

Transportation Communications Union/IAM

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



God Bless America

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May 29, 2013

The Honorable Ray LaHood, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of the Transportation Communications Union/IAM (TCU), I write in support of The Indiana Department of Transportation's (INDOT) application for federal grant funds under the 2013 National Infrastructure Investments (TIGER V) program for the White River Freight Railroad Bridge Replacement Project.

The White Bridge is a 115-year old steel through-truss bridge located in rural, economically-distressed Greene County, Indiana on the network of the Indiana Rail Road Company (INRD). This bridge carries traffic important to the region including a strategic military installation. Traffic on the bridge has already been weight restricted and soon train length will be restricted, further reducing regional mobility. Within a few years safety will require that the bridge be closed completely, severing an important regional rail link.

This bridge is a key component of the networks of two regional railroads. It bisects the route of the Indiana Rail Road Company (INRD) running south from Terra Haute to the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Crane facility. It also bisects the main line of the Indiana Southern Railroad (ISRR) running south from Indianapolis to Evansville. The impacted INRD line utilized by NSA Crane to route its traffic through Terra Haute is a DoD-designated Connector to the Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET) lines operated by CSX Transportation. One of the largest Navy installations in the world, NSA Crane is a joint-service facility hosting the Crane Army Ammunition Activity, the third largest facility of its kind in the US. In this role Crane is responsible for maintaining a storage capacity of 650,000 tons of ordnance from which it actively provides on demand a full range of conventional munitions to US warfighters around the globe. High-capacity, reliable freight rail service is absolutely necessary for NSA Crane to achieve its mandated munitions throughput capacity in a mobilization scenario.

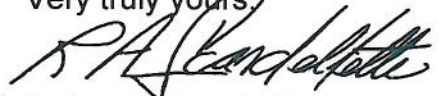
It is also centrally located on the key Indianapolis to Evansville rail route which utilities including Duke Energy and Indianapolis Power & Light use for regional high-volume coal shipments supplying their power generation stations. Other routine cargoes carried over the bridge include grain and manufactured goods and precursors.

The bridge's present restrictions have already led to diversion of some traffic onto more circuitous rail routes and to trucks. The looming further restrictions and ultimate closure of this bridge will result in far greater diversions and impacts on the region and local communities. When this scenario plays out NSA Crane will be faced with its only rail routing option being a non-DoD-designated low-density line to the south. This line, which would require significant investment to meet the base's capacity requirements, is economically dependent upon the interchange traffic presently crossing the White River Bridge. Accordingly, besides severing the present STRACNET connector to the north, closure of this bridge will also halt rail traffic necessary to support the financial viability of the base's only remaining rail option. The operator of this southern line projects that a bridge closure will make this line uneconomic to operate. Investment will be reduced and ultimately this last rail connection leading to Crane will be subject to closure. In the event of a military mobilization Crane's munitions logistics output capacity requirements are significant. There is insufficient capacity of licensed ammunition truck contractors to move even a fraction of Crane's requirement by road if rail is not available.

The new bridge will enable heavy-haul unit freight train traffic at speeds up to 40 m.p.h. with a long-term reduction in periodic maintenance costs. The new design removes a clearance restriction enabling previously height-restricted railcars, such as double stack containers. The rail-driven economic development opportunities in southwest Indiana will benefit from this investment. A key mobility link for energy, agricultural, manufacturing, and military operations will be preserved and improved. The regional rail network will be used optimally and the highways can be spared damage and safety risks by reducing truck traffic.

I respectfully ask that the Administration consider these views as you move forward on this important matter.

Very truly yours,



Robert A. Scardelletti
National President