

March 23, 2012

The Honorable John L. Mica
Chairman
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John J. Duncan, Jr.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Highways & Transit
2207 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Subcommittee on Railroads
204 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, III
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Highways
& Transit
2134 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Corrine Brown
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Railroads
2336 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Northern
New England
Passenger
Rail Authority

Southern High
Speed Rail
Commission

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC), an organization representing 34 member states across the nation, I write to encourage you to support amendments to the surface transportation authorization legislation that would provide additional flexibility to states by eliminating the three-year limit on the use of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program funding for operating intercity passenger rail service.

As you know, the primary purpose of the CMAQ program is to fund transportation projects that reduce air pollution emissions in areas designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as non-attainment or in maintenance with respect to National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Current policy limits use of CMAQ funding to offset operating costs of intercity passenger rail for a period of three years, however, the beneficial impacts of transit services and intercity passenger rail services are a proven and eligible tool in improving air quality. These projects not only meet initial program eligibility criteria, the emissions benefits sustain and increase over time as ridership grows.

State-sponsored intercity passenger trains continue to have the highest rate of ridership growth of any trains operated by Amtrak, and last year comprised 48 percent of all intercity passenger trips. We are entering a time of profound change to the way people and goods travel as well as tighter availability of funds with which to invest and operate our transportation system. More and more people are using Amtrak and transit, and with an expanding economy vehicular traffic-caused congestion will again strain the existing highway network. Accordingly, as Congress shifts more responsibility to the states to plan, design, finance, construct, maintain, procure equipment, contract for operation, and manage these services, states need to have the flexibility to use CMAQ funds for these ongoing purposes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Hammond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

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

cc: Kurt Steudle, P. E., President and John Horsley, Executive Director, AASHTO
Eugene A. Conti, Jr., Secretary NCDOT, Chairman AASHTO Standing Committee on Rail
Transportation
Ray LaHood, Secretary, USDOT