

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 18, 2019

The Honorable Elaine Chao
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
West Building, 1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590-9898

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to call your attention to the Delmarva Central Railroad Company's (DCR's) Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement Program ("CRISI") grant application. The rural Delmarva economy can be strengthened from an upgraded rail infrastructure that gives companies and farmers additional transportation options and shipping reliability. The DCR has made significant capital investments since assuming management in 2016 of rail traffic in much of Delaware, portions of Maryland, and now the Virginia segment of the Delmarva Peninsula. The DCR's \$29.4 million proposal would make additional investments in its main line and three older bridges along the only rail connection on and off the Delmarva Peninsula, and the nearly \$19 million of federal funds they are applying for would be vital to the project. We also believe this project fits well with your focus on rural infrastructure. DCR's rail lines pass through and serve commercial users and residents in a number of rural census tracts located within Opportunity Zones.

DCR's CRISI grant application will rehabilitate three large aging moving rail bridges— the Chesapeake & Delaware (C&D) Canal Bridge, Nanticoke River Bridge, and the Pocomoke River Cassatt Bridge. The Nanticoke and Pocomoke bridges were built in 1890s. This grant will help DCR make other investments to the primary rail corridor through the Delmarva Peninsula in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia by upgrading public rail crossings and upgrading the main line, resulting in track speed increases up to 25 miles per hour.

This multi-million investment in the Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia rural economies will help companies by ensuring they have transportation choices for shipping cargo, and by keeping thousands of trucks off local roads and stressed highways. Improving these bridges supports a critical flow of freight on the Delmarva Peninsula, connecting many rural areas in southern Delaware, Maryland, and the Eastern Shore of Virginia to the national rail network, supporting major industries and regional employers such as NRG Energy, Mondelez Global, Perdue, Mountaire Farms, Amick Farms, Nutrien, and Growmark. These businesses supply all of the region's construction aggregate, feed for the region's poultry industry, and most of the region's propane needs.

Additionally, the C&D Canal is a vital transportation link for the Ports of Baltimore, Wilmington, and Philadelphia. Should the bridge ever be stuck in a lowered position, it would create a chaotic logistical situation for Baltimore and the ships that would have to add days of sailing days to their trip around the Delmarva.

These investments will also help recreational boaters in Delaware and Maryland. Boaters rely on functioning swing bridges in order to have enough clearance to depart and return to local marinas. Boaters have been significantly impacted by extended outages of the Nanticoke River railroad bridge in the past because there is not enough room for sport craft to get under the swing bridge when closed. Recreational boaters also rely on the Pocomoke River and C&D Bridges.

We appreciate your time and consideration of this CRISI grant application, as we believe it supports key stakeholders in this predominantly rural region and increases the reliability of rail and waterway infrastructure. Please contact us once a decision is rendered.

Sincerely,



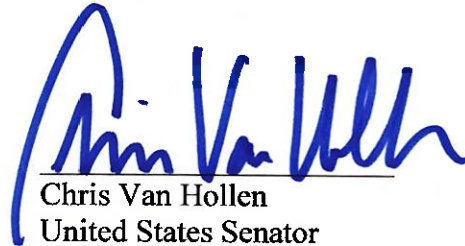
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Andy Harris, M.D.
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