

WMC

Wisconsin's Chamber

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:

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), Wisconsin's combined manufacturing association and chamber of commerce, appreciates the opportunity to write in strong support of Watco's "Strategic Bridge Improvement and Sustainability Project" (Project) CRISI grant application.

WMC is the largest general business association in Wisconsin, representing approximately 3,800 member companies of all sizes and from every sector of the economy. Since 1911, our mission has been to make Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation to do business.

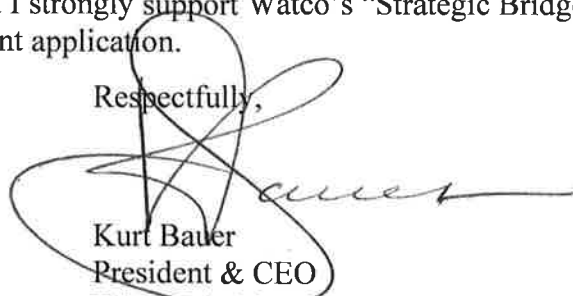
This Project is important because of the impact it will have on Watco's rail customers in Wisconsin. Twenty-two of the bridges in the Project serve the Fox Valley and northern Wisconsin. These bridges are critical to safe and efficient railroad service in affected communities, have suffered through years of deferred maintenance from the previous owners/operators, are currently under restricted weight loadings, and experience random and regular service interruptions to rail service. If these bridges ever fail, rail service could be impacted for an indefinite period of time and there will be widespread consequences for the customers that rely on their rail service, particularly in the agricultural industry.

Watco's Project proposes to complete at least 30% preliminary engineering and design work, including all environmental work, and Watco has committed to the 20% local match of the total project cost. The public-private partnerships that help share the cost of these infrastructure projects will help extend the value of taxpayer dollars, address more projects, and ultimately improve the state's and national transportation network that will benefit both individuals and commerce.

WMC supports modernized, reliable infrastructure that builds our economy and positions our communities for a strong future. Safe and efficient flow of commerce, via surface and other modes, is essential to the growth and prosperity of our state, its residents, and our businesses.

Thank you for your consideration and I strongly support Watco's "Strategic Bridge Improvement and Sustainability Project" CRISI grant application.

Respectfully,



Kurt Bauer
President & CEO
Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce

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WMC is the combined state chamber of commerce, manufacturers' association and safety council.