

# U. S. Department of Transportation

# news:



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STATEMENT PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY  
SECRETARY DREW LEWIS  
CONRAIL NEWS CONFERENCE  
MAY 11, 1981

I am pleased to announce today that 15 major shippers, doing business in the Northeast and Midwest, have joined with other companies and industry associations already on record in support of the Administration's plan to improve rail freight service in the region now served by Conrail.

Representatives of those companies are here today. Copies of their statements are available and the gentlemen here will be glad, I am sure, to answer your questions.

Let me emphasize that the shippers who have joined in support of our proposal together represent much of the freight moved by Conrail. They share our overall objective to improve freight service, and are clearly committed to the continuation of service. They fully support our proposal to transfer Conrail properties to the private sector.

To move in that direction, we have their endorsement of our efforts to reform the existing costly labor protection benefits, relieve the system of its commuter service obligations and restructure the freight terminal operations along the Northeast Corridor.

I want to make it clear that our number one goal is to preserve and improve rail freight service. If Congress approves our plan and we are proceeding toward our three objectives -- labor protection relief, transfer of commuter operations, and terminal operations restructuring -- the Administration would be willing to support some interim funding that might be needed to assure that service continues without interruption until the system can be integrated into the nation's private rail network.

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