

CITY OF NEW HAVEN, INDIANA

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

September 15, 2026

United States Congressman

Re: New Haven Railroad Crossing Blockages — Request for Congressional Assistance

Dear Congressman:

I am writing to request your assistance with an issue that is having a meaningful and recurring impact on residents not just of New Haven, Indiana, but impacts Hoosiers and Americans: prolonged and unpredictable railroad crossing blockages.

Our office reviewed **464 constituent comments** concerning the problem. Taken together, these comments document firsthand experiences involving emergency response, school transportation, employment, healthcare appointments, family responsibilities, traffic, neighborhood access, and local businesses.

The constituent message is not opposition to freight rail. Residents understand that trains are an important part of our transportation system and that short delays are an ordinary part of living alongside railroad infrastructure. Their concern is specifically with trains that stop or move very slowly while occupying public crossings for extended and unpredictable periods.

The comments include reports of emergency vehicles being delayed; school buses and parents being held up; children attempting to go around, under, or over stopped trains; workers arriving late or being unable to reach work; medical appointments being missed; and residents making lengthy detours because multiple crossings can be blocked at the same time.

The economic impact is also a concern. A New Haven business owner reported that trains stopping for an hour or more can cut off access to the downtown business corridor, affecting customers and businesses while also creating public-safety concerns.

What concerns me most as mayor is the combination of **duration, frequency, unpredictability, and limited alternatives**. A resident may encounter a blocked crossing without knowing whether the delay will last five minutes or several hours. That uncertainty makes it difficult to plan for work, school, childcare, medical appointments, deliveries, and other time-sensitive responsibilities.

I respectfully ask that you help New Haven bring together the railroad, appropriate federal transportation authorities, state transportation officials, emergency responders, and local government to identify practical solutions.

Areas for Congressional attention include:

- **Emergency access** — evaluate procedures and infrastructure that preserve reliable routes for police, fire, and EMS.
- **Prolonged blockages** — explore operational practices or appropriate standards that could reduce excessively long occupancy of public crossings.
- **Real-time information** — support reliable public notification of blocked crossings and, where feasible, expected clearance.
- **Data** — encourage systematic tracking of blockage frequency, duration, location, and simultaneous crossings.
- **Infrastructure** — evaluate grade separation, overpasses, underpasses, and other long-term engineering solutions.
- **Coordination** — convene the railroad, local and state officials, schools, emergency responders, and federal agencies.

New Haven is not asking Congress to stop the trains. We are asking for help finding a workable balance in which **freight can move, roads can remain accessible, emergency responders can reach every part of the community, and residents can safely conduct their daily lives.**

The enclosed two-page constituent-impact brief summarizes the concerns documented in the 464 comments. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue with you or your staff and to participate in a coordinated effort toward both immediate operational improvements and long-term infrastructure solutions.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Indiana.

Respectfully,

Steve McMichael

Mayor

City of New Haven, Indiana

Full copies of constituent comments are available upon request.