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Person Submitting Testimony:

Patricia Quinn, Chair, States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc. (SPRC)
Executive Director, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA)

Submitted to:

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

Via email at: THUD@appro.senate.gov

Agency the testimony is addressing:

USDOT

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc. (SPRC) is an advocacy group made up of 23 state department of transportation leaders from across the United States and 2 passenger rail authorities, who work together to support the development and growth of passenger rail service for America.

Our state members sponsor 29 - intercity passenger routes serving 296 communities across America. Last year our trains carried almost 15 million passengers, representing 48% of Amtrak's total ridership. In FY2015, we also contributed \$711 million in revenues to Amtrak, through \$489 million in passenger revenues plus \$222 million in contract payments, representing approximately 35% of Amtrak's total revenues.

SPRC members also partner with the USDOT and host freight railroads to make critical investments in rail safety and capacity, stations, and other network improvements to help ensure effective, reliable and efficient freight and intercity passenger services. All 50 states contract with railroads for a range of programs and projects including the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) highway-railroad crossing safety projects. 30 states are active in the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Rail State Safety Participation Program and 28 states engage in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) State Safety Oversight Program.

Safety is our primary concern, SPRC supported the Committee's decision to increase funding for Railway-Highway Grade Crossings above FAST Act authorizations in FFY 2016 and urges the Committee to continue to fund the Section 130 program at \$350 million in FFY 2017. Vehicle-train collisions and deaths at highway-rail grade crossings fell in 2015, along with injuries to pedestrians trespassing on train tracks. SPRC wants this trend to continue.

SPRC is pleased that the Congress authorized, and the President signed into law, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and that the legislation includes a much needed forum for resolving issues and progressing intercity passenger rail services—the State Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC). This committee is composed of representatives of state intercity passenger rail service sponsors, Amtrak and the FRA, and is critically important to timely resolution of cost-sharing issues, and as a forum for policy review and coordination among the parties. Again, we thank the Committee for providing \$500,000 to assist state representatives to participate in the meetings and strengthen the overall effort.

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The FAST Act authorized three new rail capital investment programs that provide the foundation for a safer more efficient national intercity passenger rail system, the “Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements” program, the “Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair” program and the “Restoration and Enhancement Grants” program. These programs are essential for the development of a safe and efficient intercity passenger rail system.

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.

In light of recent tragic events in Europe and elsewhere as well as the release of reports and scientific studies related to climate change, we respectfully request that you include language that clearly recognizes that funds provided in the programs can be used for resilience and adaptation. We would stress, both Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration are thoroughly aware of these issues and that they are making every effort to incorporate adaption and resilience in all of their efforts. Further, this is not a request for additional funding rather an acknowledgement of the world we live in.

We acknowledge the untenable budget environment that you face but respectfully request that the Committee provide some degree of funding for essential intercity passenger rail needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit recommendations for state federal rail safety, and rail infrastructure investments.

Respectfully,



Patricia Quinn
Chair, States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc.
Executive Director, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Enclosure