The Canadian Association of Railway Suppliers

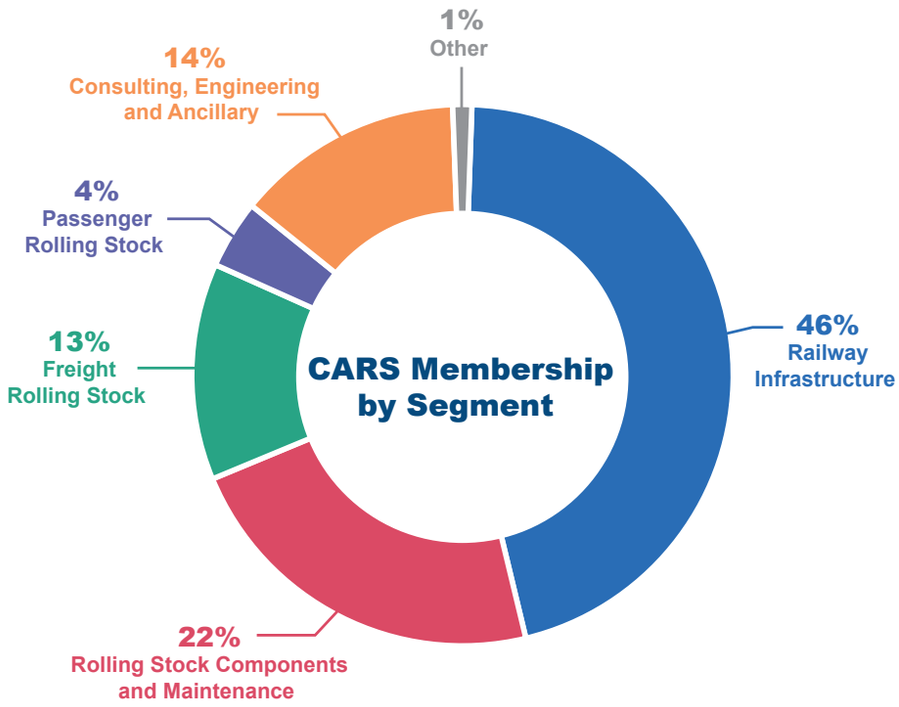
Association Canadienne des Fournisseurs de Chemins de Fer

Who We Are

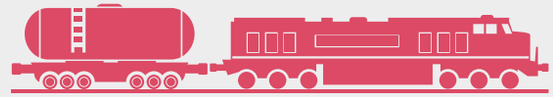
CARS is a member driven association of companies that supply products and services to Canadian freight railways, passenger and commuter railways, urban light rail operations and subways.

Our membership includes a wide variety of large, medium and small businesses. CARS represents over 130 companies across Canada. We are a unified voice on priority issues that affect our members. Our objective is to grow a vibrant, competitive supply industry, and promote the importance of rail transportation to achieving Canada's economic and sustainability goals.

CARS' members supply a diverse range of products and services to railways and transit authorities. Major industry segments that we serve are illustrated in the graph below.



Economic and Social Benefits



Freight Rail

Rail is safe, reliable, and provides access to national and international markets. Canada's railways move an estimated $282 billion worth of goods every year, while relieving road congestion (e.g. 1 train = 280 trucks) and helping to limit harmful emissions. Although we are a leader in natural resources and energy production, the distance to markets is considerable. A productive, innovative and competitive transportation system, including rail, is critical.

In addition to the efficiency benefits of rail, it provides considerable employment. The Canadian rail industry workforce averaged 32,681 employees in 2014, according to the Railway Association of Canada. On top of this statistic, CARS's members employ more than 20,000 people. Hundreds of thousands more work in communities across the country for railway customers who rely on their service to move goods to market — roughly 50% of our nation's exports depend on rail transportation.

Passenger Rail

Canadians are increasingly aware of public transit's key role in overcoming vital challenges such as climate change, smog and congestion. In major cities across Canada, rail-based systems have been the backbone of transit service for more than a century. Many rail transit technologies are available to suit to diverse operating environments found in Canadian cities.

Canadian suppliers compete vigorously to domestic and international rail transit related contracts, and are constantly improving their products and services. The many benefits of rail transit include large system capacities, reliability, environmental impact, catalyst for optimal land user, low operating costs and some opportunities to leverage existing trackage.

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Canadian Association of Railway Suppliers / Association Canadienne des Fournisseurs de Chemins de Fer

Infrastructure Funding

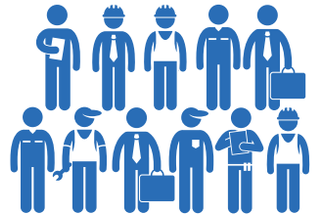
Clear and fair allocation of funds for transit projects

The allocation of funds for transit projects should be established in a clear and fair fashion. A system to encourage federal infrastructure dollars supports Canadian companies. Taken as a group, these programs should offer both transfer-based and merit-based funding for not only capital projects, but state of good repair and maintenance expenditures, as well.

Employment & Training

Pressing need to upgrade skills of existing and future workforce

As firms pursue new market opportunities, they must also recognize a challenge facing all service providers and manufacturers — the pressing need to upgrade the skills of their existing and future workforce. Any efforts to address overall manufacturing-related skills gaps will also generate benefits for the rail sector and vice versa.



Research and Development Funding

Spur innovation in the rail industry and related sectors

Policy needs to support activities that spur more innovation in the rail industry and related sectors. Changes to the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP) — increase in limits and size of companies who can participate so mid-sized companies developing new safer products for the rail industry can receive IRAP funding.

Reinforcing Railway Safety

Ensure open dialogue and continued industry input

Harmonization with U.S. regulatory developments

There are two key issues associated with railway safety: 1) ensuring open dialogue and continued industry input to take advantage of innovation, and to avoid unintended consequences, and 2) harmonization with U.S. regulatory developments. The efficiency of the North American freight network is based on cars free to move interchange service. Regulatory differences can result in costly fleet segregations and car shortages, leading to reduced competitiveness and lost export opportunities.

If Transport Canada wishes to have an influence on safety issues that are specific to the Canadian operational or physical environment, we believe it needs to invest in both research and personnel.

Trade and Economic Growth

Capitalize on opportunities, build on manufacturing's multiplier effect, create jobs and improve diversity

Continued government support will help local manufacturers capitalize on business opportunities, build on manufacturing's strong multiplier effect, create more jobs and improve business diversity.