



Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

September 2, 2025

Kyle D. Fields
Chief Counsel
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Amendments to Brake System Maintenance and Inspection Requirements
Docket No. FRA-2025-0130**

Mr. Fields:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I am pleased to respond to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) regarding amendments to its existing brake system maintenance and inspection requirements. TTD consists of 39 affiliate unions representing workers in all modes of transportation, including freight rail workers who will be directly affected by this proposed rule.¹ We respectfully request that the FRA rescind its proposed rule. In addition, we endorse the comments filed in this docket by our affiliates, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD), and the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen Division (BRC) of the Transportation Communications Union (TCU/IAM).

Background

The amendments proposed in this NPRM would codify certain brake system and maintenance waivers. These waivers pertain to existing relief granted to certain railroads from regulatory requirements under 49 CFR parts 229, 232, and 238. The FRA argues that the codification of these waivers would also eliminate the need for railroads to submit waiver petitions from the various applicable regulations and FRA's review and approval burden for the waiver petitions and extension requests.

Section 229.29 Air Brake System Calibration, Maintenance, and Testing

The waiver in Docket Number FRA-2005-21613 that will be codified by this NPRM involves locomotive Electronic Air Brake (EAB) systems manufactured by New York Air Brake (CCB-1,

¹ Attached is a complete list of the unions affiliated with TTD.

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Greg Regan, President / Shari Semelsberger, Secretary-Treasurer

CCB-2, and CCB-26), and Wabtec (EPIC 3102D2, EPIC 2, and FastBrake). Approximately 17,000 locomotives in the United States, and approximately 70 percent of the Class I operating fleet, are equipped with these types of brakes. During the course of the existing waiver, the test committee overseeing implementation of the relief concluded that the periodic inspection period interval for these brake systems could be extended from 1,472 days to 3,680 days. TTD opposes this change as extending test intervals is not in the interest of safety for employees, passengers, or the general public.

In our view, it is essential for these types of changes to be considered by the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC). We are concerned that the Department of Transportation (DOT) recently suspended many federal transportation advisory committees and terminated current committee members, including members of the RSAC. We urge the FRA to swiftly reconstitute these committees, like the RSAC, and restore labor representation in order to resume the consideration of important issues like those raised in this docket.

Extending periodic inspection intervals is a decision that will have impacts across freight railroad crafts, beyond maintenance and inspection personnel to include operating crafts, as well. Given the widespread use of the EAB systems involved in this waiver, extending the periodic inspection intervals deserves additional scrutiny and consideration by a diverse body like the RSAC. No action should be taken to extend these intervals unless and until the RSAC concludes doing so is in the interest of safety and develops specific recommendations as to what these intervals should be. At this point, TTD must object to the FRA's proposal.

Section 238.309 Periodic Brake Equipment Maintenance

The FRA also proposes to extend brake equipment service life and maintenance intervals for periodic cleaning, repairing, and testing of air brake equipment, based on industry and FRA experience implementing test waivers. Again, TTD objects to the FRA's proposal to extend maintenance and testing intervals for air brake equipment. The data gathered from test waivers and industry experience may be useful, but must be considered collectively by the stakeholder groups, including labor, that will be impacted by the changes. The RSAC should be tasked with evaluating the data gathered by the test committee and developing recommendations with regard to testing, maintenance, and inspection intervals for brake equipment.

Conclusion

We are concerned about the FRA's reliance on test committee data without proper consultation and consideration by stakeholder groups, particularly the RSAC. For this reason, we respectfully request that the FRA rescind this proposed rule and establish an RSAC task specific to the evaluation of air brake periodic testing, inspection, and maintenance intervals.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proceeding and look forward to working with the FRA in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Greg Regan', written over a circular line.

Greg Regan
President