

Another GOP Attempt to Defund Northeast Corridor Rail

by [Steven Higashide](#)



An amendment from Rep. Rod Frelinghuysen could defund rail projects in his home state of New Jersey and throughout the tri-state region.

Much of the recent [commentary](#) on Northeast Corridor high-speed rail has revolved around House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica's proposal to [privatize the system](#). But Dan Schned of America 2050 sends word of a near-term threat to rail in the corridor: An amendment that would take back \$1 billion in high-speed rail funds that were [awarded last month](#) — putting projects in our region at risk.

The amendment, offered by Rep. Rod Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), passed the House Appropriations Committee last week attached to [a water and energy bill](#). It would take back half of the \$2 billion in rail grants awarded from the funds returned by Florida after that state rejected a high-speed rail project. In our region, projects awarded money from this pool include:

- \$450 million for catenary wire and other improvements between New Brunswick, NJ, and Philadelphia which would create “a 24-mile segment of track capable of supporting train speeds up to 160 mph” according to USDOT, and should lead to more reliable NJ Transit service on the Northeast Corridor. Service today is frequently delayed by conditions on the Amtrak-owned line.
- \$295 million for the Harold Interlocking in Queens, a congested convergence of tracks where Amtrak, LIRR, and NJ Transit trains (headed to a storage yard in Queens) merge. Clearing up the interlocking would reduce delays for both Amtrak and the LIRR.
- \$58 million for improvements to New York's Empire Corridor, including a new Schnectady station and new track to relieve a bottleneck at Albany-Rensselaer, as well as \$1.4 million to study a new train station in Rochester with better connections to transit.
- \$30 million for Connecticut's New Haven-Springfield line, which would bring the state closer to its “[near-term vision](#)” to double Amtrak service, run 21 commuter trains a day, and bring service to 5 new stations.

Because these funds were awarded but have not yet been obligated (formally committed), they can still be taken back by Congress. The amendment would need to be passed in the full House and Senate to become law.