



3136 Kingsdale Center #112 • Upper Arlington, OH 43221
www.allaboardohio.org



April 18, 2020

Mr. Jack Marchbanks
Director
Ohio Department of Transportation
Columbus, Ohio

Mr. Matthew Dietrich
Exec. Director
Ohio Rail Development Commission

Mr. Sam Randazzo
Chairman
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

Gentlemen,

On behalf of All Aboard Ohio and our Board of Directors, we would like to express serious concern over recently announced moves by the Norfolk Southern Railroad to shift movements of oil, ethanol and natural gas trains from relatively rural routes in Central Ohio to what would be more densely populated urban areas in Northern Ohio. Norfolk Southern also made this major change in its system without any prior public notice.

Given that Ohio has experienced serious derailments of such tank trains in the past decade, at least three of which (including one in the heart of Columbus) resulted in fires and property damage, we urge you to oppose such an action by the railroad.

We understand that Norfolk Southern, like many Class-1 railroads, are experiencing the impacts of fewer coal shipments and an overall drop in business. But consolidating such potentially and demonstrably volatile rail traffic into already busy freight and passenger rail corridors in Ohio is a potential tragedy looking for a place to happen. It will also add traffic to a corridor that has also seen its share of grade crossing accidents and blocked crossings from delayed trains.

It is our understanding that Norfolk Southern has already asked for permission from the Federal Railroad Administration to downsize its trackage from double to single track status on what is known as the Fort Wayne Line. Again, this line goes through a considerably more rural corridor through Ohio. We urge you to oppose this as well. History shows that when a rail corridor loses track, it will more than likely never return: making that corridor less attractive to current or future shippers who depend on efficient service.

Ohio can ill afford to lose more of its railroad capacity and All Aboard Ohio is concerned we are witnessing the beginning of a similar loss of rail corridor that Ohio experienced in the 1960's and 70's. Much of what our state lost is gone for good: claimed by either real estate development or agricultural use.

It is also worth mentioning here that the DeWine administration and ODOT have communicated to All Aboard Ohio that expansion and improvement of passenger rail service in Ohio is a larger priority than it was with

prior administrations. That makes the loss of rail corridors and the overcrowding of others only more of a critical issue to Ohio's mobility and economy.

For all of the above reasons, All Aboard Ohio opposes any further reduction of Ohio's rail corridors by either pulling up track and signals or shifting clearly dangerous cargo on to corridors that already handle significant traffic from freight and passenger trains. We urge you to notify both the Federal Railroad Administration and Surface Transportation Board that the State of Ohio opposes this as well.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Stuart F. Nicholson

Stuart F. Nicholson
Executive Director
All Aboard Ohio

Cc: All Aboard Ohio Board
Railroad Passengers Association
Amtrak