

April 13, 2026

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

Dear Members of the Missouri Congressional Delegation,

As Congress develops surface transportation reauthorization legislation, we urge you to support policies that allow freight railroads to continue operating efficiently, safely, and reliably. Missouri is a key crossroads for America's rail network, and federal decisions that affect operations elsewhere often ripple through our state—impacting local industries, communities, and families.

Freight rail is essential to Missouri's economy. With major rail hubs in Kansas City and St. Louis, our state connects east–west and north–south trade routes that move goods between ports, coasts, and inland markets. These rail corridors support manufacturers, farmers, energy producers, and distributors in communities across Missouri and beyond. Rail also helps control rising costs—its efficiency keeps supply chain expenses lower, which helps relieve inflation pressure on everyday items like food, fuel, and construction materials.

Because of this central role, Missouri has seen decades of investment in rail-connected infrastructure—from industrial parks and logistics hubs to modernized ports and grade separation projects. Rail suppliers and engineering firms based here also support the broader U.S. rail system, bringing jobs and economic development to our state.

That progress depends on smart federal policies. Unfortunately, several proposals under consideration would add rigid, one-size-fits-all mandates that limit flexibility without improving safety. These include:

- Technology mandates that lock in specific inspection tools or spacing requirements, instead of allowing railroads to adopt emerging technologies like automated track inspection (ATI) that improve safety and efficiency.
- Train length caps that would force more trains to run to move the same amount of freight—leading to more fuel use, higher emissions, more highway congestion, and added infrastructure wear.

- Crew size mandates that override long-standing collective bargaining agreements and would apply requirements to rail that aren't required of other modes, despite significant advances in safety technology.

Missouri relies on railroads that can adapt to real-world conditions. The current performance-based system has delivered real safety gains. Since 2005, mainline accident rates are down 43% and hazardous materials accident rates have dropped by 80%, with over 99.99% of hazmat shipments arriving safely. In 2023 alone, railroads reinvested \$26.8 billion nationally into infrastructure, safety, and reliability—using private dollars, not taxpayer funding.

Overregulation would threaten that progress. Adding inflexible mandates risks pushing more freight onto highways, increasing traffic, raising costs for shippers, and shifting expenses onto local taxpayers. When rail becomes less efficient, Missouri consumers feel the impact in higher prices and longer delays.

We respectfully urge Congress to keep freight rail policy grounded in data—supporting innovation, safety, and private investment, while protecting affordability and economic strength for Missourians and communities across the country.

Sincerely,

Joey Auxier
Presiding Commissioner
Phelps County

Sherri Gallick
State Representative, District 62
Missouri House of Representatives

Brian Brookshire
Executive Director
Missouri Forest Products Association

Chris Guttierrez
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Sherry Stites
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