



September 17, 2015

Senator Thune  
511 Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Nelson  
716 Senate Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Shuster  
2268 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative DeFazio  
2134 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, Chairman Shuster, and Ranking Member DeFazio:

On behalf of the Agriculture Transportation Coalition (AgTC) we respectfully urge both Committees to extend the deadline for railroads to implement positive train control (PTC) beyond the December 31, 2015 date that was set forth in the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. We have grave concerns that if an extension is not issued, rail service will stop, and the movement of U.S. agriculture and forest products cargo will be severely impacted.

The AgTC has been identified by a leading transportation and logistics publication as "the principal voice of agricultural exporters in US transportation policy. The AgTC's membership includes companies that represent virtually all agriculture products and many forest products exported from the United States, as well as many which are imported. These products are grown, raised, processed, packaged and shipped from all regions of the US, to all markets worldwide, where they typically face competition from similar products sourced elsewhere.

Rail transportation is a vital means to move the vast quantities of agriculture and forest products grown and produced in the U.S. to seaports for export. If we do not have reliable transportation infrastructure, then our U.S. farmers, processors, and manufacturers cannot guarantee timely delivery to their foreign customer. Once reliability is lost, the sale goes elsewhere.

Railroads are implementing measures to comply with the new regulations, but have encountered challenges with technology development, limited supplier capacity, and construction delays associated with federal reviews of PTC implementations. The Government Accountability Office gave the estimated PTC compliance date for BNSF as December 2017, for Union Pacific as December 2018, and for both CSX and Norfolk Southern as 2020. An extension of the deadline is needed not only for Class I carriers but affected short lines as well, as short line railroads face the same significant and numerous technological and other hurdles that Class I carriers face. Most railroads have stated that they will shut down vast portions of their rail lines unless the deadline is extended.

We urge you to extend the deadline in order to allow the railroads to fully comply with the important PTC safety regulations, while still ensuring that U.S. agriculture products are able to move throughout the U.S. and to our seaports for export.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Friedmann  
Executive Director  
Agriculture Transportation Coalition