



425 3rd St SW, Ste 940
Washington, DC 20024
202.808.3230 • gorail.org

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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Alabama Policy Institute
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CEO
Advanced Engineering & Consulting
Woodland Hills, CA

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Program Manager
AECOM
Los Angeles, CA

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Long Beach, CA

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Converse Consultants
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Santa Cruz, CA

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El Cerrito, CA

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Fresno, CA

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Fresno, CA

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FuturePorts
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Sacramento, CA

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Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce
Stockton, CA

David R. Henderson
Research Fellow
Hoover Institution, Stanford University
Stanford, CA

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Rancho Cucamonga, CA

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Long Beach Chamber of Commerce
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Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
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CEO
Los Angeles County Business Federation
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Irvine, CA

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Orange County Transportation Agency
Orange, CA

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Executive Director
Peninsula Freight Rail Users Group
Redwood City, CA

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General Manager, Ventura County Railroad
Port Hueneme, CA

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Long Beach, CA

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Port of Redwood City
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San Diego, CA

Richard Aschieris
Port Director
Port of Stockton
Stockton, CA

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San Bernardino, CA

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Chief Executive Office
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System
San Diego, CA

William Manis
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Executive Director, LOSSAN Rail Corridor
San Luis Obispo, CA

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Founder, Mineta Transportation Institute, SJSU*
San Jose, CA

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Viterbi School of Engineering, USC
Los Angeles, CA

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Consultant
VLG Consulting, Inc.
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Washington, DC

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Co-Founder, Committee to Unleash Prosperity
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Washington, DC

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Executive Director
Railway Eng.-Maintenance Suppliers Assoc.
Washington, DC

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Railway Supply Institute
Washington, DC

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Senior Transportation Policy Analyst
Reason Foundation*
Washington, DC

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Washington, DC

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TechFreedom
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Aalborg University
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AIF
Tallahassee, FL

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American Enterprise Institute**
Gainesville, FL

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Florida Ports Council
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Railroad Consultants PLLC
Altamonte Springs, FL

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CEO
Railway Auditing & Management Services, Inc.
St. Johns, FL

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Railway Systems Suppliers, Inc.
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Georgia Ports Authority
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Georgia Transportation Alliance
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Post Falls Chamber
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Illinois

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Commerce, GA

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VP, Business Development
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Former Executive Director
Railway Tie Association
Peachtree City, GA

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Royston, GA

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Bolingbrook Area Chamber of Commerce
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Reggie Greenwood
Executive Director
Chicago Southland Econ. Dev. Corporation
Hazel Crest, IL

Chicagoland Chamber
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VP, Sales
EVRAZ, NA
Naperville, IL

Andrew Nicol, PE, SE
Project Manager
Hanson Professional Services Inc.
Lisle, IL

Maggie Vuono
National Sales Manager
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Duane Ratermann
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Illinois Association of County Engineers
Springfield, IL

Clark Kaericher
Exec. Dir. Technology and Infrastructure
Illinois Chamber of Commerce
Springfield, IL

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Louisville, KY

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Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions
Lexington, KY

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St. Louis Regional Freightway
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Supply Chain Risk & Resil. Research Inst., UMSL
St. Louis, MO

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Director
Supply Chain Risk & Resil. Research Inst., UMSL
St. Louis, MO

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Econ. Dev. Authority of Western Nevada
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Carson City, NV

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ExecutiveVP, Government Relations
New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce
Trenton, NJ

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Managing Director
New York New Jersey Rail, LLC
Jersey City, NJ

Chip Hallock
CEO
Newark Regional Business Partnership
Newark, NJ

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Dir. of Locomotive & Rail Operations Support
RAILPROS
Newark, NJ

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Railroad Construction Co. of South Jersey, Inc.
Paulsboro, NJ

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Railroad Construction Co., Inc.
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Herkimer County Industrial Dev. Agency
Herkimer, NY

Jean-Paul Rodrigue
Professor, Global Studies
Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY

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Hudson Valley Econ. Development Corporation
Poughkeepsie, NY

Ulisses Camilo
President & CEO
New York Air Brake, LLC
Watertown, NY

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New York City Econ. Development Corporation
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Wabtec Corporation
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Clayton Railroad Construction, LLC
West Union, OH

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Columbus Region Logistics Council
Columbus, OH

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Defiance, OH

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Xenia, OH

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Executive Director
Grow Licking County
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Oklahoma

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1889 Institute
Oklahoma City, OK

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Altus Chamber of Commerce
Altus, OK

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Canton, OH

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The Timken Company
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City of Sayre
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Formcrete Fiberglass Products
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Frederick Chamber of Commerce
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Pryor Area Chamber of Commerce
Pryor, OK

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Sayre Chamber of Commerce
Sayre, OK

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U.S. Congress
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Yukon
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Amerities Holdings, LLC
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The Greenbrier Companies
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Rail Industry Consultant
Harmon Communications
Corvallis, OR

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Oregon City, OR

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U.S. Congress
Dunthorpe, OR

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Oregon Rail Users' League
Wilsonville, OR

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Director
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Salem, OR

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Altoona, PA

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Philadelphia, PA

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Chambersburg, PA

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Hitachi Rail STS
Pittsburgh, PA

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Pittsburgh, PA

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Chambersburg, PA

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Director of Business Development
Loram Maintenance of Way, Inc
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Perkasie, PA

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Pennsylvania Association of Boroughs
Harrisburg, PA

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Pennsylvania Econ. Development Association
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Pennsylvania General Assembly
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Founder and CEO
RI Center for Freedom and Prosperity
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Beaufort, SC

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Economic & Business Development
Ellis & Eastern Co
Sioux Falls, SD

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South Dakota Legislature
Sioux Falls, SD

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Ferrovia Services, LLC
Rapid City, SD

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Central Sales & Service
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Frisco, TX

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GCF Railworks, Inc.
Addison, TX

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Granbury Chamber of Commerce
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VP Sales
Hulcher Services, Inc.
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Laredo Economic Development Corporation
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Littlefield, TX

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Lonestar Policy Institute
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Plainview Chamber
Plainview, TX

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Executive Director
Plainview/Hale County Econ. Dev. Corporation
Plainview, TX

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Port Isabel, TX

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Port of Beaumont
Beaumont, TX

Port of Freeport
Freeport, TX

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VP Rail Group
Purify Fuel
Houston, TX

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San Angelo, TX

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Peter J. LeCody
President
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Dallas, TX

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General Counsel
Texas Railroad Association
Austin, TX

The Borderplex Alliance
El Paso, TX

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Tyler, TX

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Tyler Economic Development Council
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Alexandria, VA

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Founder/Chairman
60 Plus Association
Alexandria, VA

Lisa Nelson
CEO
ALEC Action
Arlington, VA

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American Association of Port Authorities
Alexandria, VA

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Van Horn, TX

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Utah State Legislature
Lehi, UT

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Utah Valley Chamber
Provo, UT

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American Policy Center
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Americans for Limited Government
Fairfax, VA

Brent Gardner
Government Relations Director
Americans for Prosperity
Richmond, VA

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Supervisor
Botetourt County
Fincastle, VA

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CEO
Buckingham Branch Railroad
Dillwyn, VA

Andrew Quinlan
President
Center for Freedom and Prosperity
Alexandria, VA

Jeffrey Mazella
Sr.VP Legal Affairs
Center for Individual Freedom
Alexandria, VA

Jennifer B. Rose, MPA
Executive Director
Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce
Fairfax, VA

Brian Isringhausen
CEO
Cranemasters
North Chesterfield, VA

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Supervisor
Fairfax County
Fairfax, VA

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Fairfax, VA

Terry Banez
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Greater Williamsburg Business Council
Williamsburg, VA

Ira Agricola
Senior VP Government Affairs
Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce
Norfolk, VA

Carrie Lukas
President
Independent Women's Forum
Alexandria, VA

Andrew Langer
President
Institute for Liberty
Washington, VA

Charles Sauer
President
Market Institute
Alexandria, VA

Patrick McLaughlin
Director of Policy Analytics & Sr. Research Fellow
Mercatus Center at George Mason University*
Arlington, VA

Phil C. North
Vice-Chair
Roanoke County Board of Supervisors
Roanoke, VA

Janet Scheid
Chair
Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Assoc.
Roanoke, VA

Karen Kerrigan
President & CEO
Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council
Vienna, VA

Aaron Stover
Dir. of Fed. Government/Corporate Relations
The Heartland Institute
Alexandria, VA

Chris Braunlich
President
Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy
Alexandria, VA

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Councilman
Town of Warrenton
Warrenton, VA

Keith Martin
Executive Vice President
Virginia Chamber of Commerce
Richmond, VA

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Virginia General Assembly
Millboro, VA

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Virginia General Assembly
Roanoke, VA

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Virginia General Assembly
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CEO
Cedar AI
Seattle, WA

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Virginia General Assembly
Richmond, VA

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President & Co-Founder
Virginia Institute for Public Policy
Abingdon, VA

Bob McKenna
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Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
Hampton, VA

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Virginia Port Authority
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Seattle, WA

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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