



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad  
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

November 12, 2021

Mr. Ian Jefferies  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Association of American Railroads  
425 3rd Street, SW  
Washington DC 20024

Mr. Paul P. Skoutelas  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
American Public Transportation Association  
1300 I Street, NW, Suite 1200 East  
Washington DC 20005

Mr. Chuck Baker  
President  
American Short Line and  
Regional Railroad Association  
50 F Street, NW, Suite 7020  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Messrs. Jefferies, Skoutelas, and Baker:

I am writing this letter regarding a serious safety concern. In March through August of 2021, two certified conductors have sadly lost their lives performing their duties relating to train operations. Furthermore, there has also been several other non-fatal injuries during this time that resulted in serious and life altering injuries, such as amputations and crushing injuries. For example, there have recently been two certified conductors with less than a year of service who suffered amputation after being struck by moving railroad equipment.

Certification programs meeting Federal Safety Standards are meant to ensure that only properly trained and qualified individuals perform safety related duties, thereby reducing the rate and number of accidents and incidents, improving railroad safety. Based upon the recent review of certain Class I railroad conductor certification training programs by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), FRA is concerned with the quality and sufficiency of conductor certification training. Further, it appears that there is a movement within the industry to reduce the duration of conductor certification training for new-hire employees.

In response, I have directed the Operating Practices Division of FRA's Office of Railroad Safety to immediately commence comprehensive reviews of all railroads' conductor certification programs and perform audits of those programs to confirm compliance. A central purpose of FRA's conductor certification regulation (49 CFR Part 242), and the required certification program, is to ensure that new-hire employees being considered for the position of a certified conductor are adequately prepared to safely perform their duties in the dangerous railroad

environment. Accordingly, if any railroad's conductor certification program, or the implementation of that program, is found to be deficient after FRA's review and audit, FRA will direct the railroad to correct the deficiencies.

In the interim, FRA expects all railroads subject to 49 CFR Part 242 to immediately review their conductor certification program to ensure conformance with the regulation, and to ensure that it is sufficient to prepare and protect individuals in performing safety related duties as a certified conductor.

Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Karl Alexy, Associate Administrator for Safety and Chief Safety Officer at [john.alex@dot.gov](mailto:john.alex@dot.gov) or (202) 493-6282. A copy of this letter has been provided to the presidents of labor organizations that represent railroad employees subject to 49 CFR Parts 240 and 242.

Sincerely,



Amit Bose  
Deputy Administrator

cc:  
Mr. Jeremy Ferguson, President, SMART-Transportation Division  
Mr. Dennis Pierce, President, BLET