

October 2, 2015

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

The undersigned organizations representing American farmers, manufacturers, retailers, energy providers and other freight rail customers are concerned that large portions of the American rail network will be forced to shut down at year's end without Congressional action to extend the deadline for the rail industry to fully implement Positive Train Control (PTC). All of our organizations fully support PTC implementation, but the reality is that significant hurdles make it virtually impossible to bring PTC fully on line nationwide to meet the regulatory deadline. We urge Congress to act expeditiously to avert the potentially catastrophic shut down of the American rail network.

The threat of a rail service shutdown is very real.

Information from the Government Accountability Office, the Federal Railroad Administration and the railroads demonstrates that no Class I freight railroad will be in compliance with PTC requirements by December 31, 2015. To date, no Class I railroad has committed to continuing to carry freight traffic after December 31. In fact, some railroads have informed customers and policy makers that they may completely cease operations unless Congress extends the deadline. In recent letters to Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune, all Class I railroads offer a very stark outlook on the anticipated operating status of freight and passenger services at the end of the calendar year and beyond if a PTC deadline is not extended by Congress. Impacts will begin to be felt well in advance of the December deadline as railroads and customers soon begin preparations for that process.

A shutdown of large segments of the nation's freight rail network would have broad and long lasting consequences. As rail customers, we rely on railroads to deliver farm products, automobiles, coal, heating oil, propane, road salt, chemicals, consumer goods, building materials and many other essential products. A major disruption of freight service would have cascading impacts on food, energy and water supplies, as well as transportation, construction and nearly every sector of the U.S. economy.

The rail system is interwoven into the fabric of the American economy and cannot be simply switched off once the deadline is hit. Railroad and freight rail customers are already making decisions about post-shutdown operations. The economic consequences have already begun to be felt and will continue to grow throughout the fall and winter, and well into the New Year.

However, no amount of preparation will be sufficient to prevent widespread and long-lasting harm in the event of a rail shutdown. This issue cannot await further delay, and we urge Congress to act. We believe that H.R. 3651, the "Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015," and the PTC-related provisions of the Senate-passed surface transportation reauthorization bill, H.R. 22, the "DRIVE Act," are important paths towards addressing this issue.

Railroads, rail shippers and all stakeholders need Congress to pass legislation that will ensure that rail service will not be disrupted as a result of the PTC implementation deadline. Our organizations support PTC full implementation. We urge Congress to ensure PTC is implemented on a workable timetable that will allow the railroads to install this complex technology and that prevents a nationwide rail service shutdown.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
Agriculture Transportation Coalition
Airforwarders Association
Alliance for Rail Competition
Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
Almond Hullers & Processors Association
American Apparel & Footwear Association
American Chemistry Council
American Coatings Association, Inc.
American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Forest and Paper Association
American Foundry Society
American Frozen Food Institute
American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers
American Import Shippers Association
American Iron and Steel Institute
American Malting Barley Association
American Pyrotechnics Association
American Soybean Association
Association of Food Industries
Auto Care Association
California Farm Bureau Federation
California League of Food Processors
Colorado Association of Wheat Growers
Corn Refiners Association
Council on Safe Transportation of Hazardous Articles
Fashion Accessories Shippers Association
Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America
Foreign Trade Association
Foundry Association of Michigan
Freight Rail Customer Alliance
Gemini Shippers Association
Global Automakers
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Idaho Barley Commission
Idaho Grain Producers Association
Idaho Wheat Commission

Indiana Cast Metals Association
Institute of Makers of Explosives
Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc.
Intermodal Association of North America
International Association of Movers
International Vessel Operators Dangerous Goods Association
International Warehouse Logistics Association
Louisiana Chemical Association
Manufacture Alabama
Meat Import Council of America
Midwest Shippers Association
Montana Farmers Union
National Association of Chemical Distributors
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Mining Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Onion Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Propane Gas Association
National Retail Federation
National Shippers Strategic Transportation Council
Nebraska Soybean Association
Nebraska Wheat Board
Nevada Mining Association
New York/New Jersey Foreign Freight Forwarders and Brokers Association
North American Home Furnishings Association
North American Meat Institute
Ohio Cast Metals Association
Oregon Wheat Commission
Pennsylvania Foundry Association
Promotional Products Association International
Resilient Floor Covering Institute
Retail Industry Leaders Association
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
Snack Food Association
Society of Chemical Manufacturers and Affiliates
Steel Manufacturers Association

Texas Cast Metals Association
Texas Wheat Producers Board
The Chlorine Institute
The Fertilizer Institute
The National Industrial Transportation League
The Vinyl Institute
Transportation Intermediaries Association
Travel Goods Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Hide, Skin and Leather Association
U.S. Pea and Lentil Trade Association
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
Vinyl Building Council
Vinyl Siding Institute
Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Washington Farm Bureau
Washington Grain Commission
Washington State Potato Commission
Western Fuels Association
Wisconsin Cast Metals Association
Wyoming Wheat Marketing Commission