

April 30, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The American Trucking Associations and the trucking industry have long recognized the importance of intermodal transportation and the need for all modes of freight transportation to work together for America. However, we believe that recent statements from your Department suggesting that freight rail and marine highways replace trucks on our nation's highways is not only factually incorrect, it can breed irresponsible policy.

Here are a few of the comments we find misleading to the public:

- A key part of the administration's livability program is getting "gas-guzzling trucks off the road."
- "The lion's share (of TIGER grants) went into our freight rail system because it takes trucks off the road – it takes gas guzzling trucks off the road."
- The TIGER grants went to freight rail improvements and should help "get trucks off the road and unclog some of our highways."
- DOT policy has "paid a lot of attention to the freight rail companies" to both expand passenger train service and draw freight off highways. "We've made a huge investment in their opportunity to build capacity."
- The DOT is working with ports "again, to take trucks off the road and to really utilize the marine highways."
- "A marine highway will get trucks off the road and clean up the air."

With railroads reaching only one-fifth of U.S. communities, it's a gross misconception that the ability exists to significantly ease congestion by shifting freight from the roads to the rails. Even if intermodal rail tonnage doubled by 2020, intermodal rail would account for just 1.8 percent of freight movement, compared with the 1.5 percent that is currently projected for 2020. By comparison, trucks will move 71 percent in the same time frame.

It's a further misconception that such a shift would also result in less congestion near urban areas. An intermodal ramp concentrates truck traffic for pickup and drop off in one

location. The truck traffic that is removed would be largely in rural areas, while the truck trips needed as part of an intermodal move would still be concentrated on urban highways. Furthermore, additional conflicts at highway-rail grade crossings would have devastating effects on congestion, highway safety, and further divide communities for increasingly longer periods of time.

The simple fact is, very little freight moves solely by rail. Trucks are needed to take the freight to the railroad or from the railroad to the final destination, or both. The same holds true for short sea shipping. Even if subsidies of both sectors grow, trucks will continue to carry the bulk of our nation's freight. Taking "trucks off the road", as you suggest, would bring our nation's supply chain to a screeching halt.

At ATA, we're committed to doing our part to ensure that America's freight moves in a clean, efficient and safe manner. With the rollout of our sustainability initiative in 2008, we have been systematically working to reduce carbon emissions and lower fuel consumption while continuing to focus on improving the safety of our highways. According to DOT figures, the truck-involved fatality rate declined 12.3 percent in 2008—the largest year-to-year drop ever. The fatality rate is at its lowest since the DOT began keeping records in 1975 and has dropped 66 percent since that time.

Mr. Secretary, I have a great appreciation for the significant challenges you face in dealing with the myriad of transportation issues confronting our nation. The opportunity to successfully resolve those issues will be found by acknowledging, embracing and enhancing the efficacy of all the nations' transportation options. Trucks moves 70% of the nations freight because for decades businesses and individuals have come to rely upon trucking as the most efficient and flexible form of freight transportation in the nation. Please do not disregard that fact as you work to shape transportation policy for the future of our nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns with you.

Sincerely,



Bill Graves