



Senate Transportation Committee Public Hearing

Wednesday, May 28, 2025 | 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
Railroaders Memorial Museum, 1200 9th Ave., 3rd Floor, Altoona, PA
Rural Crossroads of Economy and Infrastructure

Testimony of Loni Martz Briner

President of the Keystone State Railroad Association (KSRRRA)

INTRODUCTION

My name is Loni Martz Briner. I am the PR & Media Manager of the North Shore Railroad Company & Affiliates. We operate six short line railroads across Central PA. Today, however, I am joining you as the President of the Keystone State Railroad Association, or KSRRRA.

The KSRRRA includes a membership of major freight carriers, short line railroads, non-operating railroads, tourist railroads, and associate members who work with or conduct business for railroads in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

OPENING

I was asked to join you today to discuss the challenges and, more importantly, the opportunities surrounding railroads and their impact on economic vitality and infrastructure of rural Pennsylvania. But, before I dive into that, I would like to give a brief overview and some statics about Pennsylvania's freight railroads.

Pennsylvania is home to more railroads than any other U.S. state. **PA freight railroads directly employ approximately 4,400 people** across 60 different railroad companies who operate more than 5,100 freight rail miles. 3,100 of those miles are controlled or owned by short line railroads - like my railroads.

According to the 2023 data, it would have taken 9.5 million trucks to handle the freight that moved by rail in Pennsylvania in that one year.

Also in 2023, environmental studies show that **moving freight by rail, in PA, prevented 4.63 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions**, the equivalent of taking 907,000 cars off the road or planting 70.1 million trees. That's a lot of trucks and a lot of trees!

The railroad freight industry is critical to the Commonwealth's manufacturing and economic landscape, as we are deeply intertwined with and important to the fabric of rural Pennsylvania in four critical ways.

EMPLOYMENT

For my first point, I would like to highlight how we railroads are significant employers, and providers to companies, of good-paying, stable jobs. **These jobs support families, fuel local economies, and contribute to the overall stability of rural communities.**

While my railroads provide around 70 jobs in Pennsylvania, we serve roughly 100 businesses across 11 PA counties, and these businesses support 12,600 family-sustaining jobs.

The companies we are serving are good employers who are creating competitive wages for the rural areas we serve. Here is an example... One of our newest customers is currently hiring. Their posted starting salary: \$39.95 per hour with a \$5,000 sign on bonus! Now, they do have other positions in the company that are less technical... when those positions are open (which is not often), their starting rates are closer to \$26-\$30 per hour...

This one example proves that the continued health and growth of our railroad operations directly translates to the prosperity of the individuals and families who call rural Pennsylvania home.

ENVIRONMENT

For my next point, I would like to talk about the environment. Using rail is the most efficient means of transporting freight. **On average, a diesel-powered freight train can move about 400 to 500 tons per mile on one gallon of fuel.** In comparison, trucks usually average around 6 to 8 miles, so trains are much more fuel-efficient when transporting large volumes of freight. The higher energy efficiency of rail transportation results in lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Trains have the ability to bypass heavily trafficked roads and allow trucks to move faster in areas where they are needed. Additionally, trains are more likely to operate at full capacity, which reduces the overall impact per unit of freight moved. Because trucks are traveling on the same roads as the general public, truck transport is a major contributor to road congestion. We especially see this issue in urban areas and along heavily traveled corridors. Road congestion leads to more idling, more fuel consumption, and higher emissions.

Rail can be a solution to road congestion, especially in regions where freight movement is high. **On average, one railcar can carry the equivalent of about four truckloads worth of freight.** For these reasons, rail is a better means of transport for the environment.

CONNECTIVITY

Now, for my third point - railroads provide a crucial artery for the movement of freight throughout the Commonwealth. **We are the connection for rural businesses, manufacturers, and even farms to a market that reaches across the United State and beyond.**

Having access to and using rail enables a more efficient and cost-effective transport of goods and materials. PA's rail infrastructure is truly the lifeblood that allows rural Pennsylvania to participate fully in the larger economy, fostering growth and competitiveness.

We transport the raw materials they need, and we ship their finished products out, keeping their businesses running and their economies growing. We give them options to move product across the nation, using less fuel and costing them less in shipping. Without a robust and efficient rail network, rural Pennsylvania risks being isolated and left behind.

Just because a business is not located on the tracks does not mean they cannot use rail. We have transload facilities located along our lines that allow businesses to move the bulk of their shipments by rail and then use truck for that last leg. YES – we do work well with the trucking industry.

With that being said, the savings that rail offers to shippers, receivers, and sometimes end-users who are not even located directly along the tracks, makes rail an important part of improving the rural economy and infrastructure.

SAFETY

My final point for today is – rail is the safest option. Moving freight by rail is safer, especially when measured in terms of: accidents, injuries, fatalities, and hazmat transport.

Rail has significantly fewer accidents per ton-mile compared to trucks. U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Railroad Administration statistics attest that trucks are involved in more accidents per billion ton-miles of freight. While statistics show that rail accidents have been declining, truck accidents are more frequent, especially in terms of total accidents per miles traveled.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that about 150,000-160,000 people are injured in crashes involving large trucks annually while the FRA reports approximately 10,000-12,000 rail-related injuries annually.

Truck freight is associated with far more fatalities, especially for people not in the truck, like people in passenger vehicles. On average, in recent years, in the U.S., more than 4,000 people die each year in crashes involving large trucks. Rail-related fatalities are often lower than truck fatalities due to the controlled nature of rail travel. **There are far less than 1,000 rail-related fatalities each year, and the majority of these are due to suicides or collisions at grade crossings which are situations outside of the railroad's control.**

Further, truck drivers have one of the highest rates of workplace fatalities in the U.S., mostly due to vehicle crashes. Railroad workers are still at risk, particularly from equipment-related incidents, but have lower transport-related death rates.

Rail is also statistically safer for transporting hazardous materials. According to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), railroads account for less than 1% of all hazmat incidents. While rail hazmat accidents tend to be high-profile in the media, they are much rarer than spills from trucks.

Comparatively, rail is a much safer means of transporting freight in rural Pennsylvania and beyond.

OPERATION LIFESAVER

As I bring this to a close, I would like to add a plug that I include with all of my presentations... It takes more than us railroads to keep the tracks safe.

Being on railroad property is illegal! Railroad tracks are private property (even the abandoned ones), so being on them is trespassing, and trespassing is against the law... You wouldn't go into a stranger's house just because they are not home, so why would you go on tracks just because you don't see a train?

Being on railroad property is dangerous! Because of railroad trespassing, every three hours, someone in the United States is hit by a train. Railroads do not always run set schedules. When a customer needs a delivery, we run, so anytime is train time!

Stay off the tracks, and stay safe!

CLOSING

Any investment in rail is not just for the railroads; it's an investment in the future of rural Pennsylvania. It's an investment keeping the heavy loads off the roadways and on the rails, in jobs, in economic growth, and in the vibrant communities that make our Commonwealth so unique.

Let us work together – government, industry, and the people of rural Pennsylvania – to seize the opportunities that lie before us and **build a stronger, more prosperous future for everyone.**

Thank you.



THE IMPORTANCE OF FREIGHT RAIL

In Rural Pennsylvania

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KEYSTONE STATE
RAILROAD ASSOCIATION



About the KSRRRA

- *Major freight carriers*
- *Short line railroads*
- *Non-operating railroads*
- *Tourist railroads*
- *Associate members*

*...who work with or conduct business for railroads
in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*



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PA FREIGHT RAIL OUTLOOK

~60

Railroads

*More than any other
U.S. State*

4,400

Employees

*Directly
Employed*

5,100

Rail Miles

*3,100 miles are
short lines*

9.5 Million

Trucks

*taken off of PA
highways in 2023*

4.63 Million

Prevented Greenhouse

Emmissions
in 2023

RAIL IS VITAL TO SUCCESS IN PENNSYLVANIA



EMPLOYMENT



Direct



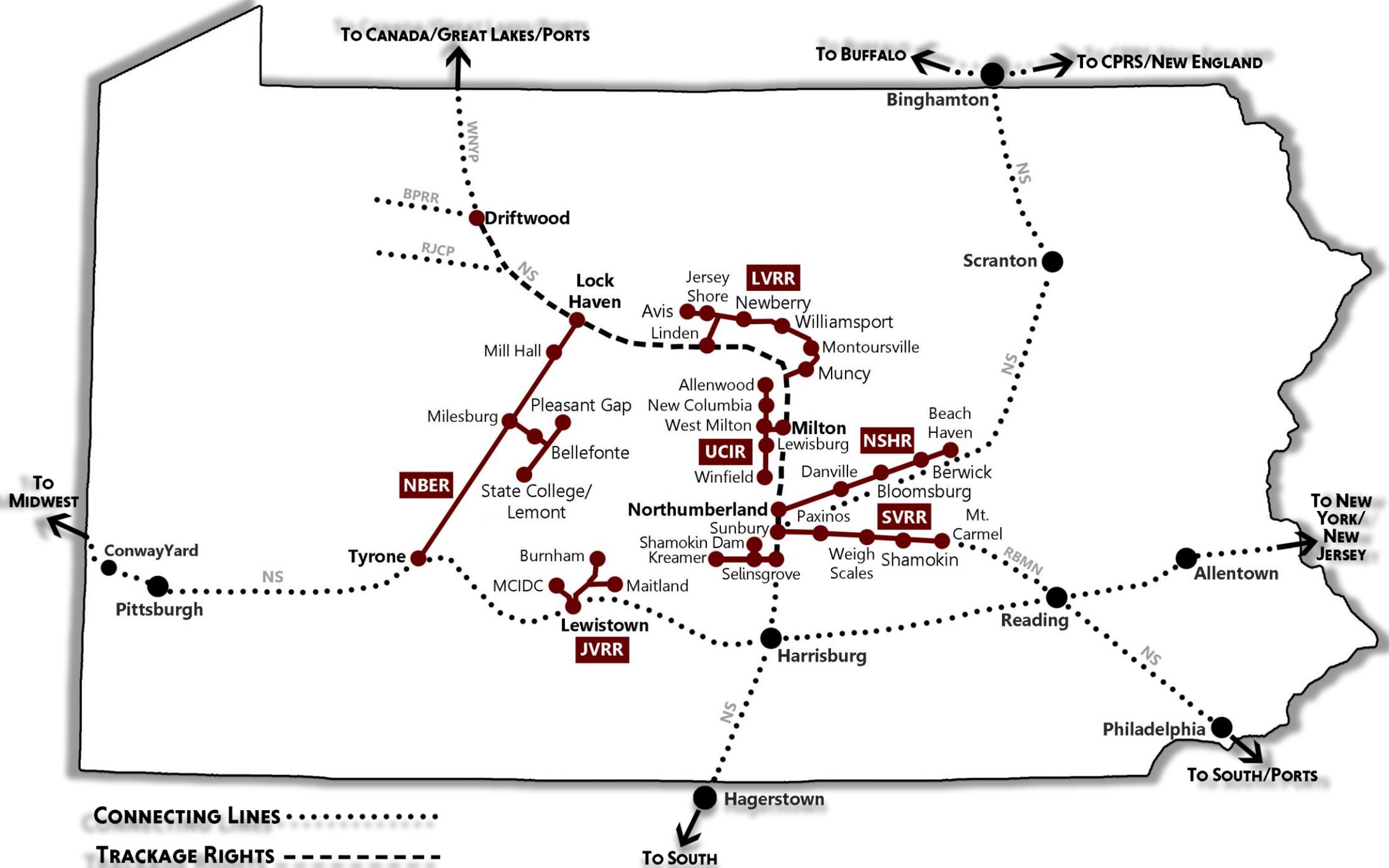
Indirect



Competitive

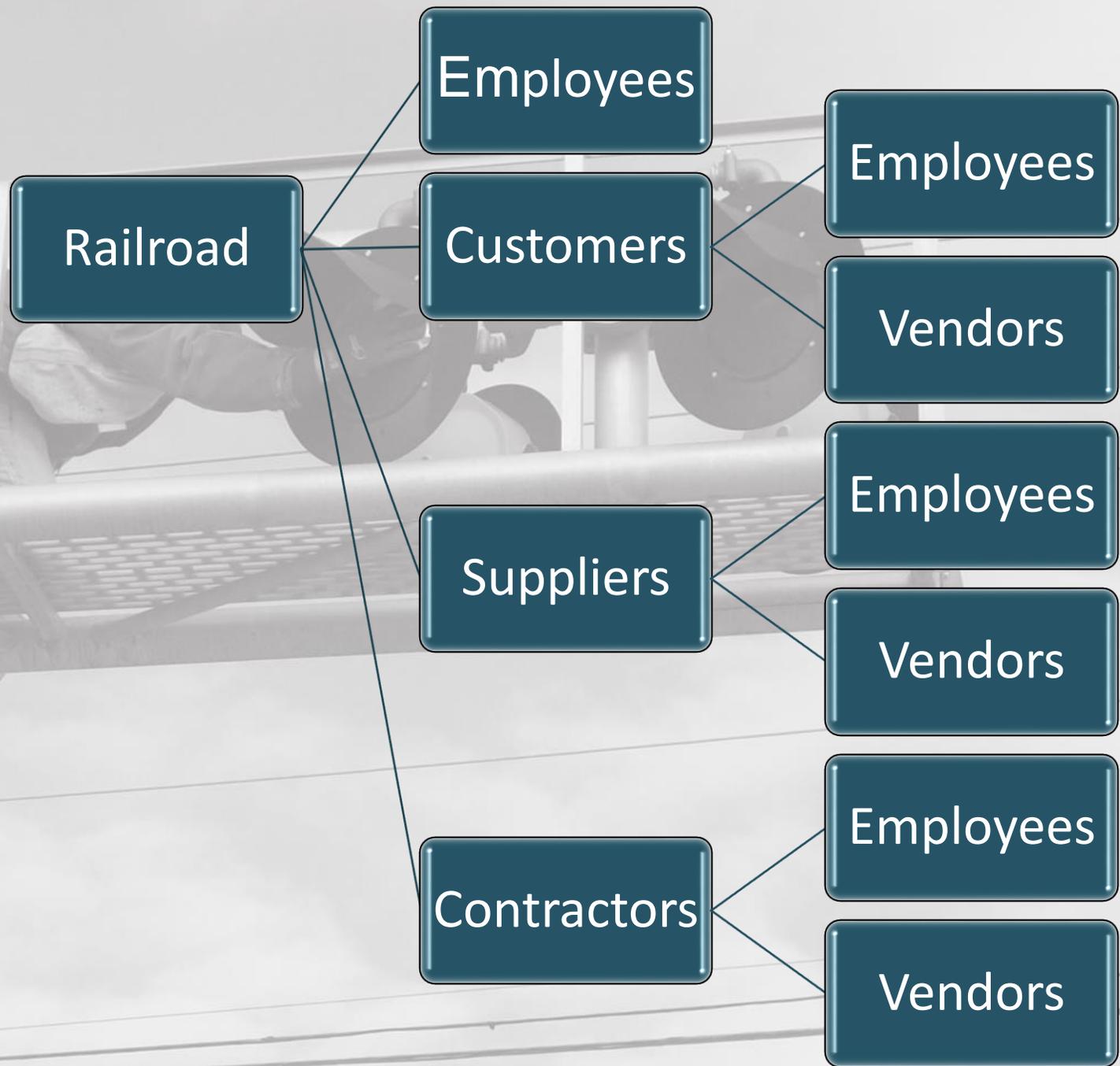


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RAILROAD EMPLOYMENT

Impact Flow Chart



KEEP IT RAIL

Freight Rail v. Trucking: Costs, Capacity, Emissions

Freight rail is significantly more economically and environmentally efficient than shipping by truck. The numbers tell you why you should . . . **keep it rail.**



ENVIRONMENT

DIESEL COSTS

> **2X**

increase over the past two years

EFFICIENCY

one ton of goods moves

480 miles

over rail with just **one gallon** of diesel

CAPACITY

trucks needed to match the freight capacity of one train

800

EMISSIONS IMPACT

freight rail accounts for a small amount of transportation emissions, just

1.9%

GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS

↓75%

by switching from truck to freight rail



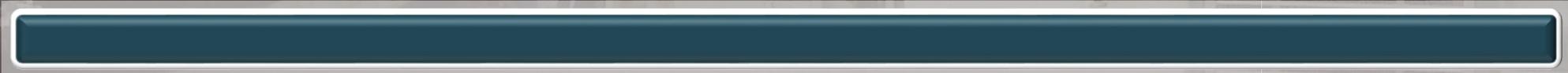
RAILCAR VS. TRUCK CAPACITY COMPARISON

On average, one railcar can carry the equivalent of about four truckloads worth of freight.

Tractor Trailer Capacity



Railcar Capacity



KEYSTONE STATE
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CONNECTIVITY

- ✓ Intrastate
- ✓ Across the US
- ✓ Across the Globe



RAILS WITH TRUCKS



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RAIL SAFETY



✓ Fewer Accidents

According to the U.S. DOT and FRA, trucks are involved in more accidents per billion ton-miles of freight.

✓ Fewer Injuries

The NHTSA reports that about 150,000-160,000 people are injured in crashes involving large trucks annually while the FRA reports approximately 10,000-12,000 rail-related injuries annually.



RAIL SAFETY



✓ Fewer Fatalities

Trucks = >4,000 annually

Trains = <1,000 annually

The majority of rail fatalities are because of suicides or grade crossings accidents and NOT situations caused by the train.

✓ Safer for HAZMAT

PHMSA reports that railroads account for less than 1% of all hazmat incidents.



COMPARATIVE SAFETY OVERVIEW

	Truck Freight	Rail Freight
Accident Rate	Higher (per billion ton-miles)	Lower (per million ton-miles)
Injury Rate	Higher	Significantly lower
Fatalities	Thousands annually	Far fewer
Hazardous Materials Incidents	More frequent	Rare and declining



**Stay Off
Stay Safe**



This is a crime scene.

TOUCHDOWN

TOUCHDOWN

**IT CAN TAKE THE LENGTH OF
18 FOOTBALL FIELDS
TO STOP A TRAIN.**

See Tracks? Think Train!



SeeTracksThinkTrain.org





Rail is Important to Rural PA

- *Employment Opportunities*
- *Better for our Environment*
- *Connects Rural PA to the World*
- *Safest Means of Freight Transport*



THANK YOU!



Loni Martz Briner



President



Keystone State Railroad Association



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