

COUNTY OF EL DORADO
Board of Supervisors

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GEORGE TURNBOO
SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT II

March 4, 2026

Dear Members of California's U.S. Senate and House Delegation:

As state and local leaders from communities across California, we write to express our strong support for including policies in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization that ensure freight railroads remain a key pillar of our state's infrastructure, economic growth, and environmental progress.

California has reclaimed its position as the world's fourth-largest economy, and freight railroads are behind-the-scenes powerhouses keeping goods moving efficiently and affordably. With 27 freight railroads operating on the fifth-largest rail network in the country, these carriers are integral to a third of our state's economy that depends on reliable goods movement.

Unlike most other infrastructure systems, freight railroads fund and maintain their own networks, spending and investing on average \$23 billion annually to maintain, grow, and modernize rail infrastructure. Each year, California's railroads carry enough freight to remove nearly 9 million truckloads from our highways—cutting traffic, roadway wear, and emissions. In fact, a freight train can move a ton of goods from Los Angeles to Sacramento, roughly 500 miles, on just a single gallon of fuel.

In a state where affordability is top of mind, freight rail also plays a vital role in holding down transportation costs for consumers and businesses alike. Research has shown that railroads help blunt inflation by insulating supply chains from price shocks. Lower shipping costs benefit every corner of the California economy including housing, construction, and agriculture.

As you consider upcoming surface transportation reauthorization and other freight-related legislation, we respectfully urge you to:

1. Sustain and Expand Federal Rail Grant Programs: California communities have excelled in leveraging federal rail grants to improve safety, mobility, and sustainability. In the most recent round of the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) program, California received more awards than any other state, supporting projects across Merced, Dixon, Yolo, and Los Angeles counties. These investments reduce risk, ease congestion, and support future freight and passenger rail. We urge continued, robust funding for RCE and the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program, which deliver cost-effective, bipartisan results.

2. Oppose Unnecessary Operational Mandates: Prescriptive federal mandates on rail operation such as fixed crew size would reduce rail's flexibility and raise costs for California shippers. These sort of one-size-fits-all rules ignore the safe and efficient performance of modern railroads and would tip the balance toward less sustainable, more congested highway alternatives. Rail is already the safest mode of overland freight transport, with consistent improvements in safety over the past two decades, including a 24% decline in train accident rates since 2000.

3. Promote Modern Rail Regulations: California leads on climate and technology, and freight rail should be allowed to innovate too. Technologies like automated track inspection can detect track issues earlier and more accurately than older methods, enhancing safety and efficiency. But outdated regulations risk sidelining these advances. Congress should support a modern framework that enables railroads to deploy proven technologies to keep our rail network safer and more resilient.

Freight rail connects California's ports to farms in the Central Valley, warehouses to storefronts, and local manufacturers to global markets. Rail supports affordable goods, lower emissions, and a stronger state economy. We thank you for your leadership and look forward to working together to ensure freight rail continues to deliver for California.

I authorize GoRail to include my name and organization on this group letter, which will be delivered to the California Congressional Delegation in advance of its mark-up of an infrastructure bill.

Sincerely,

George Turnboo
District 2 Supervisor
County of El Dorado



03/04/2026