

April 13, 2026

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

Dear Members of the Texas Congressional Delegation,

As local leaders, economic developers, and business stakeholders from across Texas, we urge you to support freight rail as a key pillar in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. Rail is essential to the strength of our local economies and communities—and we need policies that preserve its flexibility, safety, and long-term reliability.

Texas plays an outsized role in national and international commerce, and freight rail is at the center of it. Our state moves around 350 million tons of freight annually by rail, connecting manufacturers, farmers, energy producers, ports, and distribution centers to markets across the country and around the world. By investing in and maintaining their own infrastructure, railroads help lower transportation costs, ease pressure on our roads, and reduce the burden on taxpayers who would otherwise be responsible for highway expansion and maintenance.

This system works. But proposed federal mandates—such as fixed crew sizes or limits on train length—would make it harder to move freight efficiently, raising costs for Texas businesses and families without delivering safety benefits. A one-size-fits-all approach could slow innovation, reduce investment, and shift more freight to the highways, adding traffic, emissions, and costs that local governments must manage.

Instead, we encourage Congress to take a performance-based approach that keeps railroads investing in safety and innovation:

- **Preserve Flexibility, Avoid Prescriptive Mandates:** Policies that restrict train length or require specific staffing levels would increase transportation costs and reduce system efficiency—without making communities safer. Rail is already among the safest modes of freight movement, and strict federal oversight ensures safety standards are upheld.
- **Support Innovation in Rail Safety:** Tools like automated track inspection, drones, and advanced sensors can catch issues earlier and more accurately than manual checks. These technologies improve safety and reduce risks for workers and communities. Congress should promote innovation, not freeze progress by locking in outdated rules.
- **Maintain Federal Rail Grant Programs:** Programs like CRISI and RCE are helping Texas communities upgrade crossings, improve rail infrastructure, and make local networks safer and more efficient. These competitive grants stretch federal dollars by leveraging local and private investment—and they make a real impact on the ground.

The freight rail system depends on smart regulation and continued private investment. In recent years, Class I railroads have reinvested nearly \$27 billion into safety and infrastructure. Thanks to those investments, rail safety has steadily improved over the past two decades. According to federal data, Class I mainline accident rates have dropped 43% since 2005, and more than 99.99% of hazardous materials shipments arrive safely.

Texas has always been a leader in logistics and trade. To keep it that way, Congress must support a rail network that is flexible, forward-looking, and built to meet the needs of our growing economy and communities.

Sincerely,

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