



A bold voice for transportation workers

March 24, 2023

John Karl Alexy
Associate Administrator for Railroad Safety
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Petition for Extension of Waiver of Compliance, ARRC
Docket No. FRA-2008-0161**

Dear Mr. Alexy:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I am pleased to respond to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) notice regarding the Alaska Railroad Corporation's (ARRC) petition to extend its existing waiver of compliance regarding qualification of mechanical inspectors for its passenger service between Talkeetna and Hurricane Gulch, AK. TTD consists of 37 affiliated unions representing the totality of rail labor, including rail workers who operate on these lines.¹ We ask that the FRA deny this waiver extension petition for the reasons below.

Specifically, TTD is not convinced by ARRC's explanation for the need of this waiver. In its 2008 application, ARRC stated:

The requirement for a "qualified maintenance person" to complete the required "daily exterior inspection" and of this equipment at Talkeetna (sic) would require either the assignment of a "qualified maintenance person" at that location or the travel of an employee 224 miles each day from Anchorage. Neither of these options is attractive. In the first, there is not enough work to support a position in Talkeetna and in the second, it would require an employee to be driving on a busy highway for a majority of their workday presenting a substantial safety concern.

¹ Attached is a list of TTD's affiliated unions.

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Greg Regan, President / Shari Semelsberger, Secretary-Treasurer



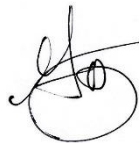
We do not agree that highway driving is any more dangerous than the routine work duties performed by qualified maintenance personnel (QMP). Further, and more fundamentally, if there is a need for daily exterior inspections and Class I brake tests, there is a need for at least one QMP. Stating that there is not enough work for a QMP is an excuse that railroads use to avoid providing adequate training and paying workers for the additional expertise and training needed to perform their jobs.

If a QMP were assigned to the Talkeetna location, that worker could perform additional duties that would support ARRC. As the Transportation Communication Union, Local 6067, stated in 2009, "...if a QMP were stationed in Talkeetna, we believe that in addition to the passenger 238.303(c) & 238.313(d) functions being fulfilled, this person could further support the railroad and fill valuable role and freight repairs at Talkeetna such as work trains or as a mobile repair person to support the surrounding area taking care of freight cars set out awaiting needed service and repair."²

For these reasons, FRA should deny ARRC's waiver petition. As a regulatory agency, FRA is not in a place to provide waivers to railroads to allow them to operate as is most "attractive" to their bottom lines. The FRA must judge each waiver entirely on the basis of safety merits – and in this case, there is no convincing evidence to show that a QMP could not be assigned to these tasks.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with FRA on this and other issues in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Regan', written over a circular stamp or mark.

Greg Regan
President

² FRA-2008-0161-0003