

ROGER WICKER, MISSISSIPPI
ROY BLUNT, MISSOURI
MARCO RUBIO, FLORIDA
KELLY AYOTTE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
TED CRUZ, TEXAS
DEB FISCHER, NEBRASKA
JERRY MORAN, KANSAS
DAN SULLIVAN, ALASKA
RON JOHNSON, WISCONSIN
DEAN HELLER, NEVADA
CORY GARDNER, COLORADO
STEVE DAINES, MONTANA

BILL NELSON, FLORIDA
MARIA CANTWELL, WASHINGTON
CLAIRE McCASKILL, MISSOURI
AMY KLOBUCHAR, MINNESOTA
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT
BRIAN SCHATZ, HAWAII
EDWARD MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
CORY BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
TOM UDALL, NEW MEXICO
JOE MANCHIN III, WEST VIRGINIA
GARY PETERS, MICHIGAN

NICK ROSSI, STAFF DIRECTOR
KIM LIPSKY, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

September 14, 2016

Mr. Daniel R. Elliott
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Mrs. Deb Miller
Vice Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Mrs. Ann D. Begeman
Board Member
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairman Elliot, Vice Chairman Miller, and Member Begeman:

The railroad industry is a critical part of our country's economic success. We depend on a healthy railroad network to move goods quickly and efficiently across the country. As you work on current proceedings at the Surface Transportation Board (STB), I encourage you to consider the importance of maintaining a robust freight rail network.

Last December, Congress passed the Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act of 2015, bipartisan legislation that reauthorized the Board for the first time since its inception in 1996. This legislation focused largely on making the STB a more efficient and transparent organization, while keeping the underlying rail economic framework that has guided the Board for the past several decades in place. Recently, however, the STB has embarked on several new regulatory efforts, which could have far reaching effects on today's rail network and the shippers it serves. It is critical that any proposal moving through the regulatory process be grounded in sound economic principles and supported by data-driven empirical analysis of their impact.

Freight rail is a vital industry for Florida, generating jobs and contributing to the state's economy. There are more than a dozen freight railroads in Florida and approximately 2,900 miles of track. Freight rail companies employ thousands of Floridians and support industries throughout the state.

At a time when freight traffic is only expected to grow in this country – by nearly 60 percent by 2040 – doing anything that would weaken the nation's railroads' abilities to meet the transportation needs of the country could have dire consequences for my state and our economy. I urge the Board to keep these concerns at the front of their minds as these issues move through the regulatory process.

The Honorable Daniel R. Elliott, Deb Miller, and Ann D. Begeman

September 9, 2016

Page 2

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

BILL NELSON
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Chairman