

June 21, 2011

Via Facsimile and First Class Mail

The Honorable John L. Mica
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Committee Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Messrs. Chairman and Shuster:

We are writing to express in the strongest possible language our opposition to your proposal to privatize Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC). The proposal is bad for the economy, will threaten a service that is vital to the well being of America, ignores the facts and history of passenger rail service in America and threatens to strip the value of the public investment in perhaps one of the most complicated and important pieces of public infrastructure in the world. You have stated that you have the support of labor for this proposal. We need to be absolutely clear about this point. We do not support this proposal and the vast majority of labor does not support this proposal for the obvious reasons - it threatens the public interest. Please stop misrepresenting our position on this to the public. You are wrong about labor's support for this ill conceived proposal and more importantly, you know you are wrong. If there is any doubt on this question in your mind about this, let this letter set the record straight. We do not support this bill.

Amtrak is a public-private success story. Amtrak pays a greater percentage of its operations from the fare box than any other passenger rail operation in the country. The privatization of passenger rail in Europe was a huge failure, sticking the European tax payer with greater costs with reduced service and increased fatalities of passengers and workers. These are facts. Repeating the failures of these experiments will not benefit America. Our own history has shown that when the private sector operated passenger rail service in the Northeast it was unable to do it. Without a publicly owned and operated Northeast Corridor the public and its economic interests will be put at risk at a time Amtrak has shown that it can operate the infrastructure and the service efficiently within the resources and parameters it is given to operate.

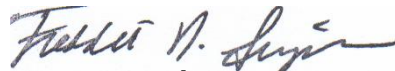
Your plan to sell the public's investment off to the private sector is ideologically driven, cynical and short sighted and will not provide better passenger rail service in the Northeast. Ultimately it will result in more public money being spent to undo the damage done by the private sector. When the public's interest is auctioned to the private sector the goal will not be public service but to extract maximum revenue while costing as little as possible. Eventually the infrastructure will be completed depreciated, debt will increase astronomically, the private sector will declare bankruptcy and the public will be required to rescue the service with far more

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additional tax dollars than if it had remained in the public's hands. How do we know this? We already did it with the bankruptcy of the Penn Central and the public bailout of that economic crisis. Your willingness to do a rerun of that economic catastrophe must be opposed by all who support the most efficient use of tax payer dollars, desire to see passenger service grow and prosper on the NEC and put the public's interest first. The Federal government needs to operate and maintain the NEC to ensure it is being operated in the people's interest, not the interests of Wall Street and other speculators.

Please withdraw your bill and start working on the serious business of properly funding and supporting passenger service and high speed rail in the Northeast and around the country.

Respectfully,


President

cc: The Honorable Nick Rahall
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure

The Honorable Corrine Brown
Committee Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure