February 12, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cruz, Chair Collins, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Vice Chair Murray:

As you work to reauthorize surface transportation programs expiring in 2026, we strongly urge you to include advance appropriations for Amtrak and passenger rail programs in the final bill. The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) appropriated $66 billion in new funding from Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 through FY 2026 for passenger and freight rail, of which $22 billion was for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC) and National Network, $36 billion was for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program, and $5 billion was for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Grant Program. This funding has been instrumental in driving the largest boom in rail construction in Amtrak's history—enabling much-needed improvements to ensure safe, reliable infrastructure that carries millions of passengers every year. Continued advance appropriations beyond FY 2026 will allow Amtrak to continue this progress and maintain the cost-effectiveness of its capital improvement program.

Passenger rail is a vital part of our national transportation network, providing passengers with a valuable and efficient option for regional travel and connecting cities across America. Established by Congress in 1970, Amtrak operates on more than 21,400 miles of railroad on its NEC and National Network service lines and serves more than 500 communities across 46 states and Washington, D.C. Throughout 2025, Amtrak has focused on delivering reliable, high-quality service—surpassing systemwide customer service goals, expanding its network, and increasing network capacity. As a result, Amtrak experienced unprecedented ridership across its network. More than 34.5 million passengers chose Amtrak in FY 2025, as the company set all-time records for both ridership and revenue for the second consecutive year. Amtrak's capability to make responsible, strategic investments in its infrastructure and equipment has the company on track to achieve operational profitability.

The NEC faces a backlog of essential capital improvements after decades of underinvestment and deferred maintenance. Aging assets malfunction or fail, leading to delays and cancellations. An estimated $84.1 billion is needed to ensure the corridor's infrastructure is in a state of good repair by 2040. Thanks to IIJA's historic rail investments, Amtrak has already made significant progress in tackling the major backlog of capital needs, helping maintain the quality and reliability of service that drives ridership and revenue. Using IIJA funds, Amtrak completed the first year of construction on the Connecticut River Bridge replacement, with key components built in Florida, Alabama, and Pennsylvania. Significant progress has also been made on replacing the B&P Tunnel in Baltimore, which will eliminate one of the NEC's most severe bottlenecks.

Amtrak has also used IIJA funds to modernize and expand its services, bringing the nation closer to a world-class passenger rail system that showcases American innovation. In 2025, Amtrak launched its NextGen Acela train on the NEC. The trainset's construction generated over 1,300 new jobs across 29 states, with nearly all of its components made in America. Amtrak also introduced the Amtrak Mardi Gras Service—operating through Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana—which carried over 18,000 riders in the first month of service. In 2026, Amtrak's new Airo trainsets will enter service, offering improved amenities and reduced travel times. In addition, supported by IIJA funding, Amtrak is advancing its stations toward full ADA accessibility by 2029. Nineteen stations across the country reached compliance in 2025, with another 50 stations targeted for FY26.

Stable and predictable funding for passenger rail allows Amtrak to build and maintain a transportation system that optimizes efficiency and responds to the needs of travelers. Continued advance appropriations will enable Amtrak to maintain its skilled workforce and plan future projects for cost-effective delivery. Without the certainty afforded by advance appropriations, we risk undermining recent progress, wasting taxpayer dollars, and compromising Amtrak's ability to meet rising passenger demand. For these reasons, we urge you to provide advance appropriations for Amtrak and passenger rail from FY 2027 through at least FY 2031 in any surface transportation reauthorization legislation. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Andy Kim
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
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Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
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Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

John Fetterman
United States Senator