



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad  
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

February 21, 2024

Mr. Alan H. Shaw  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Norfolk Southern Corporation  
650 West Peachtree Street NW  
Atlanta, GA 30308

Dear Mr. Shaw:

As we read recent reports of investor activism among some at Norfolk Southern (NS), I write to reiterate the only avenue to ensure NS's immediate and long-term success is through a relentless focus on safety.

As the federal safety regulator, the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) primary mission is to ensure the safety of the railroad industry, communities where rail travels, and railroad workers. Last year, FRA published findings and recommendations resulting from our 60-day supplemental safety assessment of NS and communicated other concerns identified by FRA safety staff.

You recently wrote to the Secretary detailing the progress NS has made under your leadership in response to some of those directives. This includes partnering with BLET, SMART-TD, and FRA to initiate a confidential close call reporting system (C3RS) pilot program for 1,000 NS workers, reaching agreements with your entire workforce on paid sick days, and undertaking a pilot with BRS, with technical support from FRA, to perform field visits to consider signal safety.

As part of your commitment to not furloughing crews during economic downturns and the corresponding need to hire additional employees, you reported an increase in new conductor trainees. Ensuring that employees, especially those who are new and without prior experience, receive proper training is fundamental to safe operations. You have also instituted "Performance Standard Engagement," which focuses on coaching and teaching NS workers, rather than a discipline-centric approach to enforcing rules compliance.

The commitments you make in your letter are important and demonstrate the ability to make progress when railroads make safety a priority. I particularly commend your commitment to investing in safety as those investments are imperative for continuing the unique progress your railroad has made; early data for 2023 suggest that NS was the only Class I railroad to achieve significant reductions in the rate of mainline derailments this past year.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> January to November 2023 (most recent data available) compared to January to November 2022.

But this work is not complete. We must do as much as possible to prevent incidents, injuries, and fatalities. Safety is an ever-evolving task, and, while FRA remains committed to our goal of improving rail safety, achieving improvements requires the commitment of industry including its most senior leadership, and it will require follow-through on the many items cited above and more.

While I recognize NS for the meaningful steps and results seen so far, often in notable contrast to industry peers, I want to emphasize the importance of a durable and lasting path forward that continues to prioritize safety. Any backsliding, as a result of a change in leadership or otherwise, on the safety-oriented path you have laid out and communicated to us will likely attract renewed oversight attention from my office as we pursue our safety mission.

Sincerely,



Amit Bose  
Administrator

cc:

Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary, Department of Transportation  
Honorable Martin J. Oberman, Chairman, Surface Transportation Board