October 23, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi,

The undersigned organizations representing American farmers, manufacturers, retailers, energy providers and other freight rail customers strongly urge Congress to act without further delay to pass an appropriate extension to complete the installation of positive train control (PTC) on the nation’s rail lines. This PTC issue must be resolved in the upcoming highway bill extension in order to avoid a disruption to the supply of vital commodities—we cannot afford for this issue to go unresolved into November.

It has been made abundantly clear that PTC will not be installed in time to meet the rapidly approaching regulatory deadline. As a result, passenger and freight railroads have told Congress and their customers that they will shut down large segments of the nation’s freight rail network. A disruption in freight rail service of this magnitude would jeopardize the nation’s access to food, energy and water supplies and negatively impact every sector of the U.S. economy.

A shutdown of rail service is very real, and rail customers are already starting to feel the impacts. We have received notifications that disruptions will begin next month to complete shipments that are in transit and that railroads will not accept new shipments. With a shutdown just around the corner, rail customers must start putting contingency plans into motion, including adjusting production schedules and workforce levels.

Without a solution from Congress in the next few weeks, the impacts on our members and the broader economy will grow every day. A recent economic impact analysis by the American Chemistry Council calculated that a one month shutdown will pull $30 billion out of the economy with a loss of 700,000 jobs.

Our members and the U.S. economy need a solution from Congress now to keep the trains running. Passing an extension should not be held hostage to resolve other issues. We strongly support the legislative compromise that was approved by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the mark-up of the highway bill on Thursday, and we appreciate all of the efforts by Senate and House leaders to move forward with an extension.
We strongly urge that you work with your colleagues to include a provision to extend the PTC deadline in the highway bill extension before the end of this month. This legislation is the best and most expedient way to resolve this issue and to avert a nationwide shutdown of rail service.

Sincerely,

AgriBusiness Association of Kentucky
Agribusiness Council of Indiana
Agricultural Retailers Association
Agriculture Transportation Coalition
Airforwarders Association
Alabama Agribusiness Council
Alabama Crop Management Association
Alliance for Rail Competition
Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
Almond Hullers & Processors Association
American Apparel & Footwear Association
American Chemistry Council
American Coatings Association
American Composites Manufacturers Association
American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers
American Import Shippers Association
American Iron and Steel Institute
American Malting Barley Association, Inc.
American Pyrotechnics Association
Auto Care Association
Automotive Oil Change Association
Brokers Association
California Chamber of Commerce
California Farm Bureau Federation
Chemical Industry Council of California
Chemical Industry Council of Delaware
Chemical Industry Council of Illinois
Chemistry Council of Missouri
Chemistry Council of New Jersey
Chicago Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association
The Chlorine Institute
Colorado Association of Wheat Growers
Connecticut Business and Industry Association
Corn Refiners Association
Delaware-Maryland Agribusiness Association
Far West Agribusiness Association
Fashion Accessories Shippers Association
The Fertilizer Institute
Florida Fertilizer & Agrichemical Association
Foreign Trade Association
Freight Rail Customer Alliance
Gemini Shippers Association
Georgia Agribusiness Council
Georgia Chemistry Council
Glass Packaging Institute
Minnesota Crop Production Retailers
Missouri Agribusiness Association
Montana Agricultural Business Association
Montana Grain Elevator Association
Motor and Equipment Manufacturers Association
National Association of Chemical Distributors
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Water Companies
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Cattlemen’s Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Industrial Transportation League
National Onion Association
National Pasta Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Retail Federation
National Shippers Strategic Transportation Council
National Sunflower Association
New York State Chemistry Council
New York/New Jersey Foreign Freight Forwarders and Brokers Association, Inc.
North American Meat Institute
North Dakota Agricultural Association
Ohio AgriBusiness Association
Ohio Chemistry Technology Council
Oklahoma Agribusiness Retailers Association
Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association
Oregonians for Food & Shelter
Plastic Pipe and Fittings Association
Railway Supply Institute
Renewable Fuels Association
Retail Industry Leaders Association
Rocky Mountain Agribusiness Association
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
Society of Chemical Manufacturers and Affiliates
South Carolina Fertilizer and Agrichemicals Association
South Dakota Agri-Business Association
State Chamber of Oklahoma
Steel Manufacturers Association
Texas Chemistry Council
Travel Goods Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
United States Dry Bean Council
United States Fashion Industry Association
United States Hide, Skin and Leather Association
Vinyl Building Council
The Vinyl Institute
Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Washington Farm Bureau
Washington Friends of Farms & Forests
Washington State Potato Commission
West Virginia Manufacturers Association
Western Plant Health Association
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association
Wyoming Agriculture Business Association
Wyoming Wheat Marketing Commission

cc: The Honorable John Thune
The Honorable Bill Nelson
The Honorable Bill Shuster
The Honorable Peter DeFazio