

April 13, 2026

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

Dear Ohio Congressional Delegation,

As local leaders from across the Buckeye State, we urge you to support policies in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization that recognize freight rail's vital role in powering Ohio's economy, holding down costs for consumers, and keeping goods moving safely and efficiently.

Our 44 freight railroads operate over 5,100 miles of track and employ nearly 5,000 people in Ohio. The state is home to the fourth-largest rail network in the U.S. and the second-most intermodal terminals, connecting Ohio industry to markets across the country and globe. In 2023 alone, railroads moved over 258 million tons of freight through Ohio—goods that would have otherwise required 14.3 million trucks.

Ohioans continue to face cost pressures, and freight rail plays a key role in keeping goods moving efficiently and affordably. From food and fuel to building materials and consumer products, rail helps ensure steady supply chains and predictable shipping costs. That reliability is especially important now, as working families and small businesses navigate economic uncertainty.

Rail also supports Ohio's reshoring resurgence. As manufacturers embrace the "Made in Ohio" promise, they'll depend on reliable, scalable, and cost-effective logistics—making freight rail a critical partner in our state's continued growth.

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

- 1. Sustain and Expand Federal Rail Grant Programs:** Ohio communities have made smart use of federal rail grant programs like the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) programs. In the most recent RCE funding round, Ohio secured four major awards, totaling over \$80 million to improve safety and traffic flow in Delaware County, Hudson, North Ridgeville, and Circleville. These projects will eliminate dangerous crossings, reduce emergency response delays, and support mobility for commuters and freight alike. We urge continued, robust funding for these competitive, cost-effective programs.

2. Protect Freight Rail's Role in Reducing Costs: Freight rail offers a vital check against rising transportation costs and helps keep Ohio goods competitive. Proposals to impose rigid federal mandates—such as fixed crew sizes or limits on train length—would reduce rail's flexibility, increase costs, and shift freight to trucks. This would put more pressure on taxpayer-funded highways and worsen congestion, all while raising prices on consumers. Congress should reject one-size-fits-all rules and instead support performance-based standards that maintain both safety and affordability.

3. Advance Rail Safety Through Innovation: Freight rail is already the safest way to move goods over land—and getting safer. Since 2005, the derailment rate for Class I railroads has dropped 46%, train accident rates have dropped 40%, and employee injuries are down 54%, outperforming most other industries, including trucking and construction. Technologies like automated track inspection and positive train control help identify risks earlier and prevent incidents altogether. Congress should support the use of these emerging technologies and ensure that federal regulations encourage—not hinder—continued safety innovation.

Ohio has long been a freight rail powerhouse. We are proud of our railroads and the public benefits they deliver: efficient commerce, good-paying jobs, less traffic and emissions, and lower costs for Ohioans.

We thank you for your leadership and urge you to ensure freight rail continues to be a foundation of our state's economy and transportation system.

Sincerely,

Sean Beck
Councilor
Village of Ida

David Haber
Commissioner
Preble County

Jack Bradley
Mayor
City of Lorain

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City of Worthington

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