

April 13, 2026

*The Honorable Jeff Hurd*  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1641 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Hurd,

As local elected officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders from across Colorado's 3rd Congressional District, we write to urge your strong support for freight rail priorities in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization. Freight rail remains a foundational component of the Western Slope and Southern Colorado economies, ensuring that producers, manufacturers, and energy developers across the district can compete in national and global markets.

Colorado's 3rd District is one of the most rail-dependent regions in the Mountain West. Major rail hubs in Pueblo and Trinidad, the critical Front Range rail corridor, the Union Pacific transcontinental route through Grand Junction, and an extensive network of regional and short line railroads together form a system that connects rural industries to interstate commerce. For many communities across the district, freight rail is not simply an alternative shipping mode—it is the backbone of local economic viability, supporting agriculture, energy production, mining, construction materials, and advanced manufacturing.

Freight rail also plays an essential role in maintaining affordable supply chains for families and businesses across Southern and Western Colorado. By moving large volumes of goods efficiently over long distances, rail helps reduce highway congestion, limit infrastructure wear on rural roads, and stabilize transportation costs that would otherwise be passed on to consumers. Continued investment and supportive federal policy will ensure that the district's rail network remains competitive and capable of supporting future economic growth.

As Congress develops the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization, we respectfully encourage your leadership on the following priorities:

**1. Sustain and Strengthen Rail Infrastructure Grant Programs**

Federal programs such as the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) and Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) grants provide essential funding for projects that improve safety, enhance reliability, and expand capacity across Colorado's rail network. Continued robust funding for these programs will help communities across the 3rd District address critical needs ranging from grade separations to corridor upgrades that improve both freight mobility and public safety.

**2. Oppose One-Size-Fits-All Operational Mandates**

Operational mandates, for example crew size and train length restrictions, risk raising shipping costs for Colorado industries without delivering measurable safety improvements. Rural producers, energy developers, and manufacturers in the 3rd District would bear the brunt of these added costs. Congress should instead pursue performance-based regulatory approaches that maintain safety while preserving the affordability and competitiveness of rail transportation.

### **3. Encourage Innovation and Modernization in Rail Safety Technologies**

Advances such as automated inspection systems and predictive maintenance technologies are improving rail safety outcomes nationwide. A modern regulatory framework that allows railroads to deploy these technologies efficiently will help strengthen safety performance while ensuring that Colorado's freight network continues to operate at the highest standards.

From the historic rail corridors that helped build Southern Colorado to today's transcontinental routes linking Western producers to national markets, freight rail continues to power the economy of Colorado's 3rd Congressional District. Federal policy decisions made in the upcoming reauthorization will directly influence the region's ability to grow, attract investment, and keep supply chains moving efficiently.

We appreciate your leadership and respectfully urge your continued support for policies that strengthen freight rail infrastructure, preserve operational flexibility, and ensure that Colorado's 3rd District remains a vital transportation gateway for the American West.

**Sincerely,**

Jim Baldwin  
Commissioner  
Otero County

Patricia McPheeters  
Commissioner  
Pueblo County

Diane Danti  
Councilor  
City of Pueblo

Rob Oquist  
Commissioner  
Otero County

Roger Gomez  
Councilor  
City of Pueblo

Dylan Roberts  
State Senator  
Colorado General Assembly

Tim Knabenshue  
Commissioner  
Otero County

Kaysie Schmidt  
Administrator  
Otero County

Miles Lucerno  
Commissioner  
Pueblo County

Lynda Scott  
Clerk & Recorder  
Otero County

Meghan Lukens  
State Representative  
Colorado General Assembly

Jeff Shaw  
CEO  
Pueblo Economic Development Corp.

Rick Taggart

State Representative

Colorado General Assembly

**CC: Senator Michael Bennett, Senator John Hickenlooper**

