



National Grain and Feed Association

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Docket Services (M-30)
U.S. Department of Transportation
West Building Ground Floor
Room W12-140
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590-0001

RE: *Docket No. FMCSA-2015-0419 and FRA-2015-0111*

Dear Reviewing Official:

The National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement concerning the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) request for comments on obstructive sleep apnea among individuals occupying safety-sensitive positions in highway and rail transportation.

NGFA, established in 1896, consists of more than 1,000 grain, feed, processing, exporting and other grain-related companies that operate more than 7,000 facilities and handle more than 70 percent of all U.S. grains and oilseeds. Its membership includes grain elevators, feed and feed ingredient manufacturers, biofuels companies, grain and oilseed processors and millers, exporters, livestock and poultry integrators, and associated firms that provide goods and services to the nation's grain, feed and processing industry. NGFA also consists of 26 affiliated State and Regional Grain and Feed Associations, and has strategic alliances with the North American Export Grain Association and Pet Food Institute.

NGFA recognizes the important roles that FMCSA and FRA have in further enhancing highway and rail safety. An efficient freight transportation system is vitally important to the grain, feed, processing and export industry because of the large volumes of commodities that are handled and the multiple modes and availability of sufficient capacity that is required to transport agricultural products between numerous origin-destination pairs.

For example, each year trucks move approximately 500 million tons of U.S.-produced grain from field to storage, which is the equivalent of 20 million truckloads. Further, after the initial movement to storage, grain often is transported at least one more time before arriving at its final destination, the end user. A 2015 modal share analysis conducted by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service found that the final movement of grain to the end user is performed by truck 64 percent of the time versus 24 percent by rail and 12 percent by barge.

Given the large quantities of raw agricultural commodities that are moved by truck and the surge in driver demand that occurs at harvest, having access to a sufficient number of drivers is critically important for transportation across the agricultural supply chain. The vast majority of

truck movements for grain, feed and processed commodities are considered short hauls (within a 150-mile radius of the origin). Due to the nature of short hauls, actual driving time is separated by loading and unloading, thereby allowing drivers to pause and relax. Long-haul truck movements of raw agricultural commodities are not cost-efficient given the relatively low value and tight margins for these products. Therefore, long-distance movements of raw agricultural commodities most often are performed by rail, barge or vessel.

In recognition that the grain, feed, processing and export industry requires numerous drivers to move products relatively short distances, thus limiting actual driving time and providing ample opportunities for drivers to pause and relax, NGFA urges that a one-size fits all approach not be considered for compliance with potential obstructive sleep apnea regulations.

The NGFA also notes that truckers completing the American Transportation Research Institute's obstructive sleep apnea survey disclosed that the costs for diagnosing and treating obstructive sleep apnea are significant relative to the average wage of a truck driver. Such costs include the sleep study, time away from work to complete the sleep study and treatment supplies. Further, the truckers shared that many drivers who completed sleep studies did not meet the criteria of requiring obstructive sleep apnea treatment and often drivers with mild obstructive sleep apnea found treatment detrimental or had no effect on to their sleep quality. **Therefore, NGFA urges that potential obstructive sleep apnea regulations include initial screening procedures to ensure costly sleep studies are only prescribed in appropriate situations.**

Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and the NGFA would be pleased to respond to any questions the agency may have.

Sincerely,

Max Fisher

Max Fisher
Director of Economics and Government Relations