

April 13, 2026

*The Honorable Members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation*

United States Senate and House of Representatives

Washington, D.C.

Dear Members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation,

As local officials from communities across Michigan, we urge strong support for freight rail in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization, recognizing its central role in our state's infrastructure, manufacturing economy, and supply chain resilience.

Michigan's economy is built on manufacturing and transportation. From the automotive industry to agriculture and energy, freight rail plays a critical role in keeping our state competitive. Twenty-nine freight railroads operate across 3,300 miles of Michigan track, connecting manufacturers, farms, ports, and distribution centers to domestic and global markets.

Unlike most transportation infrastructure, freight railroads privately fund and maintain their own networks, investing over \$23 billion nationally each year to maintain and modernize infrastructure. In Michigan, rail moves millions of tons of freight annually, removing 4.3 million truck trips from congested roads. This shift reduces congestion, limits wear and tear, improves safety, saves taxpayer dollars, and cuts emissions.

At a time when affordability remains a concern for Michigan families and businesses, freight rail helps hold down logistics costs. Lower shipping costs benefit consumers and manufacturers alike, while reliable rail service supports supply chain stability and reinforces Michigan's role as a production hub.

As you consider surface transportation reauthorization and related freight policy, we respectfully urge you to:

**Sustain and Expand Federal Rail Grant Programs:** Michigan communities have used federal grants to improve safety, mobility, and competitiveness. Projects funded through the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) programs have supported grade crossing upgrades and capacity improvements in cities like Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo. These investments reduce risk, ease traffic,

and enhance regional freight movement. Continued funding delivers high-return, bipartisan infrastructure improvements.

**Oppose Unnecessary Operational Mandates:** Federal mandates on crew size or train length would reduce flexibility and raise costs for Michigan shippers. One-size-fits-all rules don't reflect real-world conditions and risk diverting freight to already crowded highways. Rail remains the safest overland freight mode, with long-term declines in accident rates and ongoing investment in safety. Policy should build on this progress—not reverse it.

**Promote Modern Rail Regulations:** Michigan's economy thrives on innovation, and railroads should be able to deploy modern safety and efficiency tools. Technologies like automated track inspection and monitoring systems detect issues earlier and enhance performance. Outdated regulations risk slowing adoption. Congress should support policies that foster innovation while maintaining strong oversight.

Freight rail connects Michigan's factories to suppliers, farmers to processors, ports to inland markets, and local businesses to national and global customers. It supports jobs, strengthens manufacturing, reduces emissions, and protects infrastructure budgets. We appreciate your leadership and look forward to working together to ensure freight rail continues to deliver for Michigan's communities and economy.

Sincerely,

David Anderson  
Mayor  
City of Kalamazoo

Alan Donaldson  
Commissioner  
Gladwin County

David Aungst  
Commissioner  
Lenawee County

Jeffrey Dontz  
Board Chair  
Manistee County

Joseph "Joe" Bellino  
State Senator  
Michigan Senate

Anne Marie Graham-Hudak  
Board Supervisor  
Canton Charter Township

Brad Dakota  
Board Chairman  
Baraga County

Mark Huizenga  
State Senator  
Michigan Senate

John Kaczynski  
Commissioner  
Saginaw County

Stephen Kennedy  
Mayor  
City of South Lyon

Gwen Markham  
Commissioner  
Oakland County

Kevon Martis  
Commissioner  
Lenawee County

James Moreno  
Commissioner  
Isabella County

Michigan Retailers Association

Marcus Muhammad  
Mayor  
City of Benton Harbor

Craig Scott  
Commissioner  
Ogemaw County

Bob Terpstra  
Supervisor  
Gaines Charter Township

Jim Van Doren  
Board Chairman  
Lenawee County

Don VanSyckel  
Commissioner  
Macomb County

Lisa Wojno  
Commissioner  
Macomb County