



May 13, 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 Valley Wide Cooperative (VWC), 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).

Valley Wide Cooperative has been empowering agricultural members since 1920, providing them with increased bargaining power and market share through its four divisions of business: Agronomy, Energy, Feed, and Farm Supply Stores. Headquartered in Nampa, Idaho, VWC serves over 60 communities across the Northwestern United States. With 24 agronomy locations, 18 retail stores, 15 propane plants, and a feed center, VWC offers high-quality products and services to farmers, ranchers, and growers in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

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.

Valley Wide Cooperative 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,

Valley Wide Cooperative