



May 5, 2016

United States House of Representatives

Dear Members of the Committee on Appropriations:

As you consider Fiscal Year 2017 Appropriations for Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, the OneRail Coalition urges you to support investments in rail infrastructure and operations. These investments will create and maintain good domestic jobs, enhance productivity, spur economic growth, relieve road and air congestion, and protect the environment.

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 bipartisan support of this bill, led by Representatives Shuster, DeFazio, Graves, Holmes Norton, Denham, and Capuano, and verified by an overwhelming 359-65 vote in the House and an 83-16 vote in the Senate, was an acknowledgement that even in politically turbulent times we can all agree that long term, sustainable investment in a strong and resilient infrastructure is critical to moving our nation forward.

This bipartisan achievement calls for robust FY 2017 transportation appropriations to allow successful implementation of the programs authorized in the FAST Act. In particular, the OneRail Coalition urges fully funding the following provisions:

- The Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program, authorized at \$190m, 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 \$140m, 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 \$20m, 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.

- The National Network, authorized at \$1.026b, 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.
- The Northeast Corridor, authorized at \$474m, supports the nation's critical rail corridor extending from Boston down to Washington, DC, which is one of the world's most complex and valuable rail assets, supporting not only Amtrak intercity service but millions of daily commuter rail riders and important freight service.
- Competitive, merit-based, TIGER Grants, which enable States and local governments to build innovative multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional projects, frequently in partnership with significant private contributions. These types of projects are very difficult to fund through traditional programs. Since 2009, the TIGER program has provided nearly \$4.6 billion to 381 projects in all 50 states – including 134 projects to support rural and tribal communities. Demand for the program has been overwhelming with more than 6,700 applications requesting more than \$134 billion for transportation projects across the country. The Coalition urges funding for TIGER similar to the \$500m that was provided in FY16.
- New Starts/Small Starts Capital Investment Grants, authorized at \$2.302b, which are used throughout the country to leverage local investments to build and expand commuter rail, light rail, and heavy rail systems. There is tremendous demand for these rail systems – \$3.5b has been recommended in FY17 funding to advance 31 projects across the country, including ten already in the existing New Starts Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) process, seven in the New Starts Engineering phase, four in the Core Capacity Engineering phase, and ten in the Small Starts Engineering phase. If projects are delayed due to lack of funding, benefits are delayed, costs go up, and economic growth is put on hold.
- Public Transit Innovation, authorized at \$20m in general funds in addition to funding from the Mass Transit Account, supports public transportation research and demonstration projects, technical assistance and workforce development, and public transportation safety and transit asset management support services within the FTA. Collectively, these programs help enhance system safety, protect and preserve billions of dollars of public transportation investments, and enhance and support transit agency operations efficiency.

Finally, the OneRail Coalition concurs with the U.S. DOT's recent conclusion in April 2016, based on its Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, that "current data limitations are so profound" in predicting the impacts of federal truck size and weight limits that "no changes in the relevant Federal truck size and weight laws and regulations should be made until these data limitations are overcome."

Specifically, the OneRail Coalition opposes any amendment that would increase federal limits on truck weights from 80,000 to 91,000 pounds, nationally or in a single state, which would further stress the nation's already underfunded highway network. At a time when state and local transportation departments are straining to meet infrastructure maintenance demands for the foreseeable future,

actions that will accelerate highway damage and costs by diverting freight traffic from privately funded railroads to publicly subsidized roads and putting heavier trucks on those roads are not in the national interest.

Further, actions that would divert freight traffic from the railroads to the nation's highways would add to highway congestion, fuel consumption, and harmful emissions. Finally, any diversion of freight from rail to truck would likely diminish railroad resources available to invest in maintenance and capacity and therefore have negative impacts on not only freight rail service but also on the intercity passenger rail and commuter rail services that depend on freight rail infrastructure.

The OneRail Coalition believes that rail is a crucial component of an efficient transportation network that allows people and goods to move quickly and safely to their destinations, enhancing productivity, creating jobs, and allowing America to remain the largest and best functioning economy in the world. A smooth logistics system with intermodal connectivity and without major chokepoints also strengthens our exporters' ability to compete in the global economy.

The nation's privately owned freight railroads are investing billions in their own infrastructure and equipment – over \$26 billion planned in 2016 and more than \$600 billion total since 1980. While this will continue, public investments in rail transportation infrastructure are also critical to spur economic growth and encourage new business development, which will add new jobs and expand employment opportunities nationwide. Investment in rail infrastructure, both private and public, also supports hundreds of thousands of good-paying private sector rail supply and service jobs throughout the country. The record is clear that rail is safe, productive, efficient, and environmentally sustainable, and that rail promotes energy independence and contributes positively to public health and well-being.

The OneRail Coalition thanks you for considering our thoughts. We would be pleased to discuss the benefits of rail investments in greater detail with you.

Sincerely,

Anne Canby
Director, OneRail Coalition

About the OneRail Coalition:

OneRail is a diverse group of rail stakeholders who have come together to educate America about the benefits of a strong freight and passenger rail system. Our members include the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners (**AAPRCO**), American Public Transportation Association (**APTA**), American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (**ASLRRRA**), **Amtrak**, Association of American Railroads (**AAR**), Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (**BLET**), Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (**BMWE**), Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (**BRS**), National Association of Railroad Passengers (**NARP**), National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association (**NRC**), Railway Supply Institute (**RSI**), **SMART** Transportation Division, States for Passenger Rail Coalition (**S4PRC**), and the Transportation Communications International Union/International Association of Machinists (**TCU/IAM**).

Our Associate Supporters include **AECOM, Alstom, Caterpillar, General Electric, HNTB, Parsons, Parsons Brinckerhoff, and Siemens**. These global companies represent the engineering and manufacturing sectors that are an essential component of private sector job creation in the transportation industry in the United States.