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Via Email

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Person Submitting Testimony:

Paul Worley, Chair, States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc. (SPRC)
Rail Division Director, North Carolina Department of Transportation

Submitted to:

The Subcommittee on the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

Agency the testimony is addressing:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary and the Federal Railroad Administration

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc. (SPRC) is an advocacy group made up of 24 State departments of transportation and passenger rail authority leaders from across the United States working together to support the development and growth of passenger rail service for America. Established in 2000, the SPRC currently has members representing the States of California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. Additional members include the Capital Corridor Joint Powers Authority, the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency, the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority.

Our members sponsor 30 intercity passenger routes serving 296 communities across America. Last year our trains carried almost 15 million passengers, representing 48% of Amtrak's total ridership. We also contributed \$786 million in revenues to Amtrak, through \$565 million in passenger revenues plus \$223 million in contract payments. (FFY2015 data cited, FFY2016 not yet available.)

As intercity passenger rail service sponsors, SPRC members are steadfastly committed to safety, service quality and reliability. Safety is critical to our service, passengers, employees, host railroads, and the communities we serve. There is no doubt that passengers and rail employees are safer on intercity trains than any other mode of transportation, and that a strong, national system approach to intercity passenger rail is critical to ensuring safety for all.

In December of 2015, for the first time in more than a decade, Congress passed a multi-year surface transportation authorization bill – the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act, P.L. 114-94). The bill included intercity passenger rail provisions for the first time. Also, the legislation divided the Amtrak grant between the Northeast Corridor and the National Network which is composed of state and agency supported routes as well as longer distance trains.

A key to understanding the strong interrelationships within the National Network is that the connectivity between the regional services and national network is important. State and agency sponsored services offer more frequencies on shorter corridors, while the national network of long distance services offers fewer daily frequencies. Both regional and long distance services are mutually beneficial, as they provide vital connectivity to many areas of the country. This is similar to how regional airlines connect to major airports, or local roads connect to the interstate freeways, which then connect to the important national highway system. Not only do long distance services provide end-to-end connections, but they also

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provide connections to rural communities along the routes that may not be served by other modes of intercity transportation.

One report by the Department of Transportation Inspector General found that (excluding the Auto Train) only 9 percent of Amtrak's "long-distance" passengers will ride the train from endpoint to endpoint; the vast majority will board or disembark at an intermediate station.¹ These routes provide critical transportation links to and from rural towns, connecting small town Americans to medical centers, universities, and other critical services.

Thanks to Congress' very recent efforts, connectivity within the intercity passenger rail network will also be international in scope. The enactment of the Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-316), signed into law on December 16, 2016, promotes two key national goals: enhancing U.S. national security, and increasing efficiency for travelers and commercial exchanges. The new law paves the way for expansion of preclearance facilities, operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, easing travel and commerce between Canada and the United States. We urge the Committee to examine the need for border infrastructure investment.

This bipartisan achievement calls for full funding of key provisions in FY 2018 transportation appropriations to allow successful implementation of the passenger rail related programs authorized in the FAST Act. SPRC urges fully funding the following provisions:

-The Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program, authorized at \$230m, is a national program with passenger and freight eligibilities, covering important rail safety and capital needs such as positive train control implementation, track upgrades to address congestion challenges for both passenger and freight service, rail line relocations, grade crossing improvements, projects to improve multimodal passenger connections, and rail research, including the valuable National Cooperative Rail Research Program (NCRRP). It is important to maintain the full range of eligibilities and flexibility in this program, which also uses benefit-cost principles to ensure critical rail resources are allocated to their best use.

- The Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair program, authorized at \$175m, will provide for capital projects to improve or replace faltering infrastructure assets and to bring existing assets into a state of good repair. The program prioritizes joint applications and local contributions of more than 50%.

- The Restoration and Enhancement Grants program, authorized at \$21.5m, will provide a start toward efforts throughout the country to restore intercity passenger rail routes to underserved communities in need of the economic development and mobility that a connection to the national rail network would bring. For example, these funds could assist in the restoration of passenger rail service between New Orleans, Louisiana and Orlando, Florida. This would:

- Improve accessibility for the more than 2 million residents in the proposed service area between New Orleans and Orlando that includes a growing senior population.
- Boost the Gulf Coast economy by connecting the growing population centers and tourist destinations, and support diverse jobs, health care, higher education, beaches, casinos and multiple military bases.
- Provide a critical evacuation route for Gulf Coast cities.

- The National Network, authorized at \$1.085b, supports both the continued operation of the national intercity passenger rail network and the state-supported routes. These funds will be used to maintain existing equipment and infrastructure, invest in improvements that support faster, more frequent and more reliable service, replace the aging fleet of locomotives and passenger rail cars, fund safety and security projects, and improve station accessibility under requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Included within the National Network authorization is a \$2m set-aside for the State-Supported Route Committee, which is critically important to timely resolution of cost sharing issues and serves as a forum for policy review and coordination among the States, Amtrak and the FRA.

¹ "Analysis of Cost Savings On Amtrak's Long-Distance Services" Report Number CR-2005-068 Date issued July 22, 2005

- Competitive, merit-based, TIGER Grants, which enable States and local governments to build National Network intercity passenger rail projects, where possible in partnership with private contributions. SPRC recommends \$500m for TIGER.

- Further, we request that the Committee provide adequate funding to continue the activities of the Section 305 Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee, as reauthorized in the FAST Act, to continue to advance the development and maintenance of standardized next generation passenger rail equipment specifications in support of reducing costs and rebuilding the US Rail manufacturing and supply industry.

Finally, we respectfully request that you include language that clearly recognizes that funds provided in these programs can be used for resilience and adaptation.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this vital topic. As always, we would be more than happy to provide additional information as requested.

Sincerely,



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