October 23, 2015

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal The Honorable Christopher Murphy

United States Senate United States Senate

706 Hart Senate Office Bldg. 136 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC, 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal,

Dear Senator Murphy,

The undersigned organizations representing Connecticut farmers, manufacturers, retailers, water treatment providers, construction companies, municipal interests, other freight as well as passenger rail customers and rail labor are concerned that large portions of the American rail network will be forced to shut down at year’s end without Congressional action to extend the deadline for the rail industry to fully implement Positive Train Control (PTC). All of our organizations fully support PTC implementation, but the reality is that significant hurdles make it virtually impossible to bring PTC fully on line in Connecticut and nationwide to meet the regulatory deadline. We urge Congress to act expeditiously to avert the potentially catastrophic shutdown of the American rail network.

The threat of a rail service shutdown is very real. In addition to severe impacts to the U.S. freight economy freight rail service disruptions will cause, there will be widespread passenger rail outages on all passenger rail systems that have not implemented PTC. Many commuter rail systems, including the Metropolitan Transportation Authority systems, have concerns with meeting the December 31, 2015 deadline. In Connecticut and elsewhere, a rail service shutdown will impose additional burdens on the already overcrowded roadways as rail commuters seek additional transportation options.

A shutdown of large segments of the nation’s freight rail network would have broad and long lasting consequences, harming rail customers and threatening the jobs of rail workers and workers in the numerous industries that rely on rail. We rely on railroads to deliver farm products, automobiles, heating oil, propane, road salt, chemicals, consumer goods, building materials and many other essential products. A major disruption of freight service would have cascading impacts on food, energy and water supplies, as well as transportation, construction and employment in nearly every sector of the state and U.S. economy.

The rail system is interwoven into the fabric of the American economy and cannot be simply switched off once the deadline is hit. Railroad and freight rail customers are already making decisions about post-shutdown operations. The economic consequences have already begun to be felt and will continue to grow throughout the fall and winter, and well into the New Year.

However, no amount of preparation will be sufficient to prevent widespread and long-lasting harm in the event of a rail shutdown. This issue cannot await further delay, and we urge Congress to act. We believe that H.R. 3651, the “Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015,” and the PTC-related provisions of the Senate-passed surface transportation reauthorization bill, H.R. 22, the “DRIVE Act,” are important paths towards addressing this issue.

Railroads, rail shippers, workers and all stakeholders need Congress to pass legislation that will ensure that rail service will not be disrupted as a result of the PTC implementation deadline. Our organizations support PTC full implementation. We urge Congress to ensure PTC is implemented on a workable timetable that will allow the railroads to install this complex technology and that prevents a nationwide rail service shutdown.

Sincerely,

American Council of Engineering Companies of Connecticut

Aquarion Water Company

Avon Water Company

Central Connecticut Cooperative Farmers Association

Connecticut Asphalt & Aggregate Producers Association

Connecticut Business and Industry Association

Connecticut Construction Industries Association

Connecticut Council of Small Towns

Connecticut Environmental & Utilities Contractors Association

Connecticut Farm Bureau

Connecticut Ready Mixed Concrete Association

Connecticut Restaurant Association

Connecticut Retail Merchants Association

Connecticut Road Builders Association

Connecticut Water Works Association

Crop Production Services, Inc.

Glastonbury Chamber of Commerce

Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut, Inc.

Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries New England Chapter

Lumber Dealers Association of Connecticut

Manchester Manufacturers Outreach and Referral Program

Milford Chamber of Commerce

Northwest Connecticut’s Chamber of Commerce

SMART Transportation Division

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority

The Connecticut Chapter of the Association of Pool and Spa Professionals

Utility Contractors Association of Connecticut

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c.c.

The Honorable John Thune

The Honorable Bill Nelson

The Honorable Mitch McConnell

The Honorable Harry Reid

CT House Delegation

Congressman John Larson

Congressman Joe Courtney

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro

Congressman Jim Himes

Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty

Washington D.C. Office of Governor Dannel P. Malloy

Mr. Dan DeSimone