

June 11, 2013

The Honorable Bill Shuster

Chairman

Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

U.S. House of Representatives

2165 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster:

As reported by Politico, your June 6 comments about Amtrak's long distance trains caused anxiety among our members for it understandably raised the concern that these popular, heavily-used trains could be in jeopardy. We appreciate your that you are "not committed to" specific shut-downs. In a similar vein, we appreciated Chairman Denham's comment at the end of his May 21 hearing that his goal is to make the long distance routes more efficient.

Millions of Americans are already facing a loss of their personal mobility. Airlines are reducing the number of flights and have reduced or discontinued service to literally hundreds of smaller cities. Many older citizens are unable or unwilling to drive their personal automobiles for more than just a few miles; this population will grow dramatically over the next few decades in the U.S., and their needs must be accounted for. An increasing number of young people don't own automobiles, either as a personal choice or because they are unaffordable. Millions more find flying to be too expensive, too inconvenient or simply too unpleasant.

The National Association of Railroad Passengers believes that these people—and indeed all Americans—have the right to choose how they travel. We also believe it is a fundamental right that they be able to travel.

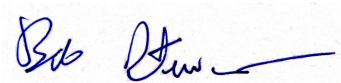
Some 173 million Americans—more than half of our total population—live within 25 miles of an Amtrak station that is served by long distance trains. Moreover, in 23 of the lower 48 states, long-distance trains are the only intercity passenger trains. The growth in revenues (up 24.4% from FY 2008 to FY 2012) and ridership on the long-distance trains, that has come in spite of unchanged capacity and aged equipment, is one indication of strong public support for these trains.

As your committee begins its work, we urge you to seek a fresh approach, focusing on legislation that will encourage and support improvement and expansion of the long-distance network.

Most of Amtrak's long-distance trains are currently at or near capacity—and capacity has not been expanded for decades. We are convinced that both ridership and revenues will continue to improve—if capacity is improved, by some combination of expanding existing trains, adding frequencies and adding routes.

We look forward to working with you on the ongoing passenger rail reauthorization.

Sincerely,



Robert Stewart

Chairman



Ross Capon

President and CEO