

# Freight Rail's Positive Impact on America

**Key Takeaway:** Freight railroads make modern-day America possible. They power economic activity, connect the supply chain, drive the economy, support high-paying jobs, help combat climate change and provide the literal foundation for passenger rail services like Amtrak.

Freight railroads form the backbone of the thriving U.S. economy. Serving manufacturers, businesses, energy companies, and farmers, freight rail generates widespread economic activity. Billions of dollars in annual investments by railroads have a profound impact on various U.S. industries, creating high-paying jobs, supporting additional roles, connecting industries and consumers to the global market, and fostering local community growth.

This investment not only results in significant cost savings for taxpayers but also plays a crucial role in transporting goods that touch every aspect of daily life, from the materials in homes to the food on tables, cars in driveways and technology in hands. Passenger trains, a vital part of the transportation network, enable millions of people to commute to work, contributing to the affordability of goods.

## Powered by private investments.

From 1980 to 2022, America's freight railroads [spent about \\$780 billion](#) — averaging well over \$23 billion a year over the past five years — on capital expenditures and maintenance expenses to maintain the safest and most efficient freight rail network in the world. As markets, technologies and the environment have evolved over time, so has freight rail spending. Each investment is a carefully chosen decision backed by data and expert insights to bolster network safety, enhance efficiency, fuel business growth, meet customer expectations and fortify the network against the effects of climate change.

## Solving for climate change.

As global emissions rise annually, urgent action and strategic policies for a net-zero economy are crucial. Freight railroads are the most fuel-efficient way to move goods over land, transporting one ton of freight nearly 500 miles on a gallon of fuel.

Engaging in technology, operational, and collaborative efforts, they work to reduce their already small share of greenhouse gas emissions from their yards and locomotives. All North American Class I railroads have approved targets with the Science Based Targets initiative, committed to ambitious climate action and [mitigating climate change impacts.](#)

## Connecting the supply chain.

Railroads play a vital role in sustaining America's economy by implementing strategic measures to maintain a consistent flow of freight within the complex global [supply chain](#). By expanding network capacity, growing the workforce and fostering strong partnerships throughout the supply chain, railroads enable the efficient movement of goods across the country and worldwide.

Freight rail's efficient movement of goods is also critical to growing [state economies](#). In a typical year, U.S. freight railroads move around 1.6 billion tons across nearly 140,000 miles throughout 49 states and the District of Columbia.

## Providing some of America's safest and best-paid jobs.

Freight rail employees are [highly skilled professionals](#) who are among the best-compensated workers in the nation. In 2022, Class I freight rail employee compensation, including benefits, averaged about \$143,000 per year. Always prioritizing safety, freight railroads have significantly reduced employee injuries. And

## Moving Chicago

Chicago's location in the center of America is as important as the human heart in the body. For 150 years, Chicago has remained the nation's busiest rail hub. All six U.S. Class I railroads operate there, as do many non-Class I railroads. As freight rail volumes and demand for passenger rail service continue to rise, Chicago has also become the largest U.S. rail chokepoint.

The [Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency \(CREATE\)](#) Program is the gold standard in public-private partnerships. The program enhances transportation efficiency to move more people and goods while reducing congestion, improving air quality, and promoting economic growth in Chicago, the nation's busiest rail hub.

## Supporting Amtrak

Three types of rail systems (intercity passenger, commuter and freight) operate on the national rail network. Together, these trains help deliver economic growth, support job creation, provide crucial environmental benefits and increase our nation's productivity and competitiveness. Freight railroads provide 70% of the train-miles [operated by Amtrak](#), providing the literal foundation for this important passenger rail service.