

July 18, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing, and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing, and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Schatz, and Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

We are writing to you on behalf of America's passengers, transportation workers, and rail industry to ask you to support a growth-oriented vision for rail and transit in the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies' Fiscal Year 2024 bill.

We are particularly concerned by the radical cuts included in the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies' Fiscal Year 2024 bill. These cuts in discretionary funding would destabilize operations on the nation's busiest rail corridor and threaten the elimination of Amtrak service for hundreds of cities and small towns across the U.S., impacting as many as 20 million passengers nationwide. It would also endanger tens of thousands of operating, construction, and manufacturing jobs; initial estimates indicate 10,000 Amtrak employees alone could be furloughed or separated due to lack of funding. Finally, the House bill would halt scores of state-sponsored transit and intercity rail infrastructure projects that will benefit tens of millions of Americans.

In light of the troubling proposals in the House, we ask that you reaffirm the growth-oriented approach authorized by Congress in the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA) by:

- Fully funding Amtrak's National Network and Northeast Corridor operating grant at the levels authorized in the IIJA;
 - Amtrak has stated that \$2.622 billion is necessary to meet its base needs, sustain current service levels, and advance critical capital projects in FY24.
- Fully funding important rail grant programs—including the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program and the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program—at the levels authorized in the IIJA; and
- Fully funding the Fixed-Guideway Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program at levels authorized in the IIJA.

An Essential Economic Connection: The Northeast Corridor (NEC) serves approximately 2,200 Amtrak, commuter and freight trains each day, making it one of the busiest transportation corridors in the world.

It carries 260 million annual passenger trips (pre-COVID-19), contributing \$50 billion to the U.S. GDP each year.

The NEC doesn't just serve Amtrak passengers, but also the riders that rely on service provided by the 8 commuter railroads that operate over the NEC (the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Shore Line East, Metro-North Railroad, the Long Island Rail Road, New Jersey Transit, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, MARC and Virginia Railway Express).

However, Amtrak is more than a regional service. Rail corridors across the U.S. see significant use by business travelers, commuters, and discretionary Amtrak riders, including services in California, Virginia, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Maine.

Serving America's Heartland: Amtrak's National Network, with its 15 long-distance routes, is an essential transportation service to the 40 percent of the nation's small and rural communities that it serves, establishing a vital link between Small Town and Big City America. These long-distance routes also connect with 28 state-supported Amtrak routes, carrying approximately half of all Amtrak passengers.

Intercity rail plays an important role in these rural communities; almost one-fifth of Amtrak's passengers travel to or from a rural station with no access to air service. As private-sector airlines continue to abandon smaller cities, Amtrak often remains the only connection to and from these places.

Additionally, service development plans submitted through the Corridor Identification Program would introduce frequent same-day train travel to dozens of city pairs, creating viable business and commuter corridors. This level of service would connect more Americans to jobs, education opportunities, and healthcare providers.

The Need for a Growing Network: There has been a tremendous amount of enthusiasm from local governments in response to the Corridor Identification Program established by the IIJA. States such as Texas, Oklahoma, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Montana, Ohio and the Commonwealth of Virginia have all submitted applications for this IIJA passenger rail development program. Congress should act in good faith towards the local governments that have committed their time and resources to passenger rail programs created by the IIJA.

The return on this infrastructure investment will benefit Americans of all stripes. A study by the Rail Passengers Association quantified the economic benefits of introducing daily train service on the route of the *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* between California and Illinois (up from the current three-times-per-week). This simple step is among several Amtrak is proposing in the first round of IIJA-enabled service improvements, and economic-benefits modeling suggests introducing daily service could generate as much as \$2.4 billion over 10 years in visitor spending in hotels, restaurants, and retail, avoided road maintenance, and supported jobs — \$144 million each year in Texas alone, and some \$239 million each year to the eight states served. That's at least four times as much the annual cost of operating this service.

Revitalizing American Manufacturing: IIJA funding has allowed Amtrak to begin the process of replacing its 20th century railcar and locomotive fleet on the long-distance, State-supported, and NEC business lines. Amtrak continues to roll out new state-owned Siemens Venture trainsets and refresh current long-distance equipment.

The private sector has already responded to this increased investment in rail and transit. Siemens announced in March 2023 that it is building a \$220 million advanced manufacturing and rail services facility in Lexington, NC in response to increased U.S. rail investment. The facility will begin production in 2024, create more than 500 new jobs by 2028, and grow the state's economy by \$1.6 billion over 12 years.

A Safer, More Efficient Transportation Network: Rail is the safest, most energy efficient surface transportation mode. When measured by fatalities per billion passenger miles, riding intercity passenger trains is more than 10 times safer than riding in a passenger car on average. Moving passengers from highways to trains will provide an alternative to over-congested highways and help reduce the roughly 42,700 deaths that occurred on U.S. highways last year.

Additionally, rail transit is 70 percent more energy efficient per passenger-mile than cars and 74% more energy efficient than light trucks. Even with an aging fleet, U.S. intercity rail is 53 percent more energy efficient per passenger-mile than light trucks and 45 percent more energy efficient than automobiles.

For these reasons, and many more, we are asking that you support passenger rail and transit programs at authorized levels.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

All Aboard Northwest
All Aboard Ohio
All Aboard Northwest
All Aboard Washington
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division/Teamsters
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen
Colorado Rail Passenger Association
Empire State Passengers Association
High Speed Rail Alliance
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)
Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
National Conference of Firemen & Oilers 32BJ/SEIU
Rail Passengers Association
RVA757 Connects
Scranton Rail Restoration Coalition
SENER Engineering and Systems Inc.
SMART – Transportation Division
Southern Environmental Law Center
Texas Rail Advocates
TrainRiders/NE
Transport Workers Union
Transportation Communications Union (TCU/IAM)
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO
U.S. High Speed Rail Association

U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America
Virginians for High Speed Rail
Virginia Transit Association
Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail

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cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations