



**American Short Line and
Regional Railroad Association**

The Voice of America's Independent Railroads

July 10, 2015

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Senate Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Senate Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

On behalf of America's 550 short line and regional freight railroads and the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA), I commend your work on Title V of the Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015. Freight rail must be considered as an integral part of any national transportation policy discussion in Congress. Your proposal recognizes the importance of small railroads as they continue to provide public benefits for highway users by efficiently moving freight that would otherwise burden overcrowded highways.

While ASLRRA is continuing to review this bill, there are numerous positive provisions in it:

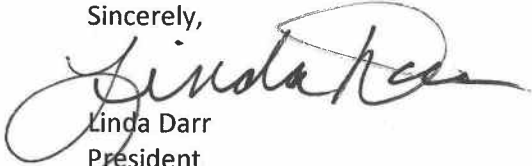
- Section 5401 reinforces the importance of the federal Section 130 program to improve grade crossing safety;
- Section 5402 begins the process of establishing a confidential close call reporting system that should improve rail safety;
- Section 5410 can help bring better uniformity to the handling of private grade crossings;
- Section 5421 provides re-authorization of grant programs that have benefited short line safety and infrastructure in the past, and directly recognizes the importance of public – private partnerships between the federal government and short line and regional freight railroads;
- Section 5412 streamlines railroad police certifications and will improve the safety and security of the freight networks;
- Section 5432 will improve tank car safety and section 5435 will help ensure that before costly technology is mandated, careful independent analysis of updated data, modeling, and testing is undertaken;
- Section 5436 will enhance safety through audio and video recording devices;
- Section 5503 could provide meaningful improvements to the environmental review process for rail freight projects while maintaining appropriate environmental safeguards; and
- Sections 5601-5610 will make improvements to the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program; a continuation of a multi-decade campaign by multiple Congresses to make RRIF function as intended.

You are to be commended for your leadership on all of these issues.

You are also to be commended for your leadership in attempting to address the difficult Positive Train Control (PTC) mandate. The bill contains a tough proposal to address a tough situation. ASLRRA continues to review this provision. The current deadline for PTC deployment is only six months away and unachievable. Even under this proposal, challenges for small railroads will remain. Importantly, this bill recognizes the differences between very large railroads and short lines. Congress intended to exclude most short lines from PTC in 2008, but many short lines are being unintentionally swept up in the mandate. Continued recognition of the challenges facing short lines is appreciated.

America's small railroads will continue to work with you on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Darr", written in a cursive style.

Linda Darr
President

American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association