

NEW JERSEY RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

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www.njrailroad.com

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman

Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member

Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

On behalf of the New Jersey Railroad Association (NJRRA), we write to express our strong support for the Short Line Railroad Relief Act (H.R. 3782). This important legislation would rectify a major problem confronting our nation's freight rail network. Current federal programs fail to provide the nation's more than 600 small railroads with immediate relief after being damaged and harmed by natural disasters. Yet current federal programs directly respond to disasters that damage other transportation modes—like highways and transit—after they are harmed by events like wildfires, earthquakes, and flooding. Disaster assistance grants through FEMA are generally inapplicable for small railroads, and the private insurance market fails to provide adequate policies that cover small railroad infrastructure for losses caused by increasingly severe storms and weather events.

Small railroads provide critical freight rail common carrier service on over 47,000 miles of track in the U.S., operating on very slim margins. Without proper resources, when disaster strikes, these railroads can be forced to shutter, which then shifts freight from the rail network to highways, increasing congestion and pollution, wearing out roads and bridges, endangering motorists and leaving gaping holes in the country's supply chain.

With the scope and severity of natural disasters increasing, Congress should minimize the peril facing short line railroads—and the diverse economic sectors they serve. The Short Line Railroad Relief Act authorizes funds so that in the event of being harmed by a natural disaster, short line railroads can rapidly get back on their feet and continue to help businesses nationwide get goods to and from market.

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The NJRRA urges you to act favorably on H.R. 3782 and advance this important, bipartisan measure.

Sincerely,

New Jersey Railroad Association Board

Bob Baily – SMS Rail Service
Mike Fesen – Norfolk Southern