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August 24, 2021

The Honorable Jim Costa, Congressman
U.S. House of Representatives
2081 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: **Concern Regarding U.S. Surface Transportation Board Proposed Rail Access Regulations**

Dear Congressman Costa:

The Fresno County Board of Supervisors wish to convey our concerns regarding the U.S Surface Transportation Board's (STB) proposed rail access regulations as directed by the Biden Administration's "*Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy.*" Fresno County contains hundreds of miles of rail lines for freight and passenger uses and are vital routes that transport billions of dollars in goods across the state and nation. STB's proposed regulations could have a severe impact upon those rail operations and our regional economy.

The Staggers Rail Act of 1980 transformed the rail economy of the Central Valley and the nation at-large. It allowed necessary consolidation of services, allowed failing companies to exit the industry, and removed government meddling in the daily operations of private commerce. In the 40 years since its passage, freight rail is safer, cheaper, and greener than in any time in history. The improved efficiency of rail operators has expanded access for Fresno County farmers and manufacturers to the larger global economy and enabled the development of an "inland port" which will further boost intra-state freight capacity, efficiency, and safety.

The proposed regulations, known as "forced access," would require railroads to provide their competitors with access to their rail lines, compromise the efficiency of the national rail system and slow the overall movement of goods across the nation. Businesses and farms rely on swift, predictable shipping options to meet their customers' requirements. By recommending that railroads comply with these regulations, the STB is likely to jumpstart a chain reaction that constricts business activity and disrupts predictable and reliable shipping timelines. This is not just discriminatory toward the railroads, but is also unfair to the businesses that form the backbone of the American economy. This could be especially harmful to small businesses at a time when many are recovering from the impacts of the pandemic. When those businesses suffer, the communities that surround them also suffer the impacts.

STB's proposed regulations could reverse decades of progress that has transformed the US freight rail system into the best in the world. The economic impact resulting from increased bureaucracy and reduced efficiency will ripple throughout the US economy. It is critically important that businesses have reliable and uninterrupted access to efficient freight transportation to ensure products can compete nationally and globally.

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We urge you to carefully monitor STB's potentially disruptive proposed regulations and the impact they would have on businesses in our state and across the nation. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

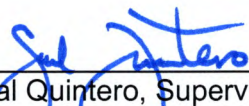
Fresno County Board of Supervisors



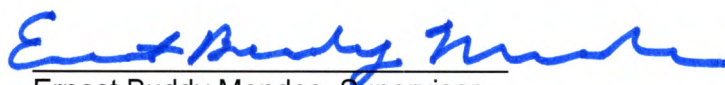
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cc: Carpi and Clay, Legislative Advocate