



March 12, 2023

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
11111 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 915
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Senator Alex Padilla
United States Senate
255 E. Temple St., Suite 1860
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Railway Safety and Service

Dear All,

The events that unfolded in East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3rd after a Norfolk Southern train derailed, releasing hazardous materials into the air, water, and soil, is a stark reminder of what we have known for years — transporting these hazardous materials through neighborhoods all across the nation by rail is not safe and rolling back regulations on an already unsafe practice is unconscionable.

That is exactly what happened when the Trump administration rolled back regulations, and the federal government has the power to prevent this from happening again.

I demand that the Department of Transportation finalize regulations increasing the minimum number of crew on trains carrying hazardous materials. And, reinstate the Obama-era regulations such as requiring modern braking systems, strengthening the current regulations on speed limits and length restrictions, and expanding the regulations to include trains like the Norfolk Southern train to be classified as high-hazard flammable trains that would require more stringent safety requirements and notice to state and local officials of their contents.

Our communities must be protected from the threat to their safety posed by these dangerous toxins transported by rail, and accidents like these must be prevented. **Therefore, we urge the Department of Transportation to reinstate and strengthen rail regulations to prevent what happened in East Palestine from ever happening again.**

While increased regulation is an imperative for the immediate term, the East Palestine accident puts a spotlight on a bigger long-term problem, the failure of the freight rail companies to make the necessary investments in their infrastructure and human resources to improve safety, efficiency and customer service. For years, accidents have been increasing, shipper complaints of poor service have been increasing and passenger trains are increasingly delayed. And, this doesn't even touch on the investment in electrification that will be needed to meet our climate goals.

This is due to the rail companies being more focused on meeting Wall Street's short-term financial expectations than serving the transportation needs of the country now and into the future. **Therefore, I strongly urge the Administration and the Senate to explore the benefits of nationalizing the railroad system and develop a plan to implement it.**

As with the highway system, the government only needs to breakeven, not meet someone's profit expectations. The current rail companies would continue to operate as freight companies, but relieved of the burden of making a return on a huge infrastructure investment and only paying for what they use. A nationalized system would also be open to other users and make possible a truly competitive rail system.

By utilizing user fees and the borrowing power of the federal government, a nationalized railroad system would be able to make the investments needed to improve safety, efficiency and travel times greatly benefiting shippers, passengers and the national economy.

Sincerely,