

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We understand that the Administration plans to unveil principles for a new, multi-year surface transportation authorization bill within the next 90 days. We write to stress the importance of including in those principles – and any future surface transportation authorization proposal developed by the Administration – a dedicated revenue source for planning and development of high-speed rail in the United States.

On June 21, 2009, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure unveiled a draft bill to reauthorize the surface transportation program, which was subsequently ordered reported by the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. The bill included a proposal for \$50 billion over six years for planning and development of high-speed rail. The actual method of funding the program was left open in hopes that the Administration would help Congress identify a dedicated revenue source for high-speed rail.

As you mentioned last April, Americans need transportation alternatives. Congestion is crippling our major cities; even the infrastructure in our small towns are aging at an alarming rate.

In 2007, traffic congestion cost \$87.2 billion, including 4.2 billion hours of delay and 2.8 billion gallons of wasted fuel, in our nation's metropolitan areas. The average driver in 28 metropolitan regions experienced 40 or more hours of delay per year. Twenty-seven years ago, only Los Angeles experienced that level of congestion. Families are losing what precious little time they have together because of time spent in traffic on the way to and from work, picking up the kids at day care, or running the endless errands that seem a part of life in today's society.

At the same time, the quality of our transportation system is deteriorating. Currently, many segments of the nation's transportation infrastructure are reaching or have exceeded their useful design life. Today, almost 61,000 miles, accounting for 37 percent of all lane miles on the National Highway System, are in poor or fair condition; more than 152,000 bridges – one of every four bridges in the United States – are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete; and more than 32,500 public transit buses and vans have exceeded their useful life. The nation's largest public transit agencies face an \$80 billion maintenance backlog to bring their rail systems to a state-of-good-repair and, within the next six years, almost every transit vehicle in rural America—55,000 vehicles—will need to be replaced.

We cannot just focus on building more roads. We have to find broader solutions to address our transportation problems. That is why we must develop high-speed rail here in the United States.

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It is no secret that the United States lags woefully behind the rest of the world when it comes to developing high-speed rail. Japan, the nation that unveiled the world's first high-speed rail system in 1964, has a 1,350-mile network and is already at work building a line that will connect Tokyo with Osaka at speeds of more than 300 miles per hour.

France, which holds the world speed record for steel wheels-on-steel rail—357 miles per hour—used its high-speed rail system to pull entire regions from isolation, ignite growth, and remake quiet towns into thriving tourist destinations. After inaugurating its high-speed rail system in 1981, France developed a 1,180-mile network and plans to add another 1500 miles. The system currently carries a remarkable 100 million passengers annually.

Spain changed the demographics of entire regions with its high-speed rail line from Madrid to Seville, which opened in 1992. The line is so successful that more people travel between the two cities by rail than by car and airplane combined. Spain plans to spend more than \$100 billion over the next decade to build Europe's largest high-speed rail network. The project will put nearly everyone in Spain within 30 miles of a train station, and will create tens of thousands of jobs.

Earlier this year, China announced a plan to expand its high-speed rail system to a network of over 16,000 miles by the year 2020. In this year alone, China has poured over \$50 billion into this system.

A robust, high-speed rail system in America will go a long way toward solving some of our nation's economic, energy, environmental, and transportation challenges, and it will create thousands of jobs, something our nation desperately needs. These benefits, however, do not come without a price tag, and experience in other countries makes clear that a successful high-speed rail system will require a significant financial commitment.

A few years ago, that type of financial commitment would have been difficult to secure: instead of providing Amtrak with the funds it needed to get back on track, the Bush Administration called for Amtrak's bankruptcy.

But with the enactment of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (Public Law 110-432) in the 110th Congress and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Public Law 111-5) in this Congress, thanks to your efforts, America is on the verge of a new rail renaissance: a transformative moment in the history of transportation.

We need to build on that momentum; we stand ready to help move your vision of high-speed rail closer to reality. But given budget constraints, we cannot continue to rely on general authorizations and appropriations to finance high-speed rail. We need to identify a dedicated revenue source for high-speed rail, and we need your help to do that.

Sincerely,

Corrine Brown
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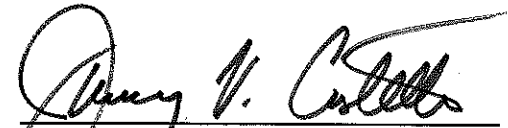
Tim Griffin

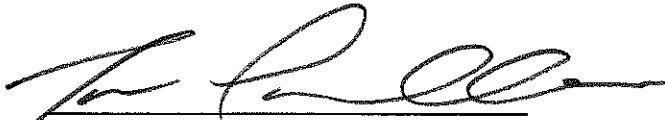
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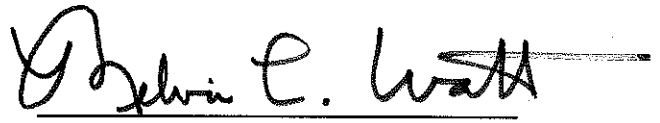

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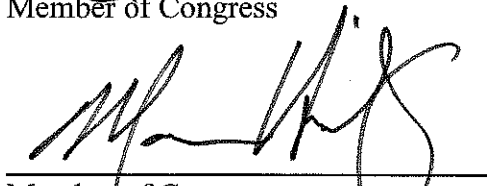

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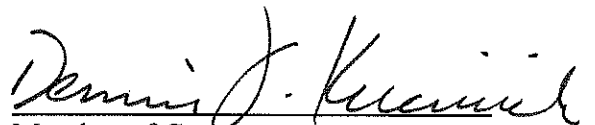

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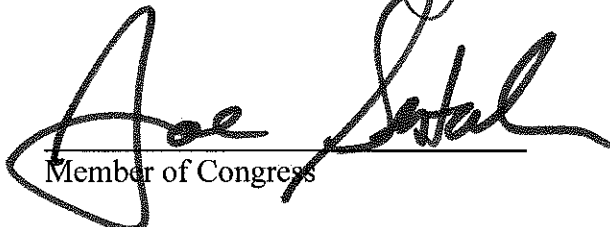

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