

# RailAmerica Operations Support Group, Inc.



® A RailAmerica Company

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March 2, 2010

RE: State of Connecticut Raised Bill No. 344,

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE UPGRADE OR ELIMINATION OF HAZARDOUS  
RAILROAD CROSSINGS AT GRADE.**

To The Connecticut General Assembly:

RailAmerica, Inc. owns and operates 40 shortline and regional railroads in the US and Canada. We are the owner/operators of both the Connecticut Southern RR (CSO) and the New England Central RR (NECR). These two rail lines currently handle the majority of all CT rail freight business. The CSO and NECR operate over 120 miles of track in the State of Connecticut. We host approximately 63 public and private at grade crossings. We are members of the Connecticut Railroad Association.

At grade road crossings with railroad tracks do not provide any benefits to the railroads. Crossings are in place to provide safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Yet the railroads shoulder the majority of the costs to maintain and rebuild these crossings. In the past, the State of CT D.O.T. was more involved in working with the railroads to rebuild, rehabilitate, and upgrade these crossings. Recent years have seen a decline in state-sponsored crossing projects. The NECR's last Conn DOT sponsored crossing project was in 1998 and the CSO's during 2002. The need for crossing projects has not declined, in fact it has increased. We currently face a backlog of these types of projects on both of our railroads. Railroad infrastructure is heavily capital intensive. Limited capital dollars are being used for priority grade crossing repairs and diverted from track infrastructure requirements such as bridges, ties, ballast, and rail. With the downturn in the economy and our freight business, this is even more concerning.

In general, we are supportive of this legislation. We hope that it can place a higher priority on these projects which are safety sensitive to the general public. We would however like to express our concerns about some of the current wording in the bill. While we do not believe that the railroads can be considered a "public service company," we would like this clarified. The bill references work that must be done when directed by parties other than the railroads. As the railroads are private property and are federally regulated for safety reasons, we must understand that no work can occur on our property without required agreements, insurance provisions, and railroad employees on site to provide flagging protection and work/safety oversight. While we support grade crossing closures and eliminations, as does the Federal RR Administration, on a nationwide basis, it is also important to understand that some grade crossings and other types of crossings (such as utilities) are not public roads and may be subject to leases and various agreements.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Hunter  
Director of State Relations- East