

September 8, 2022

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Committee  
U.S. Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member  
Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Committee  
U.S. Senate  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Chairman  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2134 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1135 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cantwell, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Wicker, and Ranking Member Graves:

Railroads and rail labor have until September 16 to reach an agreement that would prevent a lockout or strike after the Presidential Emergency Board published a proposed settlement on August 17. If an agreement is not reached during this 30-day period, we strongly urge Congress to act to avoid significant economic damage to U.S. supply chains and further uncertainty for rail customers.

The farmers, ranchers, food and beverage manufacturers, processors, package suppliers, farm supply dealers and agricultural marketers that comprise our collective memberships support and sustain millions of American jobs. Our members provide safe, abundant, affordable, and sustainably produced human and animal food, fiber, and agricultural goods essential to the health and well-being of tens of millions of U.S. and global consumers. Reliable railroad freight transportation is essential to meet these objectives.

The U.S. rail network moves critical agricultural inputs and significant quantities of agricultural products. These essential items are transported by rail to domestic facilities and to ports for export abroad. A complete stoppage of the rail system would lead to shutdowns or slowdowns of rail-dependent facilities resulting in devastating consequences to our national and global food security.

Leaders around the world are already concerned about food shortages and famine due to drought and geopolitical challenges, such as the invasion of Ukraine, which accounts for ten percent of the global exports of wheat. A freight rail stoppage would occur as America's farmers harvest their crops and would exacerbate global food insecurity and likely contribute to further geopolitical instability in regions that experience famine. Congress must be willing to act to ensure our farmers and ranchers can continue to help feed the world.

The freight rail system already is significantly challenged and many rail customers are not receiving timely rail service. A complete stoppage of rail service, even for a single day, would escalate these challenges. Most freight railroads currently lack extra capacity to make up for down time. Thus, a sizable portion of freight backlogged due to a stoppage may never be made up leading to less production from rail-dependent businesses to the detriment of producers and consumers.

Moreover, inflation is impacting all Americans. A freight rail stoppage would drastically make inflation worse, especially for those who can least afford it.

Therefore, we urge Congress to prepare to intervene, if necessary, to prevent a rail stoppage of any duration. Uninterrupted rail service is vital to the American agricultural economy, and we thank you for your responsiveness to this potentially significant supply chain issue.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Transportation Working Group

Agricultural Retailers Association  
Amcot  
American Bakers Association  
American Cotton Producers  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Malting Barley Association  
American Pulse Association  
American Soybean Association  
Consumer Brands Association  
Growth Energy  
International Dairy Foods Association  
National Aquaculture Association  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Cotton Ginners Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Grange  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Sunflower Association  
North American Millers' Association  
Soy Transportation Coalition  
The Fertilizer Institute  
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council  
USA Rice  
U.S. Canola Association  
US Pea & Lentil Trade Association  
US Rice Producers Association

cc: Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Members

cc: House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Members