



May 21, 2024

The Honorable Amit Bose, Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: **Watco's 2023/2024 CRISI Grant Program Application: "Strategic Bridge Improvement and Sustainability Project"**

Dear Administrator Bose;

On behalf of Packaging Corporation of America, I want to extend my full support for Watco's 2023/2024 CRISI Grant Application - *Strategic Bridge Improvement and Sustainability Project*. This project proposes to complete at least 30% preliminary engineering and design work, including all environmental work, for 116 strategic railroad bridges that traverse waterways across the entire Watco network. These bridges are critical to safe and efficient railroad service to our facility(s).

Packaging Corporation of America is a leading producer of containerboard in North America. Our national footprint enables us to provide finished corrugated containers to a variety of American industries. Our business has been a customer of Watco for over 40 years. Their railroads have given our business shipping options allowing us to competitively access local, regional, and national markets. The railroad is challenged by legacy infrastructure that cannot accommodate the growing needs of our business in the most efficient way.

Further weight restrictions and/or rail service disruptions due to the condition of the bridge(s) that serve our facility(s) would severely impact the economics of our business model and would result in more truck traffic navigating local roads through business, commercial and residential areas to reach our plant. I understand Watco is applying for a federal CRISI grant of \$15.2M and will be providing a local match of \$3.8M if awarded. I applaud Watco for taking this big step forward in trying to address its' infrastructure challenges today and in the future.

Packaging Corporation of America supports modern infrastructure that helps our economy grow and enhances the safety of the communities we call home, and certainly supports this CRISI grant application.

Respectfully,

Bruce Ridley
Senior Vice President, EH&S and Operational Services
Packaging Corporation of America
1 N Field Ct
Lake Forest, IL 60045