



Montana Rail Link, Inc.

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## **MRL Announces Conclusion of Lease with BNSF**

*Employees and Customers Protected in Agreement Designed to Address Supply Chain*

Montana Rail Link (“MRL”) will conclude its long-term lease with BNSF Railway Company (“BNSF”), and BNSF will resume operations and maintenance of its mainline rail corridor through southern Montana upon receipt of the necessary approvals.

MRL was founded in 1987 by entrepreneur Dennis Washington and is a part of The Washington Companies. MRL and BNSF have had a unique lease arrangement since 1987 in which MRL leases and operates mainline tracks owned by BNSF between Huntley, Montana and Sandpoint, Idaho. Both companies have a long-held, deep commitment to delivering continued strong outcomes for customers, employees, producers, and local communities.

Over the last several years, more than 90% of the traffic traversing MRL’s leased line were loads moved on behalf of BNSF. The line has become a critical link in BNSF’s northern transcontinental network, delivering grain, consumer and industrial products to the West Coast. By MRL ending its lease and BNSF resuming operation of its line, BNSF will eliminate the need to interchange freight between the two railroads, strengthening the resiliency of the supply chain and enhancing rail capacity in the Pacific Northwest. BNSF’s continued operation of its line will ensure that Montanans continue to have access to consistent, reliable, nationwide rail service to effectively compete in global markets.

BNSF has committed to retain all union and non-union employees of MRL in their current jobs with similar pay, benefits, seniority, and other terms of employment. The lease termination will require the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements with the affected unions. Customers across MRL’s network will be able to maintain their service arrangements and rates, providing continuity for Montana shippers. The vast majority of rail traffic moving on MRL today is subject to rates already established by BNSF.

While MRL and BNSF have reached an agreement, MRL must obtain authority from the U.S. Surface Transportation Board to terminate the lease before the lease concludes.

“There have been many changes in the rail industry since this long-term lease was signed, and given the need to be competitive in the current environment, we believe that this was the right time to revisit our longstanding agreement with BNSF,” said Derek Ollmann, president of MRL, “This agreement protects our workers, our customers, and our long-term commitment to safety, and it will ensure a more seamless operation of rail services in Montana.”

“We are excited to bring an important part of our railroad’s history back into our operations at BNSF,” said Katie Farmer, president and CEO, at BNSF. “The line will become the MRL Subdivision of our Montana Division in recognition of the shared heritage of BNSF and MRL.”



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Farmer continued, “We welcome the MRL team and customers back into the BNSF family. We will continue to invest in the business, provide great service and maintain the highest level of safety just as we have for over a century in Montana. This will best position employees, customers and the communities we serve for future success.”

### **About Montana Rail Link**

Based in Missoula, Montana Rail Link is a Class II regional railroad that operates over 900 route miles of track in Montana and Idaho and employs nearly 1,200 dedicated professionals. MRL services over 150 local Montana businesses and moves their products to domestic and international markets on a daily basis. MRL remains committed to providing transportation services that result in long-term growth and prosperity for the company, and its customers and employees. As a BNSF partner, its rail shipments help feed, clothe, supply and power American and international homes and businesses every day.

### **About BNSF Railway**

BNSF Railway is one of North America’s leading freight transportation companies. BNSF operates approximately 32,500 route miles of track in 28 states and also operates in three Canadian provinces. BNSF is one of the top transporters of consumer goods, grain and agricultural products, low-sulfur coal, and industrial goods such as petroleum, chemicals, housing materials, food and beverages. BNSF’s shipments help feed, clothe, supply, and power American homes and businesses every day. BNSF and its employees have developed one of the most technologically advanced, and efficient railroads in the industry. We work continuously to improve the value of the safety, service, energy, and environmental benefits we provide to our customers and the communities we serve. You can learn more about BNSF at [www.BNSF.com](http://www.BNSF.com).

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