



July 14, 2020

The Honorable David E. Price, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations Committee on
Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations Committee on
Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

On behalf of the more than 40 million Americans who depend on the U.S. rail network every year, I'm writing to extend our sincere thanks for your leadership and vision on the Fiscal Year 2021 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. This legislation will keep essential transportation connections running to hundreds of cities and towns across the U.S. through the current pandemic while also creating tens of thousands of new jobs for unemployed Americans.

Since Amtrak released its service change proposals in its FY2021 supplemental request, our Association been clear that while we strongly support emergency funds for Amtrak, any additional funds need to buy certainty for workers and passengers alike and daily train service must be the very minimum service level. We are grateful that your bill takes into consideration the well-being of all 500 Amtrak-served communities—including many small towns with few transportation alternatives—recognizing the critical role passenger rail and public transit have always played in economic resilience.

Amtrak's long-distance routes serve millions of rural Americans with no access to airports, Americans with disabilities who can't access airplanes, and senior citizens and people with health issues for whom flying would pose a health risk. COVID-19 shouldn't deny access to essential transportation services for these Americans for an extended and unspecified amount of time—particularly when exposure to coronavirus increases the risk of air travel for so many while Amtrak's sleeper car service provides a safer alternative.

Our members especially appreciate the capital funding for passenger rail included as part of Title V. These funds will go beyond merely preserving service during the pandemic, and will put tens of thousands of Americans to work addressing Northeast Corridor (NEC) chokepoints, advancing the critical Portal North Bridge and Hudson Tunnel Project, replacing Amtrak's aging equipment for both the NEC and long-distance trains, shoring up *Southwest Chief* service, and expanding National Network service to cities in underserved regions of the U.S.

Intercity rail is a safe, energy efficient, and economically competitive mode of travel, and it is well past time for passenger trains to play a larger role in the U.S. transportation network. This appropriations bill will help lay the foundation for that system. Our Association and its members stand committed to ensuring the provisions outlined in this outstanding piece of legislation are passed into law.

With Gratitude,

Jim Mathews
President and Chief Executive Officer