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May 20, 2021

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The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines,
and Hazardous Materials
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
589 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairman Payne, and
Ranking Member Crawford:

On behalf of America's \$74 billion public transportation industry, which directly employs more than 435,000 people and supports millions of private-sector jobs, I am pleased to submit this testimony for the record for the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure hearing on "*When Unlimited Potential Meets Limited Resources: The Benefits and Challenges of High-Speed Rail and Emerging Rail Technologies*" on May 6, 2021.

First, we thank you for holding this important and timely hearing on the future of high-performance passenger rail. APTA has recently endorsed "*A Vision for Connecting America's Urban and Rural Communities with Passenger Rail*". APTA believes that the transportation investments of today will be the foundation of a forward-looking strategy to establish safe, reliable, efficient, integrated, and climate-friendly alternatives for moving people. America has an opportunity to build a high-performance rail network to position us to overcome our economic challenges and compete in the global marketplace in the coming years.

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Crawford
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines,
and Hazardous Materials
House Committee on Transportation
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592 Ford Office Building
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Passenger rail is an underutilized mode, and ripe to connect with national and local transportation networks and rural areas with high-performance corridor services. These services will relieve congestion on highways and airspace and provide efficient, accessible, equitable, and environmental-friendly mobility options. New and reinvigorated rail corridors will have multiple users and would connect seamlessly with Amtrak and local and regional public transit services. Development of a national network and national rail plan should be guided by federal, state, and regional planning efforts, and coordinated with the various state-supported intercity passenger rail corridors.

Dedicated funding for passenger rail is critical to realize these goals. To that end, APTA strongly urges Congress and the Biden Administration to establish a robust Passenger Rail Trust Fund supported through new revenues, other than revenues dedicated to the Highway Trust Fund, to provide long-term certainty necessary for planning and funding multi-year projects and state-of-good-repair investments. Leveraging these funding streams with federal financing programs will further facilitate project delivery.

Currently, there is no dedicated, predictable funding program for passenger rail projects. States and other entities seeking to build or improve passenger rail must rely on several competitive grant programs to fund their significant capital needs. A dedicated Passenger Rail Trust Fund, together with significantly higher passenger rail investment, would provide long-term certainty and help fund critical projects that will repair, maintain, and improve our passenger rail systems today and in the future.

In addition, access to freight railroad rights-of-way is a significant issue to ensure effective implementation of a federal high-performance rail program. Appropriate incentives need to be provided to host railroads with the expectation that they will accommodate the public purpose and necessity of facilitating growth of passenger rail. Finally, the private sector should be offered opportunities to partner with the public sector in developing high-performance rail corridors.

We believe that seizing the opportunity to make these critical investments in passenger rail now will also help the nation meet its renewed commitments to racial and social equity and to addressing the global climate crisis. Enclosed is a copy of APTA's *Vision for Connecting America's Urban and Rural Communities with Passenger Rail*.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul P. Skoutelas
President and CEO

Encl.

A Vision for Connecting America's Urban and Rural Communities with Passenger Rail

May 5, 2021

The Proposition: What does America stand to gain from a substantial investment in high-performance passenger rail? What makes passenger rail best suited to generate positive, transformational change at this moment in time?

The Need and the Opportunity: The transportation investments of today will be the foundation of a forward-looking strategy to establish safe, reliable, efficient, integrated, and climate-friendly alternatives for moving people. America has an opportunity to learn from international success stories, and to build a high-performance rail network to position us to overcome our economic challenges and compete in the global marketplace in the coming years.

The Vision: For the past 60 years, Americans have relied overwhelmingly on highways and airlines for travel between regions. Passenger rail is the underutilized mode, and ripe to complement these networks with high-performance corridor services linking cities 300-600 miles apart, while connecting with national and local transportation networks and to rural areas. These services will relieve congestion on highways and airspace and provide efficient, accessible, equitable and environmental-friendly mobility options.

New and reinvigorated rail corridors will have multiple users and would connect seamlessly with local and regional public transit services and airports. Hubs will be in downtown business districts, generating jobs, income, and investment around stations, while providing convenient access to destinations and fostering community livability. Moreover, federal grants should prioritize alternative power technologies for equipment and facilities, including electrification of lines, to advance passenger rail's contribution to our nation's efforts to address climate change.

Amtrak's national network will be bolstered through investments that will address its repair backlog, modernize Northeast Corridor critical infrastructure, serve communities across the country with frequent and reliable service, and connect new city pairs. Development of the national network and a national rail plan will be guided by federal, state, and regional planning efforts, and coordinated with the various state-supported intercity passenger rail corridors. Private initiatives will be encouraged and supported as they proceed under different business models in select corridors.

Access to freight railroad rights-of-way is a significant issue to ensure effective implementation of a federal high-performance rail program. Appropriate incentives need to be provided to host railroads with the expectation that they will accommodate the public purpose and necessity of facilitating growth of passenger rail. Federal policies must encourage growth of both passenger and freight rail operations, recognizing the substantive public benefits to both networks.

Innovation and new technologies will be embraced as new ways are developed to enhance operations and better serve customers and communities. Consideration of new and evolving

technologies is ongoing and must not distract from the immediate need for investment in state-of-the-art high-performance rail.

The Program: APTA urges Congress and the Biden Administration to establish a Passenger Rail Trust Fund supported through new revenues, other than revenues dedicated to the Highway Trust Fund, to provide long-term certainty necessary for planning and funding multi-year projects and state-of-good-repair investments. Leveraging these funding streams with federal financing programs will further facilitate project delivery.

High-speed corridors will be selected based on criteria, with the purpose of getting several corridors in operation in the near-term. These corridors would provide models that could be emulated in other regions of the country. Projects should be advanced using progressive program delivery and regulatory oversight procedures to facilitate efficient, multi-year program implementation, as public safety and fiscal stewardship is assured.

The private sector should be offered opportunities to partner with the public sector. Where appropriate, corridor initiatives may competitively procure operation and maintenance services for passenger rail operation, in a fair and transparent manner. To ensure fair competition, all competing companies will comply with all federal railroad and other relevant national labor laws. These procurements can provide incentives for additional private investment.

Federal funding for research and development will enable the industry to partner with colleges and universities to better address future workforce capacity needs to design, construct, operate, and manage the passenger rail network of the future, and to pursue problem-solving research and innovation.

The Outcomes and Benefits: Robust investment in America's passenger rail networks will make our economy stronger, our environment cleaner, and economic and social opportunities more equitable—benefits that will sustain their transformative power over time.

By reducing travel times, a state-of-the-art high-performance rail network will bring the economic activity of megaregions closer together. This shrinkage of geography effectively enlarges labor and business markets, leading to more economic activity, tax base growth, and new linkages among businesses, suppliers, employees, and consumers.

Federal investment in passenger rail will stimulate the U.S. economy, creating good-paying manufacturing, construction, and professional jobs across America, including the critical clean energy jobs of the future.

Throughout American history, every successful transportation improvement has resulted from committed federal, local, and state leaders, along with private entities and citizens, who share a vision and possess the energy to turn that vision into reality. It is time to stop envying what other countries have. It is time to stop asking why we cannot do that. It is time to implement a high-performance rail network in America.