

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 15, 2024

Alan Shaw
President and CEO
Norfolk Southern Corporation
650 W. Peachtree Street NW
Atlanta, GA 30308

Dear Mr. Shaw:

We write today with several questions about Norfolk Southern's safety and labor practices, specifically how they will impact residents in Altoona, Pennsylvania and the hundreds of skilled workers in your nearby Juniata Locomotive Shop. We appreciate your prompt attention to these questions.

On December 20, 2023, a Norfolk Southern train derailed in Logan Township, just outside the City of Altoona. Fortunately, no one was injured and no hazardous materials spilled as a result of the derailment. However, we have heard from local leadership, including the Mayor of Altoona and the Altoona Fire Chief, that Norfolk Southern's information sharing was insufficient, raising concerns about what might happen in the event of a more serious derailment.

Norfolk Southern may feel that less damaging derailments are not worth flagging for area leaders but developing and maintaining trust between railroads and local communities is critical. To some residents of Altoona and other Pennsylvania communities like it, any derailment creates a sense of fear that what happened in East Palestine, Ohio and Darlington Township, Pennsylvania may happen to them and their families.

Additionally, we have been told by Altoona area leadership that communication with Norfolk Southern has not always been an issue. We understand that Norfolk Southern used to have an employee based in Altoona whose job included communicating with local leadership, but that position has since been eliminated.

To that end, we would like to receive answers to the following questions:

- How does Norfolk Southern determine when or if to notify area officials about a derailment?
- How does Norfolk Southern determine which area officials to notify?
- Does Norfolk Southern plan to re-hire someone based in Altoona to facilitate better community outreach?
- How has Norfolk Southern improved its community-based outreach, particularly surrounding derailments, since the East Palestine derailment?

We also have serious concerns about safety protections in and around the Altoona Locomotive Shop. The recent profit-driven operational changes made under the banner of “precision scheduled railroading” (PSR) have translated to longer trains and fewer staff, raising concerns about both safety of rail workers and the quality of service for the companies that depend on railroads to move their products. Even after the derailment, your company has continued to pursue “Precision Scheduled Railroading 2.0” or “PSR 2.0,” turning a blind eye to the harmful impacts to safety and to workers from the first round of PSR.

The first iteration of PSR had devastating impacts on rail workers throughout the country, and workers in Altoona felt it acutely. In May of 2019, Norfolk Southern laid off 50 workers at the Juniata Locomotive Shop.¹ Then, in September, the company laid off 100 more workers², and only two months after that, Norfolk Southern laid off yet another 95 workers to “streamline operations.”³ Two years later, in July of 2021, Norfolk Southern continued these harsh cuts, laying off 86 more workers at the Juniata shop.⁴

That is at least 331 workers laid off in just over two years. While we are told that some of these workers have been brought back, the total number of workers at the Juniata Locomotive Shop is still far below where it was before PSR began. Additionally, we take serious issue with this practice of hiring, firing, and re-hiring workers rather than maintaining a consistent workforce. Skilled rail workers are not pawns in Norfolk Southern’s perpetual quest to maximize profits - they are people with families who deserve fairness and stability.

In addition to the devastating impacts to these rail workers and their families, we have grave concerns about what further cuts under PSR 2.0 might mean for safety along our Nation’s railroads. We are worried that fewer workers at the Juniata Locomotive Shop and others like it will mean more work piled onto the shoulders of the remaining employees. From conversations with rail workers, we understand that the first round of PSR has already led to Norfolk Southern putting pressure on workers to cut corners, which has jeopardized safety. For example, we have heard that management has given critical repair work intended for one craft of workers to another, undercutting established work agreements that ensure work is performed by those with the proper training to do that work safely. This includes having machinists do welding work that is supposed to go to boilermakers under established work agreements.

Therefore, we ask that you clarify:

- What staffing changes do you intend to make at the Juniata Locomotive Shop, whether under PSR 2.0 or otherwise?

¹ Travis Gary, “About 50 Employees Laid Off at Norfolk Southern in Altoona,” *WJAC*, May 22, 2019, <https://wjactv.com/news/local/about-50-employees-laid-off-at-norfolk-southern-in-altoona>.

² Walt Frank, “Norfolk Southern Cuts 100,” *Altoona Mirror*, September 4, 2019, <https://www.altoona-mirror.com/news/local-news/2019/09/norfolk-southern-cuts-100/>

³ William Kibler, “New Norfolk Southern Layoffs Worry Workers,” *Altoona Mirror*, November 6, 2019, <https://www.altoonamirror.com/news/local-news/2019/11/new-norfolk-southern-layoffs-worry-workers/>

⁴ William Kibler, “NS Furloughs 86 at Juniata Shop,” *Altoona Mirror*, July 10, 2021, <https://www.altoonamirror.com/news/local-news/2021/07/norfolk-southern-furloughs-86-employees-at-juniata-shop/>

- Will you ensure that repair and mechanical work at the Juniata Locomotive Shop and other locomotive shops is given to the proper workers with training in that specific craft? If yes, how will you do so?
- Will Norfolk Southern provide an opportunity for worker input on decisions about operational changes that involve tradeoffs between safety and efficiency? If yes, how will you do so?

Norfolk Southern plays an important role in the economy of the City of Altoona and the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, creating jobs for skilled workers and moving the goods that power our economy. However, that importance does not supplant the company's obligation to be a responsible member of the community and treat its workers with fairness.

Thank you for your timely response to these questions. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact our staff.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator