ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN RAILROADS

RAILROADS OPPOSE THE MANIFEST MODERNIZATION ACT

Key Facts

- Railroads move 1.5 billion tons of goods across 135,000 miles of track each year.
- Rail shipments crossing the border are 100% screened by CBP before entering the U.S.
- Public manifest disclosure could expose sensitive shipment data, increasing security, cargo theft, and supply chain risks.

Railroads safely and efficiently move 1.5 billion tons of goods over 135,000 miles of track each year, including everything from sneakers to milk to chemicals to defense-related shipments. While nearly 38% of U.S. rail traffic is associated with international trade, must of the cross-border shipments moved on railroads are USMCA-related, including bulk goods, component parts, and finished products like automobiles.

As a common carrier, railroads are required to move more sensitive and potentially hazardous materials compared to other modes of transportation. Given the nature of how the rail industry operates, those sensitive goods can move over the same infrastructure at regular intervals. It is important to keep information about what is moving along the rail network secure and private to preserve the safety of our workers, customers, and communities.

Railroads work with appropriate federal agencies to ensure that these goods securely move into and out of the country. Under current law, railroads are required to provide a complete, accurate manifest to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) before cargo enters or exits the U.S., including information about the carrier, consignee, cargo description, arrival information, and hazardous materials included in the shipment. This system ensures that CBP knows when, where, and how goods are entering or leaving the country through the U.S. rail network while preserving sensitive commercial and security information.

Unlike other modes of transportation, railroad shipments are 100% screened by CBP when they cross the border. Railroads work directly with CBP at land ports of entry to screen and inspect every rail car that comes across the border. These processes include high tech screening portals and scanners and first inspection of the train by CBP and railroad police in closed secure railyards before a train even enters the country.

Legislative efforts like the Manifest Modernization Act that require railroads to publicly disclose manifest information put supply chain fluidity and national security at risk.

A one-size-fits-all approach fails to reflect the rail industry's unique operations, security procedures, and sensitive shipments.

- **Security Risks:** Legislation without a requirement to redact sensitive commercial or security information, such as shipment patterns and the presence of sensitive commodities like military assets or hazardous materials, creates a security risk. While CBP currently provides an online portal for ocean carriers to request additional confidentiality, the speed with which railroads move goods over the border and the sheer number of sensitive shipments moving on the railroads will create administrative burdens on railroads and CBP to keep information private.

- **Cargo Theft Risks:** Organized cargo theft has increased significantly in recent years, with criminals using sophisticated tactics to target freight rail networks. At least one Class I railroad has reported that transnational criminal organizations are using data brokers to purchase railroad manifests and use the information to identify and target specific rail shipments down to the exact car. This amendment would make the information publicly available at no cost, putting more shipments at risk when railroads already saw more than 75,000 theft incidents valued at over $200 million in losses in 2025, a 50% increase year-over-year.

- **Operational Complexity and International Coordination:** Unlike other modes, freight movements on the railroads frequently involve multiple carriers with cargo handed off from one carrier to another as it moves across the country. Cargo crossing U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico also have different data disclosure regulations and requirements. Harmonizing these international procedures and gathering, verifying, and standardizing this data to comply with public disclosure requirements designed for ocean carriers with completely different operating standards could create unnecessary delays and supply chain disruption.

Railroads support efforts to address issues like counterfeit goods and unfair labor practices around the world. Making these manifests public creates more risks for the supply chain, transportation workers, and the communities where we operate.