

# NCTA

Supporting bulk commodity shippers  
in navigating supply chain turmoil



**Rail service meltdowns. Increasing train lengths. Aging railcar fleets.**

The issues facing shippers of heavy bulk commodities like coal are numerous in the best of times. Add global supply chain disruptions and the situation can reach crisis proportions. With millions of dollars invested in private railcar assets and critical operations dependent on rail service, the stakes couldn't be higher.

With nearly five decades of experience, the National Coal Transportation Association is uniquely positioned to support commodity shippers in addressing both rail service issues and the challenges of operating and maintaining large railcar fleets.



“Supply chain” is a phrase that entered popular conversation in 2021. But at the National Coal Transportation Association, we have been facilitating solutions for supply chain issues for nearly 50 years.

The crisis-level rail service meltdown that began affecting shippers in 2021 is hardly a new phenomenon. Since consolidation of the major Class I railroads and their implementation of Precision Scheduled Railroading, serious rail service interruptions have occurred every eight to 10 years. Now other PSR-related strategies, such as implementing super-long trainsets, are affecting the physical assets of private railcar shippers, as well.

### Shipper Advocacy

NCTA is actively engaged with public policy makers at the U.S. Surface Transportation Board and on Capitol Hill in transportation matters affecting shippers. Activities include:

- Sponsorship of a recurring “Utility On-Time Performance Survey” that provides valuable railroad service data to policy makers and for industry benchmarking. Survey results are routinely shared with the STB’s Rail Energy Transportation Advisory Committee and key legislative committees.
- Regular participation in STB rulemakings and public hearings, including issues related to demurrage, railroad use of private railcar assets, and much more.
- NCTA was among the initiators of a current STB rulemaking on railroad first-mile/last-mile service data reporting – an action now widely embraced as a key response to the 2021-22 service meltdown.



### O&M Expertise

NCTA’s volunteer Operations and Maintenance Committee organizes regular events providing valuable information on the nuts and bolts of effective railcar fleet maintenance. Especially useful for today’s transitioning workforce, these activities include:

- An annual Operations and Maintenance Conference that gathers experts on railcar components and maintenance best practices.
- Membership survey activity to provide benchmarking on critical issues such as brake valve replacements and the impact of longer trainsets on railcar equipment.
- Periodic “railcar teardowns” allowing firsthand observation of railcar components and inspection and maintenance procedures.
- Frequent webinars on popular and emerging O&M topics.

### Business Networking

NCTA also sponsors spring and fall conferences that provide valuable industry networking opportunities along with speaker programs featuring leaders in transportation policy, energy, and national politics. Between conferences, NCTA members are kept informed by the association’s biweekly *On Track* newsletter and twice yearly *Transporter* magazine.



**NCTA membership is exceptionally economical and joining is easy.**

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