



Testimony of Jim Chase
In Opposition of HCR 3001
January 7, 2021

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee, my name is Jim Chase. I represent SMART-Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation employees. SMART is the largest rail labor union in North America. Our membership includes conductors, engineers, switchmen, trainmen and yardmasters. I am a locomotive engineer for BNSF Railway at Mandan.

This written testimony is in opposition to House Concurrent Resolution 3001.

Over the years many states, either through official policy or by taking no action at all, have actually encouraged freight trucks to carry heavier and heavier loads. The wear and tear being generated by heavy trucks is worsening maintenance needs at a time when states are already underfunding road maintenance by billions of dollars. With the nation's truck traffic expected to increase dramatically over the next decade, it's a problem that will only get worse.

The nation's economy depends on trucking, but that method of shipment comes with a price. Engineers estimate that a fully loaded truck--a five-axle rig weighing 80,000 pounds, the interstate maximum--causes more damage to a highway than 5,000 cars. Some road planners say that the toll is even higher: it would take close to 10,000 cars to equal the damage caused by one heavy truck. When the trucks are overloaded, as quite a few of them are, the damage is exponentially worse. Increasing a truck's weight to 90,000 pounds results in a 42 percent increase in road wear. Pavement designed to last 20 years wears out in seven.

While the statement that track miles have decreased in the past in North Dakota is true, railroads have invested hundreds of millions of **private** dollars over the last decade into infrastructure, putting them in a position to move freight efficiently in the future and taking stress off our overburdened roadways.

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Here are some advantages of rail transport over road transport to consider:

1. **Rail transport is cost-effective.** Shippers who convert long-haul freight from road to rail can save from 10 to 40 percent. Rail has lower fuel costs compared to road transport, especially when shipping a high volume of freight.
2. **Shipping via train is more environmentally-friendly.** Trains burn less fuel per ton mile than trucks. According to the Association of American Railroads (AAR), freight railroads can move one ton of freight an average of 479 miles on a single gallon of fuel. On top of that, using rail transport over road transport can lower greenhouse gas emissions by 75 percent.
3. **Rail options provide access to capacity.** The driver shortage, Hours of Service restrictions, and current market demand can make it hard for shippers to find a truck when they need it without paying an arm and a leg. Since rail transport can be more efficient and doesn't have the same kind of limitations, this is a great way for shippers to find capacity.

In conclusion, heavier and longer trucks will have physical impact on roadways; therefore, the cost will ultimately end up being paid by the taxpayer. We have rail infrastructure in place to service the agriculture industry that is privately funded.

Additional infrastructure will be required for long road trains, including places to park, refuel trucks, and provide rest stops for Hours of Service that are currently not available for long road trains. Who will bear the costs for these needed improvements?

Currently road trains are used in remote areas of Australia where there is little vehicular traffic. There are many safety concerns associated with allowing road trains to operate on public highways that have yet to be resolved. Longer and heavier will equal increased stopping distances and difficulty in passing these longer truck trailers.

I urge a do not pass on House Concurrent Resolution 3001.