

April 30, 2026

The Honorable Tony Wied
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Wied:

As local elected officials and community stakeholders from Wisconsin's 8th Congressional District, we urge you to support freight rail infrastructure in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization.

Wisconsin's economy and transportation system rely on a strong freight rail network. Our state is served by nine railroads moving nearly 70 million tons of freight annually -- equivalent to removing 8.4 million heavy trucks from our highways each year. This makes rail a vital pressure-release valve for both our roads and our taxpayers while also supporting jobs and businesses across our economy.

As municipalities around Wisconsin have struggled with funding for road maintenance, privately owned freight rail plays a unique role in absorbing freight volume without adding wear and tear to public infrastructure. Nationally, railroads move 40% of intercity freight while investing billions of dollars annually into their networks.

Additionally, freight rail helps moderate inflationary pressures. Recent analysis shows that railroads act as built-in shock absorbers—limiting price volatility for the goods that fill Wisconsin store shelves and keeping supply chains resilient.

As you consider reauthorization, we respectfully ask that you:

1. Oppose Unnecessary Operational Mandates

Wisconsin's industrial economy—spanning agriculture, forestry, paper, chemicals, and manufacturing—depends on flexible, long-haul freight rail. Proposals to impose prescriptive federal mandates on rail operations, such as crew size or train length requirements, risk disrupting the network and driving up logistics costs. Rail is already the safest way to move goods over land, with hazmat arriving safely 99.99% of the time. FRA data shows consistent improvement in the rail safety record, for example a 15% decline in the train accident rate just since 2023.

2. Sustain and Expand Federal Rail Grant Programs

Programs like the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant and Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) grant have helped Wisconsin communities make safety and efficiency upgrades that would be otherwise out of reach. Projects like the \$72.8 million Muskego Yard Bypass or crossing improvements in Superior, Fond du Lac, and La Crosse counties are making a real difference. These competitive grants stretch federal dollars

by leveraging local and private investment. Please continue supporting and growing these programs.

3. Embrace Data-Driven Rail Safety Innovation

Wisconsin needs smarter, not slower, oversight of freight rail. Railroads have made major safety gains by investing in technologies like Automated Track Inspection, which detects defects earlier and more accurately than manual checks alone. These tools, which enhance safety and support workers, should be encouraged—not sidelined by outdated regulations. Congress should promote policies that empower safety through innovation.

Freight rail is a uniquely American success story: a privately funded, highly efficient system that reduces inflationary pressure, protects public infrastructure, and keeps Wisconsin's economy moving. We urge you to support policies that ensure rail continues to deliver for our state and for the country.

Sincerely,

Rich Heidel
Village President
Village of Hobart

John Moore
Alder
City of Kaukauna

Mark Herter
Mayor
City of New London

Dave Murphy
State Representative
Wisconsin State Assembly

Mary Kardoskee
Village President
Village of Ashwaubenon

Jeff Mursau
State Representative
Wisconsin State Assembly

Jimmy Landru
Supervisor
Forest County

John Pavelski
County Executive
Portage County

Tom Lund
Supervisor
Brown County

John K. Potters
Supervisor
Forest County

Al Marvin
2nd Vice Chair
Forest County

Jim Ridderbush
Alderman
City of Green Bay

Howard Miller
Supervisor
Winnebago County

Wisconsin Towns Association

CC: Senator Ron Johnson, Senator Tammy Baldwin