

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
173 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Collins:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, we write to request full funding of Amtrak's FY 2012 budget request.

While we are cognizant of this difficult budgetary climate, it is essential to fully support Amtrak's service to improve our intercity passenger rail system and connect our economic centers. Today, Amtrak is the only nationwide intercity passenger rail service. Every day, it serves on average 78,000 passengers in more than 500 communities—150 of them rural—across 46 states on nearly 300 trains. Amtrak is also the nation's largest provider of contract-commuter service for state and regional authorities and serves more than 800,000 people each weekday. Since 2000, ridership has risen nearly 37 percent. In 2010, Amtrak carried nearly 28.7 million passengers, marking the highest ridership total since Amtrak started operations in 1971. Amtrak is also on pace to break its annual ridership record during 2011.

Amtrak also improves our transportation system by reducing congestion and easing our dependence on foreign oil. Each year, Amtrak takes 50,000 planes out of the air and 8 million cars off the highways nationwide, resulting in less frequent and less extreme delays on our highways and in our skies. The population in our economic centers is expected to double by 2050 and our nation's already congested highways and skies will not be able to meet the demand created by this growth. In addition, Amtrak is almost 20 percent more efficient than domestic airline travel and 28 percent more efficient than auto travel on a per-passenger-mile basis, according to U.S. Department of Energy data.

Under the bipartisan Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), Congress established many deadlines for Amtrak to control costs, assess its future financial needs, and return the Northeast Corridor to a state-of-good-repair. Amtrak has consistently met PRIIA deadlines. Reduced funding for Amtrak operating expenses or capital expenses would harm its ability to satisfy PRIIA requirements and address critical national needs, such as debt reduction and compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. It would also impact Amtrak's ability to move forward with critical infrastructure and capacity projects. Accordingly, we support fully funding Amtrak's operating and capital request.

We appreciate your past support of Amtrak and look forward to working with you on this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Webb (D-VA)

Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)

John Rockefeller (D-WV)

Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

Ben Cardin (D-MD)

Tom Carper (D-DE)

Chris Coons (D-DE)

Dick Durbin (D-IL)

Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY)

John Kerry (D-MA)

Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

Carl Levin (D-MI)

Joe Lieberman (I-CT)

Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)

Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

Bernie Sanders (I-VT)

Chuck Schumer (D-NY)

Tom Udall (D-NM)

Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)

Ron Wyden (D-OR)