



Columbus County
Economic Development Commission

US Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration
Attn: Office of Program Delivery
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20509

July 18, 2018

Re: Support for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project & CRISI grant application

Dear Sir or Madame,

As the Economic Development Director for Columbus County, I receive inquiries from industries interested in our area every month. A large number of these inquiries are from companies seeking sites that are served by rail. Most are also looking for sites that have good access to the State Ports at Wilmington. As a result of the numerous inquiries we receive from companies needing both rail and port access, we have been actively partnering with the City of Wilmington in their efforts to streamline rail access into the Port of Wilmington as well as improving access to the Port by the RJ Corman Railroad Company here in Columbus County.

The RJ Corman Railroad Company and the Columbus County Economic Development Commission are actively working with the Rail Division of the North Carolina Department of Transportation to evaluate the costs associated with reconnecting the existing short line rail service that currently ends in Whiteville, North Carolina to its former connection point in Brunswick County near Malmo, North Carolina. This reconnection would give a direct connection to the Port of Wilmington for industries located in Marion County and Horry County in South Carolina, as well as to Columbus County and Western Brunswick County industries in North Carolina. Efficiency, however, will still be critical to all rail users in the region. Moving freight into and out of the Port of Wilmington by rail in an efficient manner is extremely important, and this is where the rail realignment efforts underway by the City of Wilmington can have a significant impact upon economic development for the entire region.

We fully support the City of Wilmington's effort to secure funding for the PE/NEPA track of the CRISI grant opportunity so this important and transformative project can move forward to benefit all of Southeastern NC, and ultimately, our neighbors in northeastern South Carolina. Please do not hesitate to contact our office should you have any questions. We look forward to seeing this important project move forward!

My Best Regards,

Gary A. Lanier, Ed.D., Director