

Secure Tracks Act *Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Josh Hawley (R-MO)*

The persistence of railroad derailments, averaging three reportable incidents each day, underscores the need for strong federal regulations for our nation's railroads to keep our communities safe. In order to have the safest rail system, it is critical that railroads utilize both visual track inspections and automated track inspection (ATI) technology to keep our railroad tracks free from defects that can cause derailments.

ATI can more consistently and precisely measure track geometry defects. However, this technology fails to detect issues with ballast, rail wear, joint gaps, tie plate conditions, and switch components or detect trespassers, vandalism, vegetation hazards, and other real-time safety concerns. Only 26 percent of all track-related defects can be detected by ATI while the other 74 percent can only be detected by a human being. Thus, ATI should be used to supplement, not supplant, visual track inspections. Current federal regulations require regular visual track inspections by a qualified track inspector while allowing freight railroads to run ATI as much as they want, though there is no current requirement they do so.

The Secure Tracks Act would:

- Require all main line track designated for operation at Class 3 speeds or higher to perform visual track inspections twice each week
- Require any defect or unsafe condition identified to be corrected, protected or removed from service immediately upon detection
- Require qualified inspectors, if they find a deviation, to immediately initiate remedial action and grants the inspector sole authority to authorize any subsequent movements to facilitate repairs on track that is out of service
- Prohibit the Secretary of Transportation from a waiver, exemption, or modification of any safety regulation if the proposed alternative inspection, detection, or monitoring method fails to identify or detect all defect conditions defined or recognized as unsafe under applicable Federal Railroad Administration regulations
- Require that a qualifying Track Geometry Measurement System (TGMS), a type of ATI, operates over various track classifications at specified frequencies

Supporting Organizations:

Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division-International Brotherhood of Teamsters (BMWED-IBT), Teamsters Rail Conference, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS), National Conference of Fireman and Oilers (NCFO, SEIU), International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers-Mechanical Division (SMART-MD), International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD), Transportation Communications Union (TCU), and the American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA).