Stop the Rail Merger

Fact Sheet: Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern Rail Merger

Overview

Issue: Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern Rail Merger, Surface Transportation Board (STB) Finance Docket 36873

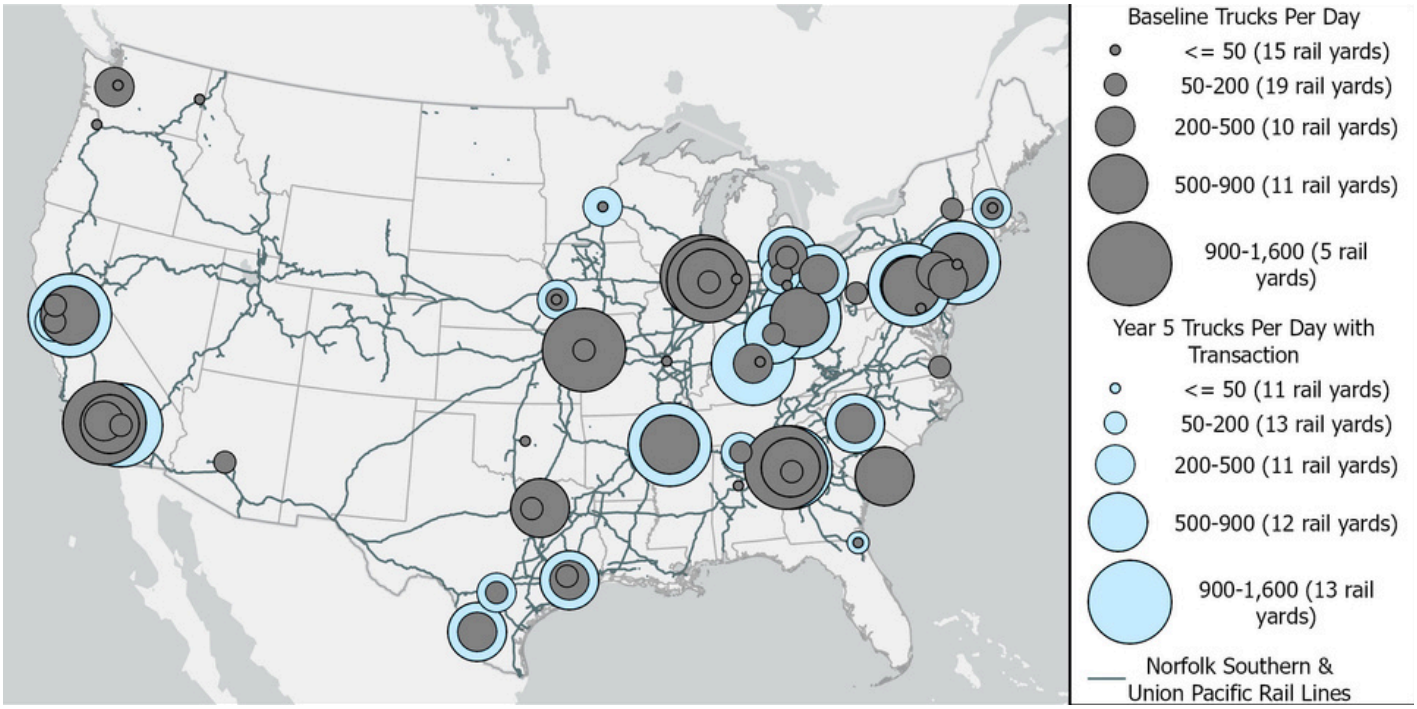
Summary: Union Pacific (UP) and Norfolk Southern (NS) are two of the largest rail companies in the country; they are applying to STB to approve their merger into one massive Transcontinental carrier. STB must "take environmental considerations into account in railroad consolidation cases" under 49 C.F.R. 1180.1(f).

Timing: Application accepted by the Surface Transportation Board on 5/28/2026. After the railroads filed supplemental information in July, the STB resumed its review. Public comments on the merger are due November 18, 2026, and responses are due February 16, 2027.

Public Comment: The scoping process at the beginning of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the only opportunity STB plans to provide for the public to make environmental comments regarding this proposal.

The STB has committed to at least 12 in-person public meetings and several virtual meetings for the environmental review, but dates and locations have not been announced. A separate public hearing on the merger is also expected, with dates to be determined.

Map of Projected Truck Traffic Growth at Railyards:
Norfolk Southern/Union Pacific Rail Merger



The draft map shows the locations of all the railyards where a certain threshold of truck traffic is exceeded in the initial Union Pacific/Norfolk Southern merger application. The circles show where the potential impact on railyards is located, along with the "jump" or increase in size. The blue shows increased traffic after the merger. Data on railyards where truck traffic will grow below the threshold (or decrease) is not provided to the public.

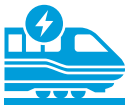


Environmental Justice advocates oppose the UP/NS mega-merger.

A rail monopoly will not result in environmental, public health, or safety benefits, nor will it be in the public interest in general.

- There are half as many Class I railroads today as there were in the early 1990s.
- Their profits have grown, with UP reportedly paying out $1.25 billion in stock buybacks in 2025. Yet despite this positive financial picture, UP hauled fewer carloads in 2025 than in 2015 [1]
- Wealthy railroad owners like UP have been able to “improve” or decrease their Operating Ratios (the percentage of revenue that’s used for operating expenses), not by improving service that attracts a bigger share of the freight market, but by cutting costs and increasing demands on workers. [2]
- Investments in people, technologies, and infrastructure are needed to deliver the environmental and safety benefits that serve the public interest, and this merger will not deliver them.

[1] Source for $1.25bn in 2025: How The Union Pacific (UNP) Investment Story Is Shifting With New Targets And Merger Expectations 2026. bit.ly/4fa9bJM
[2] Source: In Q1 2026 vs 2025, operating revenue grew, driven by "pricing gains" and more car miles per employee, and those gains were "partially offset" by fewer carloads. https://www.up.com/press-releases/financial/1q26-earnings-announcement-260423]



The applicants do not make meaningful commitments to moving U.S. rail towards zero-emission electrification.

- UP/NS seeks to control a massive share of the rail market but makes no commitment in their application regarding capital investment that would meaningfully move the industry towards electrification.
- This problem stems from owner priorities, not from technological impossibility.
- The European Union, China, and India all boast sizable rail networks that are majority electric. In contrast, **the U.S. rail system (with tracks owned by companies like UP and NS) is less than 1% electrified.**
- In requesting that the rail economy be reorganized for its monetary benefit, NS projects that it will convert only 2 of more than 3,000 locomotives to battery-diesel hybrid technology, while UP projects that it will add 5 hybrid locomotives to its fleet of nearly 7,000 locomotives owned or leased. Even those unambitious changes are not binding on the companies if they do not follow through. [1]

[1] Source: UP adding 5 hybrids: Application p. 645; NS adding 2 hybrids: Application p. 647. UP owned or leased locomotives = 6964: Application p. 5327; NS owned or leased locomotives = 3258: Application p. 5524.



Applicants make suspect claims about a merger taking trucks off the road.

- UP/NS claim that combining their networks will take more than 2.1 million long-haul truckloads off the roads by making rail traffic more economically appealing than competitor freight industries. **But historically, these megamergers have not lived up to such claims. And they exclude local truck traffic growth at their yards.** [1]
- In 2023, when approving the Canadian Pacific Railway / Kansas City Southern merger (CPKC), STB stated that CPKC “will be able to attract 64,000 truckloads from the roads to rail each year.” **However, for the most recent available data from CPKC itself, the merger has not even resulted in a quarter of the promised truck-to-rail diversions.** [2]

[1] Source: Truck diversion count: Application p. 1084.
[2] Source: https://www.stb.gov/news-communications/latest-news/pr-23-07/. CPKC data: https://www.stb.gov/proceedings-actions/filings/?action=stb_hook_modal_filing_details&id=310742]

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Have Questions? Want to Get Involved!

Contact: info@movingforwardnetwork.org

