

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2017

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill we strongly urge you to support the FAST Act authorized level of \$1.6 billion for Amtrak in FY 2018, which will allow them to continue current services.

Passenger rail is a vital part of our transportation network, helping to reduce congestion and improve efficiency and connect towns and cities across America. As the only nationwide intercity passenger rail service, Amtrak covers more than 21,300 miles of rail lines and serves 500 communities across 46 states, including 40 percent of our country's rural population. System-wide, Amtrak carries more than 30 million passengers—almost half of whom travel on a state-supported route. Amtrak set another record for revenues and system ridership in 2016, transporting nearly 400,000 more riders than in the previous year. Furthermore, Amtrak's *Northeast Corridor* (NEC) set another ridership record in 2016, and demand continues to grow. Finally, long distance ridership grew by more than 20 percent between 2002 and 2015, without the deployment of any new services, frequencies, or equipment.

We especially urge you to maintain support for Amtrak's long distance routes. While the NEC is known for linking major cities from Washington, DC, to Boston, Amtrak's operation outside of the NEC is critically important to the nation's economy. Amtrak's National Network allows some of America's hardest workers to commute from Washington, Montana, and Minnesota to the oilfields of North Dakota on the *Empire Builder*. Chicago's Union Station shuttles nearly 120,000 people through its doors every day, serving as a hub for both commuters and long distance travelers. The *Southwest Chief* connects Chicago and the heartland of America through the legendary geography of the southwest to the bustling city of Los Angeles on the West Coast. Finally, a recent inspection train found significant public support for the potential return of passenger rail to the Gulf Coast, where service has been suspended since Hurricane Katrina.

With sufficient federal funding, Amtrak's pattern of efficiency improvements will continue in FY 2018, enabling them to address the over \$35 billion backlog in needed infrastructure

upgrades required to achieve a state of good repair. For example, many of the NEC bridges and tunnels are now over a century old, and the average age of Amtrak's equipment fleet is the oldest in the company's history. In addition, strong FY 2018 funding will allow Amtrak to continue to implement critical safety measures for all passengers and help make their stations and services more accessible to individuals with disabilities.

We must begin to reinvest in the future of passenger rail. If not, the progress made in recent years will be jeopardized, and our ability to meet the current and future needs of the NEC and the National Network will be compromised. We urge you to support FAST Act level funding to meet critical needs for Amtrak in FY 2018. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

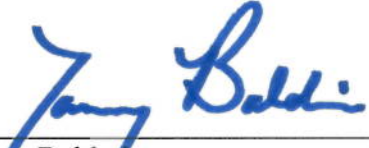
Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
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United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
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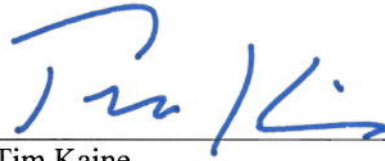
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



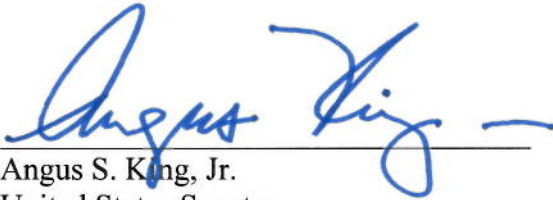
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



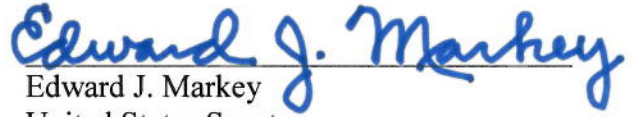
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



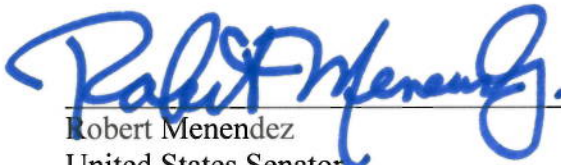
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



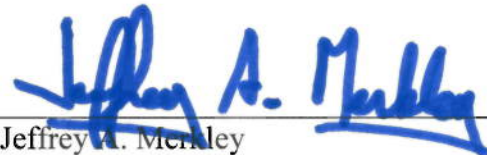
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



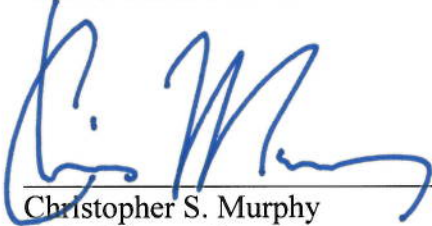
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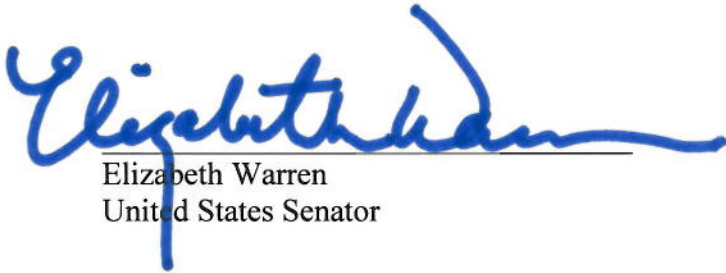
Jon Tester
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Sheldon Whitehouse
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Ron Wyden
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