

**CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515**

February 3, 2003

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-218

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128

The Honorable David R. Obey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-218

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128

Dear Conferee:

We write to urge you to adopt the Senate approved FY 2003 funding level for Amtrak, the nation's intercity passenger rail carrier. The Senate appropriated \$1.2 billion for Amtrak; an amount that virtually everyone agrees is the minimum Amtrak requires to continue operating a national network of intercity passenger trains. Anything less than \$1.2 billion will force the corporation to begin shutting down train operations. Adopting the House Appropriations Committee mark of \$762 million would guarantee insolvency by the end of the Spring.

The Administration has indicated that it wants Amtrak to adopt a number of "structural changes" in its operations before it will support appropriating the amount Amtrak needs to survive. While we agree that some reforms might be helpful, the ones proposed by the Administration, such as separating the Northeast Corridor from Amtrak or franchising out long distance train services, are neither feasible nor consistent with a long term strategy of preserving and developing the nation's intercity rail passenger network. In any event, regardless of whether any particular reforms have merit, this is not the time to begin making draconian changes to Amtrak's operations.

The events of September 11, 2001 demonstrated the need for transportation alternatives. We need to be expanding our options--not contracting them. Yet, if Amtrak does not receive the \$1.2 billion for FY 2003 the system will shut down. Many long distance trains will disappear forever and we will no longer have a national intercity rail transportation system.

Amtrak's new President, David Gunn, has taken a number of positive steps that have been widely praised by those familiar with Amtrak, including bringing greater transparency to Amtrak's accounting processes. Mr. Gunn has said repeatedly that he needs time to stabilize the corporation and that major restructuring at this time would be counterproductive. We agree. On Monday, January 22, 2003, he told the U.S. Conference of Mayors that Amtrak will need \$2 billion annually for the next 5 years to

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bring the railroad back to a state of good repair. This estimate is consistent with those made by the Department of Transportation Inspector General and the General Accounting Office. In fact, the Subcommittee on Railroads of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure authorized by voice vote \$1.975 billion for Amtrak for FY 2003. This authorization included the full \$1.2 billion Amtrak requested and additional amounts to address security and life safety needs.

Shutting down Amtrak or eliminating many of its train services is not what the American people want. In poll after poll, Americans have registered their strong support for Amtrak. A CNN poll taken just this past weekend showed that 85 percent of respondents supported giving Amtrak \$2 billion a year. Amtrak is asking for \$1.2 billion for FY 2003. We strongly urge you to adopt the level of funding approved by the Senate.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer

Jim Oberstar

Corrine Brown

Tim Holden

Richard L. Durbin

W. V. Roth

Ed E. Clums

F. James

Tim Wirth

Donald Payne

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Bill Pascrell

Pat Abernethy

Leonard L. Boswell

Lois Capps

Russ Holt

Pat de Fazio

Bill Delahunt

Rick Lussen

Nick Thompson

Lucille Roybal-Allard

Fanny Bakkum

Carolyn B. Maloney

John Lougheys

Robert J. Mataui

Frank Calnef.

Bl. Sul

Julia Ann

Robert And

Jimmy N. Costello

Michael M. Stone

Chaka Fattah

William R. W. Kelly

Earl Pomeroy

Neil O. Abernethy

Jim Langerin

Marion Rounding

Rosa L. DeLano

Tom Lantos

Howard S. Berman

Jim McAnis

Wendell Ford

Sam Rayburn

Howard Hatcher

Louie Evans

David Price

Gene Taylor

Joe Hoegge

Norm Dicks

Joe Batta

Johnnie

Tom Udde

Luigi Evers

Joe Shalby

Allen Auscher

Wm. Lacy Clay

Tom Allen

Ed Markey

Karen McCarthy

Liane E. Watson

Prof. [unclear]

[unclear]

Zoe Laffin

Ben Cardin

Miss V. [unclear]

Eden R. [unclear]

Bee Fisher

Dr. Cadzor

George Miller

Steve [unclear]

Janice [unclear]

Melvin J. [unclear]

Barbara Lee

Rick Boucher

Mukul B. Mukherjee

Ernest L. Engel

Eric [unclear]

Chaf Edwards

David Wu

Jane Harmon

Eric Boy

Denise L. Mijette

Janet Williams Jones

Hilda L. Solis

Mike Gromston

Melley Berpley

Michael E. Capuano

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For Kind

Stephen F. Huel

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Bobby Scott

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Main Bay

Bobby L. Bush

Ruben Emanuel

Mike Doyle

Jerry Keyser

Ken Lee

Jim Lee

Bob Alford

Brad Carson

John F. Tinning

Francis Hill

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Maria C. Santos

Shirley Jacobson

Al Smith

Chris Van Holten

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cc:

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The Honorable Harold Rogers	Senator Patty Murray
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