

May 20, 2026

Dear Members of Utah's U.S. Senate and House Delegation:

As state and local leaders from communities across Utah, we write to urge your strong support in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization for freight rail, a long-standing pillar of our economy, infrastructure, and mobility. With consumer costs defined by inflation, supply chain reliability matters more than ever and will continue to do so for years to come. Freight rail delivers efficient, cost-saving connections for Utah families and businesses alike helping to move goods efficiently and drive down costs.

Unlike other freight modes, railroads build and maintain their own infrastructure, investing more than \$23 billion annually nationwide without relying on taxpayer dollars. In Utah, these private investments support a high-performing rail network that moves goods across the Mountain West and anchors key industries from energy and agriculture to mining and manufacturing.

Utah's geography makes rail even more essential. With our central location and growing role as a mid-continent logistics hub, the ability to move freight efficiently is key to sustaining long-term growth. Our seven freight railroads operate over 1,375 miles of track, helping avoid nearly 3 million additional truck trips a year while cutting 1.46 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions—equal to taking 286,000 cars off the road each year. When it comes to easing traffic and protecting our clean air, rail helps us stay ahead rather than sluffing the hard stuff down the road.

It is crucial that policies in the Reauthorization bill reflect these realities and allow railroads to continue serving Utah as they have since 1869 when the first transcontinental lines connected at Promontory Summit.

1. Sustain and Strengthen Rail Grant Programs: Federal grant programs like the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) deliver tangible results in Utah. Recent awards include a CRISI grant to advance grade separation in Ogden and a major RCE grant to consolidate rail corridors in Utah County removing 19 crossings and upgrading 10 more. These projects will reduce delays, improve safety, and support future growth in our state. Continued, robust funding for federal rail grants is critical to expanding these community benefits.

2. Oppose One-Size-Fits-All Operational Mandates: Mandates on crew size would raise shipping costs without enhancing safety. Utah shippers and consumers would bear the brunt of these higher logistics costs. Meanwhile, freight railroads already operate under rigorous federal oversight and invest billions annually in infrastructure and technology. These investments have driven down accident and injury rates to record lows. Congress should support performance-based policies that promote both safety and affordability.

3. Enable Innovation Through Modern Regulation: Tools like automated track inspection, drones, and advanced sensors offer earlier, more accurate safety detection than legacy methods. But outdated regulations may limit their use. Congress should support a forward-looking regulatory framework that enables railroads to innovate and continue delivering safe, efficient service.

From driving in the Golden Spike 157 years ago to the intermodal trains moving tons of freight across the Wasatch Front today, railroads have helped build Utah. As the nation prepares to mark 250 years of independence, it's a fitting time to recognize how freight rail (born alongside America's earliest infrastructure projects) continues to drive progress.

We thank you for your leadership and urge continued support for policies that ensure freight rail remains a cornerstone of our state's future.

Sincerely,

Carl Albrecht	Representative	Utah State Legislature
Sheri Bingham	Mayor	Hooper City
Bridger Bolinder	Representative	Utah State Legislature
Emily Buss	Senator	Utah State Legislature
Benjamin Hart.	Executive Director	Utah Inland Port Authority
Larry Jensen	Commissioner	Carbon County
Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh	Senator	Utah State Legislature
Val Peterson	Representative	Utah State Legislature
Mike Schultz	Representative	Utah State Legislature
Rex P. Shipp	Representative	Utah State Legislature
Jerry Stevenson	Senator	Utah State Legislature
Evan Vickers	Senator	Utah State Legislature
Raymond Ward	Representative	Utah State Legislature
Ron Winterton	Senator	Utah State Legislature