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July 19, 2024
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The Honorable Robert Primus, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

The Honorable Karen Hedlund, Vice Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

The Honorable Patrick Fuchs
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

The Honorable Michelle Schultz
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Via Email

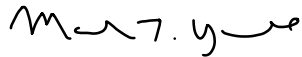
RE: FD 36787 Alameda Belt Line—Operation Exemption— Board of Harbor Commissioners of the Port of Los Angeles, Board of Harbor Commissioners (Long Beach), and Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority

Dear Chairman Primus, Vice Chairman Hedlund, Board Members Fuchs, and Schultz, I am writing on behalf of the Alameda Belt Line (“ABL”). ABL is a jointly owned company owned by Union Pacific Railroad Company and BNSF Railway Company. As you know, ABL filed a Notice of Exemption on June 12, 2024 so it could take over dispatching for the Alameda Corridor owned by the Board of Harbor Commissioners of the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach (“the Ports”) and administered by the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (“ACTA”). ABL dispatching is a joint, carrier-neutral solution agreed upon by the Union Pacific Railroad Company, the BNSF Railway Company, and ACTA and fully-supported by the Ports. ABL dispatching will substantially increase the efficiency and fluidity of all parties through the Alameda corridor, increasing the speed the Nations’ critical goods as they move inland to consumers. Unfortunately, the Director of the Office of Proceedings’ decision to postpone consideration of ABL’s notice could delay this joint dispatching solution and its benefits to the network and consumers by 6 months or more. I am writing in the hope that the Board can take immediate action on the notice, thereby allowing the carriers, ACTA, and the Ports to avoid this substantial delay.

As you may know, the Federal Railroad Administration issued 49 CFR part 245 – Certification of Dispatchers effective July 22, 2024. The new regulation requires a 120-day approval process for a new railroad’s dispatching training program. ABL must begin dispatching by July 22, 2024 to be subject to Sub-part B of the new regulation which allows an already operating Class II or Class III railroad 480 days to submit its training program for approval. ABL currently does not conduct railroad common carrier operations. ABL filed its notice of exemption with the STB (and described its intention to begin dispatching on or after July 12, 2024 (see *Verified Notice of Exemption of Alameda Belt Line*, FD 36787 (filed June 12, 2024)) so it can take on these neutral dispatching responsibilities forthwith. ABL has hired highly experienced former UP and BNSF dispatchers already familiar with the territory and are thus qualified for Sub-part B treatment. Without the Board’s immediate action, if ABL cannot begin dispatching operations by July 22, 2024, ABL will be delayed from until after the FRA completes its four-month review period. See 49 C.F.R. part 245.

I respectfully request the Board take immediate action on ABL’s notice. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to facilitate or support your intervention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Yarnall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a vertical line to its left.

Martin Yarnall

CEO & General Manager, Alameda Belt Line