

April 13, 2026

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

Dear Members of Washington's U.S. House Delegation,

As state and local leaders from across Washington, we urge you to support policies in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization that preserve and strengthen freight rail—a system vital to our economy, infrastructure, and communities.

Washington relies on goods movement more than most states. With 75 ports and nearly 20% of our economy tied to international trade, our state depends on freight systems that are efficient, reliable, and affordable. Freight railroads connect our ports, farms, and manufacturers to markets nationwide and around the world, playing a central role in supporting exports, jobs, and economic resilience.

Our 28 freight railroads operate nearly 2,900 miles of track, moving enough freight annually to displace more than 6 million heavy trucks. This cuts down on roadway congestion, emissions, and infrastructure costs while saving taxpayer dollars. Freight rail also supports Washington's environmental and transportation goals, preventing nearly 6 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions in Washington in a single year.

As families face affordability pressures and parts of our state navigate economic uncertainty, freight rail helps keep supply chain costs in check. Recent data shows its efficiency and scale help contain transportation costs that would otherwise raise prices on groceries, building materials, and consumer goods which is a key advantage for a trade-dependent state like Washington.

We encourage Congress to protect this vital infrastructure as part of a balanced and future-focused reauthorization.

1. Sustain Proven Rail Grant Programs: Federal programs like the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants deliver real results for Washington communities. Washington received five awards supporting safety and mobility improvements statewide in the latest RCE round—from grade crossing upgrades in Chelan County, to corridor-wide safety studies in Aberdeen, Kent, Monroe, and a major grade

separation project in Everett. These projects reduce risks and ease congestion. We urge continued support for the grant programs that enable them.

2. Avoid Unfounded Operational Mandates That Undermine Affordability: Freight rail helps keep shipping costs in check, but arbitrary operational mandates such as crew size rules would raise costs without improving safety. The data is clear: rail accident and injury rates remain at historic lows; with Class I mainline accident rates down more than 43 percent since 2005 and hazardous materials accident rates per carload at their lowest level ever. Congress should reject one-size-fits-all mandates and instead support performance-based policies that protect both safety and affordability.

3. Support Innovation in Rail: Railroads continue to invest in safety technologies such as automated track inspection, which can identify potential issues earlier and more accurately than traditional methods. These tools improve reliability across heavily used corridors that are vital to Washington's economy. Outdated regulations should not stand in the way of proven innovation. Congress should support modernized regulations that allow railroads to deploy new technologies while maintaining strong safety outcomes.

Washington's economy depends on efficient, affordable goods movement. Freight rail delivers for our ports, our exporters, and our communities while helping manage costs, reduce congestion, and strengthen our position in global trade. We thank you for your leadership and urge your continued support for policies that keep freight rail working for Washington.

Sincerely,

Andrew Barkis
Representative
Washington State Legislature

John Hodkinson
Mayor
City of Union Gap

Greg Brotherton
Commissioner and Chair
Jefferson County

Tony Ketchum
Mayor
Chehalis

Megan Dunn
Council Chair
Snohomish County

Mari Leavitt
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LaDon Linde
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Mary Miller
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Teresa Mosqueda
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David Stuebe
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Nikki Torres
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