, District 59
West Virginia Legislature
Falling Waters, WV

Hon. Linda Longstreth
State Delegate, District 50
West Virginia Legislature
Fairmont, WV

Hon. Margaret Staggers
State Delegate, District 32
West Virginia Legislature
Fayetteville, WV

Hon. Chandler Swope
State Senator, District 6
West Virginia Legislature
Bluefield, WV

Hon. Cody Thompson
State Delegate, District 43
West Virginia Legislature
Elkins, WV

Thomas E. Winker
Chairman
East Wisconsin Rail Consortium
Belgium, WI

Hon. Lester Jantzen
Supervisor
Grant County
Potosi, WI

David J. Lambert
Highway Commissioner
Grant County
Lancaster, WI

Hon. Dwight Nelson
Supervisor
Grant County
Platteville, WI

Hon. John Patcle
Supervisor
Grant County
Potosi, WI

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Supervisor
Grant County
Hazel Green, WI

Hon. Mark Stead
Supervisor
Grant County
Platteville, WI

Hon. Travis Schultz
Commissioner
Juneau County
Mauston, WI

Ronald Chamberlain
Highway Commissioner
La Crosse County Highway Department
West Salem, WI

Hon. Kevin Viney
Chair and Supervisor
Town of Burke
Burke, WI

Vernon County Highway Department
Viroqua, WI

Francis Heafy, PLS
President
Via Rail Engineering
Maribel, WI

Hon. Mike Farrell
Village President
Village of Bristol
Bristol, WI

Wisconsin County Highway Association
Boyceville, WI

Hon. Dave Considine
State Representative, District 81
Wisconsin Legislature
Baraboo, WI

Hon. Dave Murphy
State Representative, District 56
Wisconsin Legislature
Greenville, WI

Hon. Shae Sortwell
State Representative, District 21
Wisconsin Legislature
Two Rivers, WI

Hon. John Spiros
Vice-Chair, Assembly Comm. on Trans. (Dist. 86)
Wisconsin Legislature
Marshfield, WI

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State Representative, District 6
Wisconsin Legislature
Bonduel, WI

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Wisconsin Legislature
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State Representative, District 3
Wisconsin Legislature
Harrison, WI

Hon. Don Vruwink
State Representative, District 43
Wisconsin Legislature
Milton, WI

Hon. Van Wanggaard
State Senator, District 21
Wisconsin Legislature
Racine, WI

CC: U.S. Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee
U.S. House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure