

# INVESTING IN *U.S.*

# A Transportation Infrastructure Platform for 2020 Presidential Candidates

TRANSPORTATION TRADES DEPARTMENT, AFL-CIO



## SUMMARY

The Rupa Family of Des Moines, Iowa is not wealthy enough to own a car and lives in a part of town that the city's public transportation system cannot afford to serve. As a result, they are forced to walk two miles along a busy highway just to get groceries.

Sadly, the Rupas are far from alone. The plight they face is indicative of much larger problems: the federal government's failure to keep pace with the growing demands placed on our transportation system and infrastructure, and an economy that overwhelmingly favors the wealthy.

[Years of underinvestment](#) in our roads, rail lines, transit systems, airports, and seaports have taken their toll, and it's working families who pay the price — in excruciatingly long lines at airports, inadequate public transit services, and potholed roads and bridges that are no longer safe to travel across. In soul-crushing commutes, ever-tightening pocketbooks, and limited access to good jobs, educational opportunities, and medical care.

The next president of the United States will inherit an infrastructure backlog in the trillions and a transportation system that costs the average family \$3,200 a year in lost time and car repairs, leaves 900,000 jobs on the table annually, and is projected to cost American businesses \$7 trillion in sales by 2025.

Adequately addressing our nation's infrastructure crisis and rebalancing our economy in favor of workers must be more than a campaign talking point. Candidates must clearly demonstrate that they will prioritize repairing decades of neglect while restoring dignity to America's working families. They must show the kind of leadership that understands that urban and rural communities depend on one another, and are both equally deserving of attention, despite having their own unique challenges.

**By adopting the policies outlined in this platform, the next president of the United States can lead the way in improving quality of life for every American, creating and sustaining good, middle-class jobs, and securing America's position as a world economic leader by giving this country the world-class transportation network we deserve.**

## Stabilize the Highway Trust Fund by Increasing the Federal User Fee

Repairing and rebuilding our neglected transportation network starts with securing long-term, stable stream for the [Highway Trust Fund \(HTF\)](#).

Established to help fund our National Highway System, bridges, and public transit systems, the HTF has been insolvent for more than a decade, in large part because the federal gas tax — the user fee that provides most of the trust fund's revenue — has not been increased since 1993 and is not indexed to inflation.

Rather than increase revenues to meet the growing freight and population needs of our nation, lawmakers have spent more than 10 years relying on budget gimmicks, large cash transfers from the general treasury, and 36 short-term extensions of our federal surface transportation program to keep federal highway and transit programs just barely afloat. While ignoring increased pressures on our transportation system, federal underinvestment also leaves states facing growing backlogs of deferred maintenance, which puts commuters at risk and places serious but avoidable economic strain on American families and business. Put simply, the result of federal inaction leaves us trying to pay for 21st-century infrastructure needs on a 1990s budget. This is unacceptable to the American people and should be unacceptable to their elected leaders in Washington, D.C.

We encourage all 2020 candidates to commit to stabilizing the highway trust fund by endorsing an increase to the federal user fee, be that the federal gas tax, a vehicles mile traveled fee, or some other type of mechanism that relies on road users to help support the trust fund.



## Increase Investments for Public Transit

In communities across the country, [public transportation is the vital lifeline](#) people rely on to get to their homes, jobs, schools, and job training programs. But underinvestment that has led to unreliable or inadequate service prevents transit systems from meeting or driving demand. Riders often find bus and subway systems undependable, unpredictable, and in some cases, even dangerous. As a result, our roads become more congested as commuters find alternative methods of getting around. Transit workers themselves are required to do more with less, and often find the demands of their jobs changed by [technological advances](#), with no training programs in place to help them meet those new needs.

[New research](#) shows that commuting time – not education or family structure – is emerging as the strongest factor in determining whether someone can escape poverty, and access to public transportation plays a crucial role in economic mobility. For the millions of Americans who cannot afford a vehicle, a simple bus or subway route can mean the difference between a life of poverty or access to opportunity.

Presidential candidates who care about the health and wellbeing of this country's economy, and the ability of working families to achieve middle-class status, must commit to increasing funding for vital public transportation services.

## Invest in America's Roads and Bridges

Whether it's a brick and mortar store, e-commerce, or agricultural operations, Americans count on a supply chain that moves goods with a high level of precision. An interconnected highway and bridge system is critical to move freight traffic that the United States Department of Transportation anticipates will increase by 40 percent within 25 years.

Sadly, highway spending has come nowhere close to keeping pace with current needs, let alone projected demand. As a result, state-level departments of transportation are forced to balance the needs of new capacity against the pressures of growing repair backlogs – a zero-sum game that affects all Americans, from farmers who rely on highways to get their crops to market to city dwellers who purchase produce shipped in from rural communities.

It is imperative that 2020 presidential candidates recognize the vital role our roads, bridges, and highways play in our national economy, and meet the challenges we face with the kind of robust investments that will take care of maintenance backlogs and allow for increased capacity.





## Invest in Freight and Passenger Rail

The first trains left Baltimore nearly 200 years ago, forging a path through the West and connecting all corners of a burgeoning new country. While much has changed over the last two centuries, the [vital role passenger](#), commuter, and [freight rail](#) play for this country and its economy is as important as ever.

America's freight trains, and the frontline workers who operate and maintain them, move \$174 billion worth of goods and raw materials annually. More than 800,000 Americans rely on commuter rail to get them safely to and from home, work, and school. And communities across the country count on Amtrak and its national network for economic growth and development opportunities, good jobs, and as a lifeline to other segments of our transportation system.

Despite the important role freight and passenger rail has played throughout the history of our country, these industries face threats that could impact our entire economy. Our freight rail

industry, for example, has long made record profits. Despite this success, Wall Street investors are imposing a [dangerous new business model](#) that threatens the integrity of this industry, the good jobs it creates, and opens the door to substantial safety risks for frontline workers and the communities where freight trains operate.

Similarly, Amtrak has repeatedly come under threat by austerity-driven politicians and other anti-government ideologues who want to gut funding for our national passenger rail system. Routes that provide many rural communities with the only viable link to other segments of our transportation network are now being jeopardized by the carrier itself – in the form of reduced service, a degraded passenger experience, and the elimination and [outsourcing of good jobs](#).

2020 candidates must commit to investing in and supporting our commuter and freight rail systems, preserving and expanding Amtrak's national network, and protecting the good jobs found in these industries.

## **Fund Projects Based on Merits, Not Politics**

When Vice President Pence toured damage in America's heartland caused by historic flooding in the spring of 2019, he pledged to work with Republicans and Democrats to ensure farmers and ranchers in Iowa and Nebraska receive the federal funding they need to rebuild. He was right to do so. The roads, bridges, and levies that, for generations, have allowed the Midwest to feed a nation and export food products do not function in a vacuum. Like transit systems in the Northeast or ports on the West Coast, they are all part of a complex, interconnected transportation network that allows this country, its economy, and working families to prosper — and they all deserve federal funding.

Sadly, too many elected leaders have lost sight of this. Instead of choosing to value projects based on their importance to our nation's economy, some politicians have begun valuing projects based on the political landscape of their home states. This dangerous approach to infrastructure jeopardizes the integrity of our national system, undermines America's position as a global economic leader, and harms working families.

2020 presidential contenders must commit to putting the needs of the American people ahead of politics, and uphold the federal government's responsibility to help fund projects that will move us all forward.

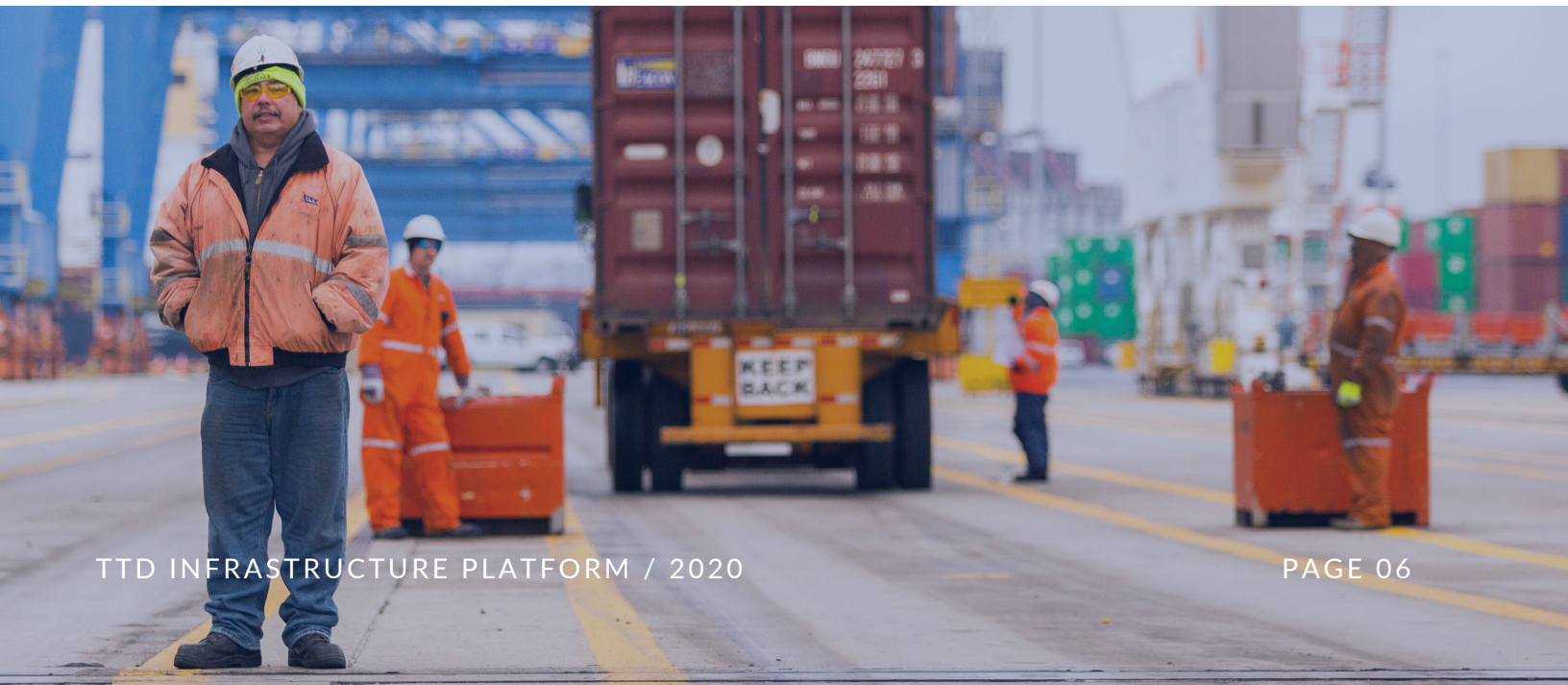
## Invest in Ports and Support Maritime Commerce

A strong maritime industry, an efficient port and harbor system, and a vibrant domestic waterborne commerce sector are all critical to America's economic and national security interests. Presidential candidates should embrace policies that support maritime transportation and the thousands of good jobs created in the seafaring, shipbuilding, and longshore sectors.

U.S. ports should be the envy of the world and are critical to our ability to compete and win in the global marketplace. The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund provides resources for the key dredging projects that deepen ports and harbors to accommodate increasingly large modern vessels. Yet, due to years of budget gimmickry, over \$9 billion in the Fund sits idle, while project needs go unmet. Legislation to fully utilize the Fund would create tremendous opportunities for workers in these sectors, as well as substantial positive economic growth. On-dock improvements must also be a priority, as ports and harbors clamor for increased and improved intermodal connections to better link them to the broader transportation network and communities across the nation.

Longstanding federal policies that promote the U.S-flag fleet including the [Jones Act](#), the [Maritime Security Program](#), and cargo preference laws all deserve support and expansion from the next president of the United States. Taken together, these laws protect the U.S. maritime industry from unfair foreign competition. These laws also fulfill key national security needs, as these same mariners provide irreplaceable sealift capability to the military in times of war or humanitarian crisis. Candidates should also support policies that seek to grow the sector, such as the increased use of [underutilized waterways for domestic shipping](#).

Any serious approach to our transportation network and infrastructure must include the maritime industry and its workforce.





## Give Our Aviation System the Support it Deserves

The United States has the most sophisticated aviation system in the world—and one that plays a central role in our national economy. Two million passengers fly on 70,000 flights every single day in America. Aviation supports nearly 12 million jobs and over \$1.5 trillion in total economic activity. Yet, an industry that is so critical to so much of our world today is operating on outdated technology and infrastructure that can barely keep up with demand.

Every day, the men and women who keep our aviation system safe and secure – including flight attendants, pilots, air traffic controllers, gate agents, inspectors and safety specialists, mechanics, and transportation security officers – are asked to do more with less, and it's only going to get worse. By 2034, U.S. airlines will carry 1.2 billion passengers per year.

[Dangerous government shutdowns](#), unpredictable funding levels, and staffing shortages have all stunted a system that, for years, has struggled to keep up with growing demand. NextGen modernization projects — which are needed to upgrade our air traffic control system from WWII-era technology —require consistent, dedicated, and adequate funding. In addition to technological upgrades, we need to invest in our nation's airports in order to accommodate the continued growth of the industry. These types of investments will increase the efficiency, reduce waste, and allow for greater job growth.

2020 candidates who care about the future of this country, growing the economy, and creating a healthy middle class must take seriously the challenges faced by our aviation industry, and commit the resources to commercial aviation that this sector needs.

## Commit to Creating and Protecting Good, Middle-class Jobs and Enhancing Workers' Rights

As we attempt to meet our transportation needs, we cannot ignore the fact that America today is at a crossroads. Unemployment is low, productivity is at an all-time high, and corporations are raking in profits like never before. Despite this, too many working families are struggling to reach and maintain a middle-class lifestyle. The introduction of new technologies, the gross misclassification of employees, and the emergence of the on-demand economy are changing the nature of work itself. Meanwhile, the most important tool working people have to get ahead – union membership – is being attacked and vilified.





The next president of the United States has two choices: a future for this country where powerful corporations and wealthy CEOs remain unchecked in their power. Or a future that puts working people first, where corporations are held accountable, finding a job that pays a living wage is not hard to do, and emerging technologies are used to enhance work and make workplaces safer.

The second option is possible, and the right investments in our transportation system and infrastructure are part of the path forward. Strong federal investments in these sectors create the kinds of good, middle-class jobs we can be proud of. By investing in our infrastructure, we have an opportunity to rebuild our country and breathe new life into the American middle class.

That's because much of the transportation industry is heavily unionized, ensuring workers in these fields earn fair wages, are safe at work, and have a say in workplace policies and procedures. Unlike jobs in the growing on-demand economy — including those found in Amazon warehouses or through apps like Grubhub — positions found in transportation and infrastructure are more likely to pay living wages, come with benefits like health insurance and retirement plans, and be stable.

Furthermore, when strong labor protections are paired with infrastructure spending, we can ensure

tax-payer dollars are used to support fair wages and safe working conditions for frontline workers. And, as we spend trillions rebuilding and repairing our crumbling infrastructure, ignoring adjacent opportunities to grow our manufacturing sector would be foolish. That's why 2020 candidates must also commit to pair infrastructure funding with smart Buy America and procurement rules, which will ensure buses, trains, steel, and other materials used in transportation and infrastructure are manufactured in the U.S.

Finally, with as many as three million frontline transportation jobs on the line, the next president of the United States must make a commitment to ensure the introduction of new technologies is used to enhance work and improve safety, not steamroll the rights of working people and put the public at risk. This starts with ensuring workers, and the unions that represent them, have a say in how and when emerging technologies are deployed and used, and putting programs in place to help mitigate any job displacement that may occur.

## **Taking Action on Infrastructure**

**Transportation labor asks all 2020 presidential candidates to endorse the policies outlined in this platform. By taking seriously the needs of America's working families and meeting our infrastructure crisis head on, we can breathe new life into the American middle-class, and create the kind of economic stability and world-class infrastructure we all require and deserve.**

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## SNAPSHOT: THE IMPACT ON WORKING FAMILIES

**The next president of the United States will inherit a transportation infrastructure maintenance and repair backlog in the trillions. This is a snapshot of how underinvestment in transportation impacts working families in America today:**

### IOWA

The Rupa family of Des Moines, Iowa cannot afford a car and lives in an area of the city where bus lines don't run. As a result, they are forced to walk two miles along a busy highway just to get groceries. (Des Moines Register, 2017)

### MINNESOTA

Youth from disadvantaged communities in Minneapolis and Chicago, who want to work and are qualified, have no way of getting to where jobs are located because public transportation in their neighborhoods is so lacking. (University of Minnesota, 2016)

### ILLINOIS

Chicago handles one-fourth of the nation's freight rail traffic, but outdated grade crossings once led to delays and congestion that caused trains to spend 30 hours traversing the region. Without the strong partnership of the federal government through the CREATE project, this bottleneck would have only grown worse and put serious strain on the nation's economy. (Progressive Railroading, 2017)

### WEST VIRGINIA

Residents of Martinsburg, West Virginia, have been forced to consider uprooting their families after funding for the commuter train – their lifeline to good jobs and a middle-class income – was jeopardized last year. (West Virginia Public Broadcasting, 2019)

## NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

The Portal Bridge, a 108-year-old swing bridge, carries trains over the Hackensack River, between New York City and Newark, and pivots to allow boats to pass by. The bridge is so old it often fails to lock into place, creating a chokepoint that disrupts travel for tens of thousands.

When this happens, an Amtrak employee is dispatched to physically hammer the bridge back in to place. To prevent rush-hour commuting headaches, local officials and the Coast Guard recently agreed to ban maritime traffic near the bridge during morning and evening commuting times. (NJ.com, 2018)

The busiest rail corridor in the country supports 30 percent of the nation's jobs and 20 percent of our GDP, yet is forced to rely on infrastructure that predates the First World War. Without federal funding for the Gateway project, Amtrak will be forced to take tunnels out of commission one at a time, reducing capacity in the area to 25 percent and costing our national economy \$16 billion over four years. (Bloomberg, 2018)

## PENNSYLVANIA

A 56-year old Philadelphia woman was hospitalized after the bus she was riding on fell into a 20-foot deep sinkhole. Since 2015, the city of Philadelphia has logged more than 17,000 reports of sinkholes, all caused by aging and inadequate infrastructure. (Post Gazette, 2019)

## COLORADO

2019 marked the first time in Colorado's history that money from the state's general fund was used to help cities and counties to help pave local roads. Many lawmakers said they felt they had no choice, citing a transportation funding crisis and a lack of help from the federal government. (Colorado Sun, 2019)

In 2004, voters in Denver approved an expansion of the city's transit system. Low ridership and lack of funding have caused the transit agency to stop the expansion and contemplate cuts to service that will impact regular riders as well as Rockies and Broncos sports fans. (Denver Post, 2020)



## IDAHO

By 2021, more than half of Idaho's 1,800 bridges will be beyond their intended lifespan. State officials say bridges are aging faster than they can be repaired because of lack of funding. (Idaho Press, 2015)

## GEORGIA

At the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta – the busiest airport in the world – travelers often endure wait times between two and three hours. Many regularly take to Twitter to chronicle their frustrations and blow off steam. (WSBTv, 2019)

In Columbus, the city's bus fleet is so old that drivers have come to expect their buses to break down in the middle of their routes. One driver, Lakeia Whatley Averett is even being hailed a hero after she pulled passengers to safety when the bus she was riding on caught fire. Averett blames the fire on the age and condition of the vehicle she was driving. (Ledger-Enquirer, 2019)

## MICHIGAN

Michigan officials were forced to unexpectedly close the Grosse Ile Bridge – the only free connection between mainland Michigan to an island in Lake Erie – after it was discovered the 50-year-old bridge could no longer support the weight of vehicles. The bridge is now reopened, but the emergency closure caused financial and time headaches for tens of thousands who cross the bridge daily. (Detroit Free Press, 2019)

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Serious traffic headaches and safety issues from highways in desperate need of expansion have forced commuters to begin looking for work elsewhere – leaving county officials in Fort Mill worried that recent economic growth they have enjoyed could be brought to a grinding halt. (Herald Online, 2018)

## ARKANSAS

Lack of federal funding for infrastructure projects in Arkansas has directly impacted the state's employment rate. The Bureau of Labor Statistics ranked the Little Rock metropolitan area fourth out of 358 in the number of construction jobs lost nationwide between October 2015 and October 2016. (FasterBetterSafer.org, 2019)

## TEXAS

Due to staffing shortages, air traffic controllers at the Dallas/Forth Worth International Airport, and other airports across the country, are forced to work six days a week. (Dallas Morning News, 2013)

## MISSISSIPPI

Outdated bridges in Mississippi were deemed such an immediate danger to the traveling public that the governor declared a state of emergency and temporarily closed nearly 400 bridges across the state. During that state of emergency, residents were forced to drive through flooded fields to get to and from work; those suffering from chronic illnesses like diabetes were unable to have their medications delivered to them; and emergency vehicles struggled to reach citizens in need. (NBC News, 2018)

## OREGON

Increased freight and commuter traffic, paired with a lack of infrastructure funding, has led to Portland residents regularly experiencing rush-hour periods that last six hours or more. During their commutes, some drivers average no more than 29 miles per hour on state highways. Costs in fuel, lost time, and freight delays come to \$1,648 per resident per year. (Oregon Live, 2019)

## HAWAII

Residents of Hau'ula on the Island of Oahu say they have literally watched roads in their community deteriorate and "disappear" from erosion as the state struggles to keep up with repairs. The problem is so bad that some say they no longer engage in activities they used to enjoy – like fishing or going to the beach – out of fear for their safety. (Hawaii News Now, 2020)

## MARYLAND

In 2015, a Prince George's County grandmother received the shock of her life when a chunk of concrete fell from a bridge she was driving under and landed on the hood of her car. The bridge was 50 years old. (Baltimore Sun, 2015)

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Aging infrastructure and recent flooding have caused roads on the Cheyenne River Reservation to deteriorate so much that residents are afraid to drive on them. Some have even raised concerns about sending children to school on buses that rely on the roads as part of their regular routes. Residents of small towns like Emory, population 450, have raised concerns about the ability to generate enough funding to repair crumbling infrastructure. (Argus Leader, 2019)

## NEBRASKA

Age combined with the increasing size and weight of agricultural equipment has placed a significant strain on rural bridges across Nebraska. Without adequate funding to replace or repair them, the state has been forced to close many rural bridges, forcing farmers to drive upwards of ten miles out of their way just to cross a creek or small river. (Nebraska Legislature, 2014)

## MISSOURI

With the help of a \$12 million federal grant, the city of Joplin was able to reconnect two neighbors divided physically and economically by train tracks. Fifteen trains a day now travel up to 50 mph through the city, and it is estimated that number will rise to 29 trains a day within 20 years. The grade separation, funded by federal dollars, has literally reconnected communities that, for years, have stood divided on two sides of the tracks. (The Maneater, 2012)

## CALIFORNIA

Without the federal grant money it qualifies for, more than 2,400 skilled trades workers currently employed by California High Speed Rail could lose their jobs, and the state could lose an additional 20,000 new jobs related to the project. (California High Speed Rail Authority, 2019)

## MAINE

Maine's deteriorating rural roads have begun causing so much damage to vehicles that truckers for Maine's logging industry, which pumps nearly \$1 billion a year into the state's economy, are refusing to work for companies that use damaged roads. (WMTW 8, 2019)

## ARIZONA

Leaders of Arizona's rural communities say that the state's deferral of badly needed infrastructure repairs is restraining the potential for economic growth and prosperity in their parts of the state. To demonstrate just how severe the problem is, a county supervisor shared a distressing image of a school bus stuck in the mud on the side of a deteriorating road in his county during a recent legislative hearing. Another expert estimated that, at current funding levels, it would take 1600 years to complete the 60 vital infrastructure projects they have identified in Arizona's rural communities. (Lake Powell Life, 2020)

## MASSACHUSETTS

Because of a lack of infrastructure investment in Massachusetts, particularly for public transit, it takes longer for people to travel on mass transit between Springfield and Boston than it does to travel between Springfield and the capital cities of New York, Rhode Island and Connecticut. (Boston Herald, 2019)

## VERMONT

In 2011, Hurricane Irene caused \$250 million in infrastructure damage in Vermont, leaving residents of 13 different Vermont communities stranded for days and even weeks after the storm and requiring supplies to be delivered by helicopter. Years later, the damage has still not been fully repaired in rural areas due to funding shortfalls. (VT Digger, 2020)

## WISCONSIN

New investments in passenger rail in Minnesota will also benefit neighboring Wisconsin, opening up funds to expand the number of daily round-trip trains between Milwaukee and Chicago from seven to 10. (Wisconsin Examiner, 2020)

## VIRGINIA

A surge of containers from large ships regularly puts the port of Virginia over capacity, creating traffic jams 13 lanes wide and 10 trucks deep that can take eight hours to clear. When this happens, port truck drivers, who often work as independent contractors, lose out on significant pay and miss spending time with their families. (Wall Street Journal, 2015)



## TTD Member Unions

Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA)  
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)  
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA)  
American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA)  
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS)  
Communications Workers of America (CWA)  
International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)  
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)  
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers (IBB)  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)  
International Longshoremen's Association (ILA)  
International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots, ILA (MM&P)  
International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE)  
Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)  
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA)  
National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA)  
National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC)  
National Conference of Firemen and Oilers, SEIU (NCFO, SEIU)  
National Federation of Public and Private Employees (NFOPAPE)  
Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU)  
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)  
Sailors' Union of the Pacific (SUP)  
Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART)  
SMART-Transportation Division  
Transportation Communications Union/ IAM (TCU)  
Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)  
UNITE HERE!  
United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)  
United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)  
United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union (USW)

*These 33 labor organizations are members of and represented by the TTD.*



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