

Chair, **Patricia Quinn**, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority  
Vice Chair, **Jennifer Moczygemba**, Texas DOT  
Secretary, **Johnson Bridgewater**, Oklahoma DOT  
Treasurer, **Paul Worley**, North Carolina DOT



**S4PRC.org**

July 3, 2013

The Honorable Anthony R. Foxx  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

On behalf of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC), a coalition of 34 states that work together to support the development and growth of intercity passenger rail service for America, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of Transportation. As you are well aware, providing safe, efficient transportation in an energy efficient, environmentally sustainable manner is a challenge at all levels of government. Intercity passenger rail can play a meaningful role in meeting these challenges.

SPRC shares the President's fundamental commitment to a national intercity passenger rail system. We have worked collaboratively with the Federal Railroad Administration to make that shared vision a reality. Together we are making measurable progress toward achieving that goal. In particular, SPRC members have been investing federal dollars from the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program to both improve existing passenger rail service and move to higher speed service. SPRC continues to be very involved in the implementation of Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), which requires states to take over from Amtrak the full cost of intercity passenger rail routes under 750 miles.

As states work to build out intercity passenger rail systems and increase service, there is one area where the federal government could further aid these efforts. SPRC was pleased that the last surface transportation authorization bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) Act (P.L. 112-57), codified administrative policy to allow the use of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program funding to offset operating costs of intercity passenger rail. In June, the Federal Highway Administration issued Interim Guidance regarding the use of CMAQ funds for operating expenses. While allowing some additional flexibility in the use of those funds, the Interim Guidance unfortunately failed to remove an existing administrative three year cap on the use of funds for operating expenses for intercity passenger rail. We strongly urge you to personally review this matter as it is within the purview of USDOT, as the beneficial impacts of intercity passenger rail and transit services are a proven and eligible tool in improving air quality.

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New Hampshire  
New York  
Nevada  
North Carolina  
Oklahoma  
Oregon  
Pennsylvania  
Rhode Island  
South Carolina  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Vermont  
Virginia  
Washington  
Wisconsin  
  
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Making such a small administrative change would give states additional flexibility to pay for intercity passenger rail, thereby furthering a goal of the Administration to reduce emissions and improve air quality. On June 25<sup>th</sup>, in his seminal speech at Georgetown University on climate change, when referring to coal fired utility plants, the President directed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to put an end to carbon pollution and in doing so said:

*"I'm also directing the EPA to develop these standards in an open and transparent way, to provide flexibility to different states with different needs, and build on the leadership that many states, and cities, and companies have already shown."*

Please give states the same flexibility with regard to intercity passenger rail operating expenses to meet their many and varied transportation needs. As you may be aware, the President has clearly made the connection between resilience, climate change and the need for investment in rail. The President's "Plan to Fight Climate Change," states that:

*"In addition, the President's FY 2014 Budget proposes \$200 million through the Transportation Leadership Awards program for Climate Ready Infrastructure in communities that build enhanced preparedness into their planning efforts, and that have proposed or are ready to break ground on infrastructure projects, **including transit and rail**, to improve resilience."*

Again, welcome. SPRC very much looks forward to working with you to help achieve both the President's goals for a national intercity passenger network and providing a cleaner, healthy environment for all Americans now and in the future.

Best wishes,



Patricia Quinn

Chair, States for Passenger Coalition

Executive Director, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority