[**OnTrackNorthAmerica**](https://www.ontracknorthamerica.org) (OTNA) was founded by Michael Sussman in 2007 as a nonprofit 501c3 transportation think tank and consultancy co-leading society in redesigning industrial systems to support sustainable life. **Michael Sussman** began his career in transportation in 1994 by launching [Strategic Rail Finance](http://www.strategicrail.com/), a North American transportation-industry consulting firm, and has since advised on infrastructure-related projects, companies, and systems for private and public sector clients in 44 states and Canada.

At OTNA, we uphold objectivity and nonpartisanship. Our autonomy from financial, political, or personal interests undergirds our ethics. Historically, industrial growth has prioritized economic advancement over community and environmental stewardship. We advance industrial systems that are financially profitable and sustainable.

OTNA continually embraces the latest perspectives that inform progress toward these goals. We support investments in projects that enable the transition from fossil fuels, petrochemicals, and environmental stresses while acknowledging pragmatic challenges. OTNA values rationality and paths that provide the greatest benefit to the most people.

**OTNA has developed state and regional plans, tools, analyses, and paradigms supporting these values.**

* In 2023, OTNA led a four-county stakeholder process in New Mexico in the aftermath of a 350,000-acre forest fire resulting in the [New Mexico Forestry Business Plan](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/nm-sustainable-forestry-business-plan/).
* In 2021, OTNA convened hundreds of transportation stakeholders to create [Nevada’s 2021 State Rail Plan](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/nevada-state-rail-plan/), a new whole-systems paradigm for statewide rail-enabled economic development.
* On December 11, 2008, OTNA gathered [industry and government leaders in the U.S. Capitol Building](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Resolution-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf) to set a new collaborative framework for freight rail transportation efficiency.
* On December 8, 1998, OTNA convened a [rail transportation educational event in the U.S. Capitol Building for 55 congressional staff](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/1998-Invitation-US-Congressional-Briefing-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf).

**OnTrackNorthAmerica Frequently Collaborates with Partners in Academia**

* Dr. Barbara Gray, founder of Penn State University’s Center for Research in Conflict and Negotiation, has contributed significantly to OTNA’s work.
* The University of Tennessee’s Institute for a Secure and Sustainable Future provided research and development assistance for OTNA’s[Land Freight Lifecycle Impact Calculator](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/land-freight-lifecycle-impact-calculator/).
  + Philadelphia’s Temple University hosted Michael’s talk, “How Collaboration, Trust, and Railroads Will Save the World,” on December 5th, 2023.
* The [Transportation Research Forum](https://trforum.org/) honored Michael with its 2024 annual President’s Award.
* Michael serves on the Industry Advisory Board of the six-university consortium, Center for Freight Transportation and Efficient & Resilient Supply Chains

**He has contributed to improving public policy by meeting with staff or leaders of 68 U.S. Senate and 165 U.S. House offices.**

* In March of 2011, Michael was the only private sector invitee to a [U.S. House Railroad Subcommittee Staff Workshop](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-Invitation-US-Congress-Rail-Workshop-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf) to explore ways to improve the FRA RRIF loan program.
* On February 17, 2011, he [testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Railroad Subcommittee](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-Testimony-US-Congressional-Hearing-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf)on reforms to the Federal Railroad Administration’s Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program.
* On October 19, 2005, he [spoke before the Surface Transportation Board](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2005-Testimony-Surface-Transportation-Board-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf) on the 25th anniversary of the Staggers Rail Act of 1980.

**Representative acknowledgments of these efforts:**

* Thank you letters from [Republican House Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Frank Wolf](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Thank-You-Letter-US-Rep-Wolf-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf) and [Democratic Senator Jay Rockefeller’s Chief of Staff](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Thank-You-Letter-US-Sen-Rockefeller-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf).
* In 2003, he contributed to Washington State produce shippers by designing and writing important elements of the [Washington State Produce Railcar Pool Act](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2003-Reference-Letter-2-WSDOT-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf) as passed by the 2003 state legislature.
* In 1999, he worked with the Federal Railroad Administration to eliminate audited financial statement requirements for Class II and III railroads from the [Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing Act (RRIF loan program)](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/OMB-Caused-the-Delay-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf).
* In November of 1997 he was responsible for making freight rail projects eligible in [H.R.115 – the National Infrastructure Development Act](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/OnTrackNorthAmerica-105v106.pdf).

**Michael ‘s writing has been published in many transportation industry journals:**

* + - * [Railway Age, December 2014, “Revitalizing Direct Rail Service”](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/2014/12/revitalizing-direct-rail-service/)
      * [Railway Age, April 2011, “A RRIF-Centered Capitalization Growth Strategy”](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/A-RRIF-Centered-Capitalization-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf)
      * [Railway Age, September 2008, “Leveraging Capital for the Entire Industry”](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Leveraging-Capital-for-the-Entire-Industry-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf)
      * [Transportation Quarterly, Fall 2002, “Regional and Short Line Railroads in the United States”](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Regional-and-Short-Line-RRs-in-the-US-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf)
      * [Association of Transportation Law, Logistics & Policy, Fall 2000, “Assessing the Process of Creating the RRIF Program](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Assessing-the-Process-of-Creating-the-RRIF-Program-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf)”
      * [Progressive Railroading, June 1998, “Getting a Lender’s Attention”](https://ontracknorthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Getting-a-Lenders-Attention-OnTrackNorthAmerica.pdf)

**Board of Directors**

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