

April 13, 2026

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

Dear Members of the North Carolina Congressional Delegation,

As Congress develops surface transportation reauthorization legislation, the undersigned North Carolina stakeholders respectfully urge you to adopt policies that preserve a performance-based, data-driven approach to freight rail safety and operations, and to avoid prescriptive operational mandates that would undermine the efficiency, safety, and reliability of our rail system.

North Carolina's economy and transportation system rely on a strong freight rail network. Our state is served by more than 20 freight railroads moving tens of millions of tons of goods each year—supporting major manufacturing hubs, agricultural producers, and the Port of Wilmington while helping keep four million heavy truck trips off North Carolina roads annually.

As municipalities across North Carolina face rising costs to maintain roads and bridges, privately owned freight rail plays a unique role by absorbing freight demand without adding wear and tear to public infrastructure. Nationally, railroads move roughly 40% of intercity freight while investing billions of private dollars each year into their own networks, reducing the burden on taxpayers.

Freight rail also helps stabilize supply chains and limit inflationary pressure. Recent analysis shows that rail functions as a built-in shock absorber for the economy, reducing price volatility for consumer goods and ensuring reliable delivery of materials critical to North Carolina industries, from automotive manufacturing to agriculture and energy production.

As you consider reauthorization, we respectfully ask that you:

**1. Oppose Unnecessary Operational Mandates**

North Carolina's diverse economy, including manufacturing, agriculture, forestry products, chemicals, and energy, depends on flexible, long-haul freight rail service. Proposals to impose prescriptive federal operating mandates, such as crew size or train length requirements, risk disrupting network efficiency, and raising transportation costs for businesses and consumers. Rail is already the safest way to move goods over land, with hazardous materials arriving safely more than 99.99% of the time. Federal Railroad Administration data continues to show safety improvements, including a significant decline in train accident rates since 2023.

**2. Sustain and Expand Federal Rail Grant Programs**

Programs such as the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)

and Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) grants have helped North Carolina communities improve safety, mobility, and economic competitiveness. Investments supporting corridor improvements along the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) line, port access upgrades near Wilmington, and grade crossing improvements in counties such as Wake and Mecklenberg are delivering measurable public benefits. We urge continued funding and expansion of these crucial investment and safety programs.

### 3. **Embrace Data-Driven Rail Safety Innovation**

North Carolina benefits when rail safety policy prioritizes smarter oversight, not slower operations. Railroads have significantly improved safety performance by deploying advanced technologies such as automated track inspection. These innovations enhance worker safety, improve reliability, and strengthen system resilience. Federal policy should promote technology-driven safety improvements rather than restrict them through outdated regulatory approaches.

Freight rail remains one of America's most successful private infrastructure models: a system that reduces inflationary pressure, protects public roads and bridges, and keeps North Carolina's economy competitive. We urge you to support policies that allow freight rail to continue delivering for our state and the nation.

Sincerely,

Ted Alexander  
Senator  
North Carolina General Assembly

Christy Clark  
Mayor  
Huntersville Town

Jeff Brittain  
Commissioner  
Burke County

Tracy Clark  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Todd Carver  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Al Cooper  
Commissioner  
Warren County

TJ Cawley  
Mayor  
City of Morrisville

Janet Cowell  
Mayor  
City of Raleigh

Ben Clapsaddle  
Mayor  
City of Wake Forest

Allison Dahle  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Michael Garrett  
Senator  
North Carolina General Assembly

Pricey Harrison  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Zack Hawkins  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Wendy Jacobs  
Commissioner  
Durham County

Donnie Loftis  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Jeffrey Odham  
Mayor  
City of New Bern

Larry Pittman  
Commissioner  
Cabarrus County

Lindsey Prather  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Mike Schietzelt  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly

Shelly Willingham  
Representative  
North Carolina General Assembly