

September 22, 2015

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx,

The undersigned organizations representing American farmers, manufacturers, energy providers, retailers and other freight rail customers are increasingly concerned that large segments of the U.S. rail system will shut down if Congress does not soon move to extend the December 31st implementation deadline for Positive Train Control (PTC). The safety, public health and economic consequences of such a large-scale service disruption would be dire. We urge the Department of Transportation (DOT) to support a reasonable extension well ahead of the upcoming deadline and encourage you to bring every resource at your disposal to help resolve this pending crisis as quickly as possible.

Unless Congress passes an extension, railroads are warning that they may shut down all rail service. Information from the Federal Railroad Administration and the railroads shows 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 Senator John Thune (R-SD), 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 catastrophic consequences. As rail customers, we rely on railroads to deliver coal, farm products, automobiles, chemicals, building materials, retail consumer goods and many other essential products. A major disruption of freight service would have cascading impacts on the nation's food, energy and water supplies, as well as transportation, construction and nearly every sector of the U.S. economy. Some negative impacts are already being experienced as freight rail customers must prepare well in advance of such a massive potential service disruption. And, unfortunately, no amount of preparation will be sufficient to prevent widespread and long-lasting harm in the event of a rail shutdown.

Our industries request DOT to actively support a reasonable extension to the PTC deadline. Because compliance with the PTC mandate is simply not achievable, the only workable solution is for Congress to approve a reasonable extension to the current deadline. As Secretary of Transportation, you are uniquely positioned to advise Congress and the White House on the significance of a large scale disruption of rail service and to help assure all stakeholders that support for a reasonable extension is consistent with support for strong rail safety policies.

This issue cannot await further delay. Railroads, rail shippers and all stakeholders need certainty that rail service will not be disrupted as a result of the PTC implementation deadline. The DOT has a critical role to work towards a solution that is consistent with your mission of ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers

American Chemistry Council

American Farm Bureau Federation

National Association of Manufacturers

National Retail Federation

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

cc: Ms. Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement
Mr. Jeffrey Zients, Director, National Economic Council (NEC) and Assistant to the President for Economic Policy