

April 13, 2026

*The Honorable Members of the Kansas Congressional Delegation*  
United States Senate and House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Members of the Kansas Congressional Delegation,

As Congress takes up surface transportation reauthorization, we urge you to support policies that allow freight railroads to operate safely, efficiently, and flexibly. Kansas sits at the center of America's rail network, and decisions made in Washington directly affect our state's farmers, manufacturers, and communities.

Few states depend on freight rail as directly as Kansas. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy, and rail is essential for moving grain, livestock feed, fertilizer, biofuels, and equipment to processors and export markets. Rail keeps transportation costs in check, which helps farmers stay competitive and protects Kansans from rising prices on essentials like food and fuel. When freight rail remains strong, it eases supply-chain inflation and keeps our shelves stocked affordably.

Rail is just as important to Kansas's growing industrial economy. Manufacturers depend on rail to ship heavy and specialized equipment—aircraft parts, wind turbines, steel, chemicals—that can't easily or safely move by truck. The ability to move these goods by rail supports job creation in aviation, energy, construction, and logistics across the state.

Kansas businesses and public agencies have invested in this system—partnering with railroads to develop industrial parks, modernize transload facilities, improve rail crossings, and expand economic opportunities across rural and urban areas. These efforts depend on a federal policy framework that encourages private investment and gives railroads the flexibility to innovate and adapt.

To sustain freight rail's progress, Congress should avoid one-size-fits-all mandates that add costs and reduce flexibility without improving safety, such as:

- Technology mandates that lock in specific inspection methods, limiting the adoption of next-generation tools like automated track inspection, which are proving to be safer and more efficient.
- Train length caps that would force railroads to run more trains to move the same freight—raising fuel use, congestion, and emissions while increasing costs for shippers and consumers.
- Crew size mandates that override long-standing labor agreements and treat rail differently from other transportation sectors that are also adopting new technologies.

These proposals would make it harder for Kansas shippers to move goods affordably and would push more freight onto our roads—clogging highways, wearing down infrastructure, and shifting costs to taxpayers. They would also raise prices for everyday goods by increasing logistics costs throughout the supply chain.

The performance-based regulatory framework has produced strong safety outcomes—since 2005, mainline accident rates are down 43%, total train accidents by 33%, and hazmat accident rates by 80%, with over 99.99% of shipments delivered safely. In 2023 alone, Class I railroads invested \$26.8 billion of private capital into infrastructure and safety improvements.

For Kansas, freight rail is not just part of the economy—it’s the backbone of it. We urge Congress to reject rigid mandates and instead support policies that protect affordability, encourage innovation, and keep Kansas connected to the markets that keep our state moving forward.

Sincerely,

Michael Baughn  
Chairman, District 3  
Thomas County

Amy Lange  
City Manager  
City of Concordia

Lona DuVall  
President & CEO  
Finney County Economic Development  
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Marty Long  
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Dr. Dee McKee  
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