

April 13, 2026

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

Dear Members of the New Jersey Congressional Delegation,

As local leaders from across New Jersey, we urge you to include policies in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization that recognize the essential role freight rail plays in keeping New Jersey goods moving, costs down, and communities connected.

New Jersey may be small in size, but when it comes to rail, we punch above our weight. We are the most densely rail-connected state in the country, served by 19 different freight railroads. Like our famous diners, railroads are woven into the fabric of our state—moving goods from docks to distribution centers and linking our economy to national and global markets.

In New Jersey alone, trains move enough freight each year to eliminate 3 million truck trips from our highways. That's less congestion for drivers, less wear on taxpayer-funded roads, and fewer emissions in our communities.

Freight rail is critical to the Port of New York and New Jersey, the East Coast's busiest port. Its on-dock rail system handles 1.5 million container lifts a year, allowing freight to move efficiently inland without jamming up our roads. Terminals in Elizabeth, Newark, Staten Island, and Port Jersey rely on rail to connect to the Midwest and Canada—and to keep port operations running smoothly as ship sizes and cargo volumes grow.

Research shows that freight rail also plays a powerful role in fighting inflation. When goods can move efficiently by train, transportation costs stay in check—and so do prices for food, fuel, cars, and housing materials. That's especially important now, as New Jersey families and businesses continue to feel cost pressures.

As Congress considers freight-related legislation, we respectfully urge you to:

- 1. Sustain Proven Rail Grant Programs:** Programs like the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants help communities address urgent safety and mobility needs. In the most recent RCE funding round, NJ Transit received \$800,000 to study 29 rail-highway crossings between Long Branch and Bradley Beach. This corridor-wide planning effort will improve safety for drivers, pedestrians, and rail workers,

while reducing delays. We urge continued support for these programs, which deliver cost-effective, bipartisan results.

2. Protect Rail's Role in Containing Supply Chain Costs: Freight rail helps keep logistics costs down, but rigid mandates—like limiting train length or crew size—would drive up prices without improving safety. Railroads already follow strict federal rules and invest heavily in infrastructure and technology, which has helped bring accident and injury rates to historic lows per Federal Railroad Administration data. Congress should support performance-based policies that advance both safety and affordability.

3. Support Rail Innovation: Railroads are deploying tools like automated track inspection technologies, which detect track issues earlier and more accurately than manual checks. Technologies like this will improve safety and system performance. But outdated rules risk limiting their use. Congress should support a modern regulatory framework that allows railroads to innovate, no different than other modes of transportation, ensuring freight rail remains safe, efficient, and resilient.

New Jersey's economy depends on reliable, affordable freight movement—and freight rail is one of the smartest tools we have. We thank you for your leadership and urge your continued support for policies that keep rail delivering for our state.

Sincerely,

Katie Brennan
Assemblywoman
New Jersey General Assembly

Angela V. McKnight
State Senator
New Jersey Senate

Joseph Daloisio
Councilman
Borough of Allendale

New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce
New Jersey Business & Industry Association

Patrick J. Diegman, Jr.
State Senator
New Jersey Senate

Rich O'Brien
Mayor
Spotswood Borough

Gordon M. Johnson
State Senator
New Jersey Senate

Erik Peterson
Assemblyman
New Jersey General Assembly

William B. Sampson IV
Assemblyman
New Jersey General Assembly

Harry Shortway
Mayor
Borough of Midland Park

Troy Singleton
State Senator
New Jersey Senate

Bob Smith
State Senator
New Jersey Senate