

National Association of Railroad Passengers: www.narprail.org

Letter to Congressional Conferees on FY 2012 Transportation Appropriations Negotiations

November 9, 2011

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Daniel Inouye
Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Thad Cochran
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation Chairman Patty Murray
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation Ranking Member Susan Collins
House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Norman Dicks
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation Chairman Tom Latham
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation Ranking Member John Olver

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) respectfully requests that you maintain the entirety of the Senate's \$1.48 billion for Amtrak and the \$100 million for the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Program in the final Fiscal Year 2012 Appropriations for Transportation, Housing & Urban Development bill.

We believe the House subcommittee's draconian operating-grant reduction to \$227 million would force an Amtrak shutdown. Equally unacceptable is the House subcommittee's provision to prohibit the use of Amtrak's operating funds on short-distance routes. This could eliminate almost 150 weekday trains and strand more than nine million passengers each year, harming the towns and cities those trains connect. It also would undercut negotiations between Amtrak and the states regarding the increased state payments required under PRIIA by October 16, 2013. Finally, the elimination of those trains would result in shifting of significant shared costs to the surviving Northeast Corridor and long-distance trains, underlining our concern that a \$227 million operating grant would force a system shutdown.

By prioritizing passenger rail infrastructure and operations spending, Congress will support existing jobs, spur job creation, reduce road congestion and increase economic productivity, reduce dependence on foreign oil, provide alternatives to families hurting from rising prices at the pump, and improve America's air quality and environment.

NARP requests the maximum possible funding be allocated to:

- **Amtrak's Operating Grant.** Amtrak carried a record-breaking 30.2 million passengers in Fiscal Year 2011, the eighth ridership record set over the past nine years and a 44 percent increase over ridership in FY 2000. It is vital that Amtrak have sufficient operating funds to meet rising demand while providing the quality service taxpayers deserve. Even at the Senate-passed level, Amtrak's work force will be significantly reduced.
- **Amtrak's Capital Grant.** With the U.S. on track to add 130 million additional Americans by the year 2050, it is essential that Amtrak have sufficient capital funding levels to meet the challenges of accommodating soaring demand for trains—including following through on existing equipment orders and placing new ones. But, even at the Senate level, Amtrak will have to put an end to working off the backlog of deferred investment in NEC infrastructure, and will be severely challenged to find the \$350 million in capital the engineering department needs just to keep the NEC running and to implement safety mandates from the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (including positive train control).
- **High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Program.** The Federal Railroad Administration has moved almost all the money provided for this program out the door to state transportation departments, many of which are requesting bids at this moment. It is essential that this jobs-creating program be replenished so that states can continue building America's 21st century transportation network.

Thank you for in advance for you consideration in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information on the benefits of passenger rail investment.

Sincerely,
Ross B. Capon
President & CEO
National Association of Railroad Passengers