

Congressman James L. Oberstar



Rep. James L. Oberstar has served on what is now known as the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure since 1975, and he has worked tirelessly to improve safety and efficiency for carriers, shippers, and the traveling public in all modes of transportation. Now the Committee's Chairman, he is widely regarded as the singular expert in transportation policy on Capitol Hill.

Rep. Oberstar was a key architect of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, also known as SAFETEA-LU, as well as most of the other major public infrastructure bills to clear Congress over the last three decades. Rep. Oberstar is leading the charge to pass the next surface transportation bill, known as the Surface Transportation Authorization Act. That legislation increases funding for the planning and development of high-speed rail corridors, makes high-speed rail development projects eligible for public financing, and creates a research, development, and demonstration program for high-speed rail technologies. The Act also provides funding for freight rail infrastructure improvements and enhances the Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) Program.

Rep. Oberstar has been a longtime, staunch advocate for Amtrak, high speed rail, and intercity passenger rail, and he has tirelessly promoted rail as an affordable, accessible, and environmentally sustainable mode of transportation. He led the effort to pass the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 and the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 ([P.L. 110-432](#)), which was signed into law in October 2008. This landmark legislation improves the nation's intercity passenger rail system, enhances the safety of our railroads, and increases funding for Amtrak over the next five years.

In 2008, Rep. Oberstar introduced H.R. 6707, the Taking Responsible Action for Community Safety Act, which would ensure that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) has the legal authority and policy direction to deal with railroad mergers that have the potential to cause serious safety, environmental and other quality of life problems for affected communities. In 2007, he introduced H.R. 2125, the Railroad Competition and Service Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 2125), which would preserve existing rail-to-rail competition in areas of the country where competition is working and reduce impediments to competition that adversely affect rail customers.