

July 21, 2011

The Honorable Richard Durbin
U.S. Senator
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

As chair of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, I would like to thank you and Senators Murray and Collins for introducing S. 942, the Transportation Infrastructure Grants and Economic Reinvestment (TIGER) Act. Since the TIGER program was established two years ago, experiences around the Nation provide real examples of the direct link between strategic infrastructure investment and economic growth. Intercity passenger rail projects especially lend themselves to achieving the measureable, sustainable goals envisioned by the program. It is clear that progress made by states to date supports the need for continuation of the program. Additionally, projects funded by the TIGER program have resulted in successful partnerships between the federal government, states and the Class I freight railroads to deliver projects that both improve the movement of goods as well as passengers.

While there are many examples of successful projects that wouldn't have progressed without that critical federal TIGER investment, the Tower 55 project, which was awarded \$34 million in TIGER II funds in the fall of 2010, is one such example. Tower 55 is a rail intersection in downtown Fort Worth, Texas where Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) lines cross, and has become a major rail and traffic bottleneck. The Tower 55 rail intersection currently operates at 90 percent above capacity, handling close to 100 trains per day. Passenger trains currently experience an average 30 minute delay daily while freight trains experience up to 90 minute delays. The project will increase rail capacity by more than 40 percent over first half of 2010 traffic levels and will avoid the environmental and economic cost of having to send freight on longer routes or via an alternative mode of transportation. It will also enhance safety through elimination of several at-grade pedestrian crossings and improve Amtrak and commuter rail reliability by alleviating current delays. In addition to the significant TIGER investment and funds from the state and city, the private railroads are also investing approximately \$65 million in this project.

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Another successful TIGER project is the Colton Crossing project, which received \$33.8 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) TIGER funds in February 2010. The crossing is located in the City of Colton, California along the major east-west tracks for UP and north-south tracks for BNSF. Amtrak and commuter railroad Metrolink also use the crossing for passenger rail service. More than 110 trains passed through Colton Crossing daily in 2008 and it has become a major chokepoint for moving goods out of and into Southern California, the nation's largest trade gateway. The Colton Crossing project will eliminate the mainline at-grade rail crossing and will provide significant local, regional and national benefits. Analysis has determined that the value of these public benefits significantly exceeds the over \$130 million in federal and state funds invested in the project. With the private freight railroads contributing the remainder of the funding - \$100 million - the project is moving forward with construction scheduled to start this fall.

Again, thank you for your leadership to continue such a successful multi-modal transportation program. We look forward to working with you as S. 942 progresses through Congress.

Sincerely,



Paula J. Hammond, P.E.
Chair, States for Passenger Rail Coalition