Memorandum

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Date: June 15, 1998
Reply to Att. of: MP&E 98-29

Subject: Freight Cars Derailed/Damaged on Short Line Railroads

From: Edward R. English
Director, Office of Safety Assurance and Compliance

To: Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators,
Motive Power & Equipment Specialists and Inspectors

During an inspection on a “Short Line Railroad”, it was discovered that some tank cars
equipped with roller bearings were derailed and sustained damages. These cars were
not repaired and the roller bearings were not examined as required, prior to delivery to
a connecting railroad. Also, the short line railroad did not advise the receiving railroad
of the derailment damage and associated damages.

If a train crew performing an Appendix D inspection at the interchange point did not
detect the defective condition of these cars, the cars would have continued in service in
a defective condition.

Many short line railroads operate over questionable or “Excepted Track” that often is
the cause of derailments. Further, some short line railroads do not have qualified
inspectors or repair facilities. Some short lines have agreements with the interchange
railroads to effect repairs to defective cars, which fall under their responsibility.

Due to the seriousness of a defective car continuing in service and/or the possible
failure of a short line to notify the receiving railroad of a defective car, each region
should review the proper handling of defective cars with each short line railroad within
their region.

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