

July 15, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
United States Senate

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
United States Senate

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Intermodal Association of North America, the only transportation trade association that represents the combined interests of intermodal freight providers and customers. IANA represents more than 1,000 corporate members, including railroads, ocean carriers, ports, intermodal truckers and over-the-road highway carriers, intermodal marketing and logistic companies, and suppliers to the industry. Such suppliers include companies that design, manufacture, and maintain intermodal chassis. We appreciate the opportunity to share our views on the Surface Transportation Investment Act of 2021 (S. 2016).

IANA applauds the Committee's leadership in approving the Surface Transportation Investment Act with broad bipartisan support. We strongly support the historic investment the legislation provides, directing \$78 billion over five years for multimodal surface transportation, rail, freight, and safety programs. IANA particularly appreciates your recognition of programs and policies that benefit intermodal freight transportation, including: authorizing an average of \$1.2 billion annually in addition to funding provided by the Highway Trust Fund for the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (INFRA) grant program and increasing the amount of funds available to multimodal freight projects under the program; establishing the new National Infrastructure Project Assistance Program focused on transportation megaprojects, authorized at \$10 billion over five years; authorizing the RAISE/ BUILD/ TIGER program at \$1.5 billion annually; authorizing \$1 billion annually for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program; and establishing a new Office of Multimodal Freight Infrastructure and Policy within the U.S. Department of Transportation. These provisions will support the intermodal transportation industry and provide much-needed funding for critical freight infrastructure projects.

Safety on our nation's highways and that of the motoring public is, and always will be, a priority for the intermodal transportation industry. The cargo container is the purest representation of today's global commerce, responsible for moving 95 percent of the world's manufactured goods. By extension, intermodal chassis, which move the containers on roadways, are critical to our national supply chains. Safe and road-ready chassis are imperative to moving freight – and thus delivering essential products and materials – in the most efficient and expeditious manner possible. Given the supply chain impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current unprecedented import cargo volumes across major U.S. ports, intermodal freight system efficiency and capacity are more critical than ever to support economic recovery.

We are pleased that the Surface Transportation Investment Act of 2021 recognizes the unique aspects of intermodal chassis operations on or near port and rail terminals across the U.S. and considers the potential impacts of a side underride mandate on freight mobility and capacity at a time when the nation's supply chain is experiencing severe disruptions. However, as currently written, the legislation allows the U.S. Department of Transportation to mandate side underride guards as they deem necessary. While well-intended, the legislation attempts to address certain types of truck-involved crashes through an industry-

wide mandate that does not account for the diversity of the industry, nor the situations under which these types of crashes occur. IANA respectfully requests that Congress include a carve out for intermodal chassis from the side underride guard provision as this legislation advances. Considering the strong safety record of intermodal chassis, a side underride guard mandate that does not exempt or consider the unique structure of intermodal chassis would place an undue burden on the sector.

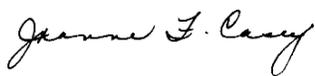
The addition of new and redesigned underride guards would increase the gross weight of the chassis which, when carrying containers loaded with cargo, could violate various state and federal maximum truck size and weight laws. Moreover, such added weight and redesigned chassis could impact the structural integrity of the equipment and cause dimensioning differences (e.g. such as road clearance). Standards for new and in-service equipment should be based on sound economic and engineering principles that improve safety, account for real-world operations, and consider unintended consequences.

If the Secretary of Transportation exercised his authority under the proposed legislation and mandated side underride guards for intermodal chassis, that requirement could restrict the availability of these assets. Pulling over 750,000 intermodal chassis out of service for repairs to meet the proposed standards would create major operational challenges, as well as significant cost implications, leading to ripple effects throughout the supply chain in terms of chassis availability, congestion, freight movement/ fluidity and land use. For example, at intermodal facilities (marine, rail, and depots) chassis are often stacked to conserve terminal space. Side underride guard requirements would decrease the number of chassis that can be stored within existing facilities, which could adversely impact terminal operations, efficiency, and yard space. The addition of side underride guards may also require modifications to the design of yard equipment to move chassis on terminals as well as the specifically designed trailers used to ship chassis.

We urge you to consider the unique operations of intermodal chassis before advancing an underride guard mandate. Given the serious adverse impacts that it could have on our industry and the supply chain, we request intermodal chassis be excluded from the scope of any forthcoming surface transportation reauthorization and infrastructure legislation.

IANA remains committed to improving the safety of our nation's roadways and we appreciate your consideration of our views, as well as your leadership on these important issues. We look forward to working with you and your staff as this legislation advances.

Sincerely,



Joanne F. Casey  
President and CEO  
Intermodal Association of North America