

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

July 18, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing in support of Progressive Rail's application to the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program. Progressive Rail is seeking \$24,000,000 for its St. Paul & Pacific Northwest Mainline Infrastructure Upgrade project to upgrade and rehabilitate 83 miles of mainline track through installation of 20 miles of new rail and 85,000 new wood crossties.

Progressive Rail is a short line railroad company that operates a family of 11 small railroad lines and is focused on providing first mile-last mile services. The St Paul & Pacific Northwest (STPP) Railroad is an international short line operated by Progressive Rail in Washington's northeastern corner. The STPP Railroad runs through seven cities and villages in Stevens County, a rural and impoverished county of 46,000 people, and connects Chewelah, just north of Spokane, to Columbia Gardens, British Columbia. The line hauls 2,000,000 tons of freight annually and provides rail service to the largest lead-zinc smelter in the world at which 230,000 tons of zinc are produced annually, most of which is used in the U.S. steel industry. However, the STPP Railroad needs upgrading if it is to continue to provide safe, efficient, reliable, and sustainable freight transportation of goods through the communities of Stevens County.

If successful, Progressive Rail will use CRISI grant funding to upgrade and rehabilitate 83 miles of mainline track on the STPP Railroad through the installation of 20 miles of new rail and 85,000 new wood crossties. This includes replacing old worn rail and significant numbers of outdated concrete and steel crossties. The project will help the manufacturing companies that rely on the STPP to deliver their raw materials and finished products retain 5,000 to 7,000 jobs. Additionally, STPP's two million tons of annual freight rail traffic keeps 80,000 trucks off Washington's highways. The line also parallels the upper Columbia River that flows 740 miles downstream providing drinking water and irrigation to many parts of Washington and Oregon so upgrading the track to ensure safe reliable freight train operation in Stevens County is of vital importance.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of Progressive Rail's application to the CRISI grant program.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell

United States Senator