

April 30, 2026

The Honorable Pete Stauber  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stauber:

As local elected officials and community stakeholders from across Minnesota's 8th Congressional District, we urge your continued leadership in supporting freight rail priorities in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization. Freight rail remains essential to the economic vitality of Northeast Minnesota, sustaining the region's industrial base, supporting family-wage jobs, and connecting Minnesota producers to domestic and international markets.

Minnesota's 8th District is one of the most rail-intensive regions in the Upper Midwest. Rail lines linking the Iron Range, the Duluth-Superior port complex, and major industrial facilities across the district move critical commodities such as iron ore, forest products, energy resources, agricultural goods, and manufactured materials. Rail corridors in the district also connect directly into the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan rail hub—one of the nation's key inland freight centers—while providing essential international rail gateways to Canada through crossings such as International Falls. Together, these connections position the 8th District as a strategic transportation bridge between the Upper Midwest, the Great Lakes, and global export markets.

For communities across Northeast Minnesota, freight rail is not only an economic engine but also a cornerstone of long-standing working-class traditions built around resource development, manufacturing, and transportation employment. Policies that maintain a strong, competitive rail network help sustain high-quality jobs while ensuring that regional industries remain globally competitive. Rail also plays a critical role in reducing highway congestion, lowering transportation costs for local businesses, and strengthening supply chain reliability for households across the district.

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

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

Federal programs such as the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) and Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) grants help communities across Northern Minnesota improve safety, modernize infrastructure, and support industrial growth. Continued robust funding for these programs will enable critical corridor upgrades, grade separations, and intermodal improvements that benefit both freight mobility and community safety.

**2. Support Balanced, Performance-Based Rail Policy**

Rail safety and workforce stability are shared priorities across Minnesota’s transportation and labor communities. Federal policy should focus on data-driven, performance-based safety standards that preserve operational flexibility while supporting continued investment in infrastructure, workforce training, and advanced safety technologies. Such an approach protects both rail workers and the regional industries that depend on efficient freight service.

**3. Encourage Innovation and Cross-Border Freight Connectivity**

Given the district’s critical international rail connections into Canada and its role in serving Great Lakes export markets, federal policy should continue to promote technological innovation, corridor modernization, and streamlined cross-border freight movement. These policies will help ensure that the 8th District remains a competitive logistics gateway for North American trade.

From the historic rail corridors serving the Iron Range to today’s modern freight routes linking Duluth, the Twin Cities, and Canadian markets, freight rail continues to power economic opportunity across Minnesota’s 8th Congressional District.

Decisions made in the upcoming reauthorization will shape the region’s ability to maintain strong industries, sustain family-supporting jobs, and keep supply chains moving efficiently across the Upper Midwest.

We appreciate your leadership and respectfully urge your continued support for policies that strengthen freight rail infrastructure, promote balanced regulatory approaches, and ensure that Minnesota’s 8th District remains a vital transportation hub for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Joe Baltich  
Commissioner  
Lake County

Michelle Clasen  
Commissioner  
Washington County

Matt Baumgartner  
President & CEO  
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce

Ron Chicka  
Director  
Duluth - Superior MPO

Bill Berg  
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Isanti County

Lew Conner  
Mayor  
City of Two Harbors

Julie Braastad  
Commissioner  
Anoka County

Joe Gould  
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Beltrami County

Annie Harala  
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Bryan Ramsrud  
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Roger J. Reinert  
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Scott Schulte  
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Anoka County

Kristen Vake  
Executive Director  
Iron Mining Association of Minnesota

Cal Warwas  
State Representative  
Minnesota House of Representatives

Mike Wiener  
State Representative  
Minnesota House of Representatives

**CC: Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Tina Smith**