

TTD NEWS RELEASE

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Radical Transit, Amtrak Privatization and Outsourcing Measures Must be Removed from House Surface Transportation Bill

Spending Flexibility Measures Needed in H.R.7 to Slow Transit Service and Job Cuts

WASHINGTON, DC—Edward Wytkind, president of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), issued the following statement on the American Energy & Infrastructure Jobs Act (H.R.7):

“There is no time to waste in completing a surface transportation bill that puts millions of Americans to work. With our economy still reeling and our transportation system falling apart, now is the time for Congress to pass a bipartisan, multi-billion-dollar reauthorization of transit and highway programs. Few initiatives considered by Congress are more important to the economy, our communities and America’s competitiveness.

“Unfortunately the bill introduced in the House Tuesday contains policy measures that make this otherwise critical legislation a grab-bag for K Street lobbyists and their corporate clients at the expense of public transit, Amtrak and transportation safety.

“The giveaways to foreign transit corporations are appalling. The bill includes heavy-handed federal mandates forcing wholesale privatization of public transit systems. For example, transit agencies could only maximize their federal share of funding if they agree to privatize major portions of their operations. These mandates represent a radical departure from bipartisan policy that has left privatization decisions to local transit authorities.

“These bullying tactics are a gross overreach and must be stripped from H.R.7.

“The legislation also lacks flexibility measures – championed by Reps. Russ Carnahan (D-MO), Steven LaTourette (R-OH) and a bipartisan majority of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – that permit transit systems to stave off service and job cuts and fare hikes during times of economic distress.

“The rail title in this bill ensures the firing of more than 2,000 Amtrak workers who serve the customers in food and beverage operations and who act as vital first responders in the event of accidents or incidents on trains. It also slashes Amtrak’s funding by one-third at a time when the company is experiencing record success. This is ideology run amok and in this instance it will kill good, middle-class jobs, threaten vital Amtrak services and place passengers at risk. We urge the committee to remove these blatant anti-Amtrak worker measures that serve no purpose other than to stir controversy and delay this must-pass legislation.

“The legislation also rolls back vital transportation safety programs such as firefighter training and health and safety protections for workers transporting hazardous materials. It also does away with mandated collision avoidance Positive Train Control systems that save lives.

“Passage of a strong surface transportation bill is one of our top priorities. We have worked with this committee, under Republican and Democratic Chairmen, for a generation promoting policies that boost investments, make our surface transportation system safer and put millions of people to work in good jobs.

“We will focus our energies on seeking support from both sides of the aisle to strip these risky policy experiments and giveaways from this must-pass transportation jobs bill.”

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