

August 3, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

The undersigned agricultural organizations write to express strong support for Karen Hedlund's nomination to serve as a Board Member of the Surface Transportation Board (STB or Board).

The STB provides oversight of the freight rail marketplace, which has consolidated tremendously since the early 1980s. Most agricultural rail shippers and receivers are captive to a single rail carrier and do not have price-competitive access to other modes of transportation, such as trucks or barges, either because they are landlocked or the distances involved in the movement are too great given the large volumes of agricultural commodities, products and farm inputs being shipped.

Rail industry implementation of precision scheduled railroading (PSR) has reduced the number of locomotives, crews, and other human and capital assets to reduce railroad operating costs, but often at the expense of their customers. The agricultural sector, which accounts for more than \$160 billion of America's trade exports, has been adversely impacted by railroad market power and by these recent changes to railroad operations.

During the past few years, the Board has responded to these developments with proactive oversight and long-overdue efforts to modernize its regulatory oversight. In particular, the agency has developed momentum in attempting to create more rail-on-rail competition and a more streamlined method for freight rail customers to challenge unreasonable rates.

The ability of the STB to follow through and pursue a modern and more balanced approach is dependent upon it having members that are knowledgeable and objective. We respectfully believe Karen Hedlund exemplifies these principles. Ms. Hedlund, a native of Illinois, and graduate of Harvard University and Georgetown University, has significant rail transportation experience having served as the Federal Railroad Administration's Deputy Administrator and Chief Counsel and presently as an advisor for rail transportation projects. In addition, she has served as Chief Counsel for the Federal Highway Administration. Her distinguished career qualifies her to serve on the Board, and she will also complement the thoughtful and pragmatic Members currently serving.

Given the important matters pending at the Board, we urge the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation to approve Ms. Hedlund and for the full Senate to confirm her nomination as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration,

Agricultural Transportation Working Group

National Associations:

Agricultural Retailers Association  
Agriculture Transportation Coalition  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Forest & Paper Association  
American Soybean Association  
Corn Refiners Association  
Growth Energy

Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils  
Meat Import Council of America  
National Aquaculture Association.  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Farmers Union  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Pasta Association  
North American Meat Institute  
North American Millers' Association  
North American Renderers Association  
Pet Food Institute  
Specialty Soya & Grains Alliance  
The Fertilizer Institute  
USA Rice  
U.S. Hide, Skin and Leather Association  
US Rice Producers Association

State and Regional Associations:

AgriBusiness Association of Kentucky  
Agribusiness Council of Indiana  
California Grain and Feed Association  
Far West Agribusiness Association  
Florida Fertilizer & Agrichemical Association  
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association  
Kansas Grain and Feed Association  
Michigan Agri-Business Association  
Minnesota Grain and Feed Association  
North Dakota Grain Dealers Association  
Northeast Agribusiness and Feed Alliance  
Ohio AgriBusiness Association  
Pacific Northwest Grain and Feed Association  
Renew Kansas Biofuels Association  
Rocky Mountain Agribusiness Association  
South Dakota Agri-Business Association  
South Dakota Grain & Feed Association  
Texas Grain and Feed Association  
TN Feed & Grain Assn  
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association  
Wyoming Ag Business Association  
Wyoming Wheat Marketing Commission

Cc: Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate