



Kentucky Chamber
Uniting Business. Advancing Kentucky.

Ashli Watts
President & CEO

March 5, 2020

Ann D. Begeman, Chairman
Martin J. Oberman, Vice Chairman
Patrick J. Fuchs, Board Member
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairman Begeman, Vice Chairman Oberman and Board Member Fuchs:

Advocating on behalf of common sense state and federal regulation is a hallmark of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. It is for that reason that I write to advocate for the continued preservation of balanced regulation embodied in the Staggers Rail Act.

As you are aware, this important piece of legislation was a catalyst for a freight rail resurgence and continues to provide measurable benefits to businesses, consumers, taxpayers and our economy. Prior to the act, overregulation had decimated the U.S. freight rail network. Bankruptcies were commonplace, rail rates were rising, safety was deteriorating, and rail infrastructure and equipment were in increasingly poor condition. Regulations at that time did not allow the highly capital intensive freight rail industry to earn enough to pay for basic upkeep, let alone innovation and improvements.

Since the implementation of the Staggers Act, U.S. freight railroads have invested hundreds of billions of dollars in the rail network. Rail traffic has doubled, rail productivity has more than doubled, rail rates are down more than 40 percent, and recent years have been the safest on record. The post-Staggers investments in infrastructure, equipment and technology transformed a failing rail system into a high-tech, highly efficient, interconnected network that links American communities, businesses and consumers to markets across the country and around the world.

On behalf of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce we respectfully request the Surface Transportation Board to preserve the current regulatory structure and allowing freight railroads to innovate, adapt and reinvest in the rail network. Our communities, our businesses and our employees depend on it.

Sincerely,

Ashli R. Watts

Cc: U.S. Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee
U.S. House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure