Dear Chairman Inouye, Vice Chairman Cochran, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Dicks:

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill, we strongly urge you to maintain the $1.48 billion for Amtrak and the $100 million for high-speed and intercity passenger rail funding included in the Senate Appropriations Committee reported bill. We also urge you to oppose the cuts proposed in the House Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee reported bill to Amtrak’s operating funds and the elimination of funding for state-supported routes.

Amtrak is the only nationwide intercity passenger rail service. Amtrak recently announced that a record 30.2 million passengers traveled on its trains in FY 11, marking the highest ridership total since Amtrak started operations in 1971. Since 2000, ridership has risen nearly 44 percent. Every day, it serves on average 82,700 passengers in more than 500 communities—150 of them rural—across 46 states on nearly 300 trains. Amtrak is also the nation’s largest provider of contract-commuter service for state and regional authorities and serves more than 900,000 people each weekday.

The House Subcommittee bill would have devastating impacts on Amtrak by reducing funding for Amtrak’s operating expenses by 60 percent and eliminating state-supported routes. The legislation would result in at least 1,500 Amtrak employees losing their jobs, and would likely end many of Amtrak’s long distance trains. Additionally, this proposal would eliminate a transportation option for more than 13 million passengers that depend on the State-supported routes, which are some of the busiest and fastest growing routes in the country. It would also undermine the work states have already done with Amtrak to reach agreements on state contributions for state-supported routes. Congress should not impose a unilateral decision that would strip states of their ability to negotiate a fair contribution with Amtrak.

Additionally, Congress has maintained a commitment to high-speed and intercity rail for over a decade. The Senate bill continues this commitment and ensures that Amtrak has the resources it needs to continue successful operations. The Senate bill also includes $100 million to allow more states and communities to benefit from faster, more reliable passenger rail service. States and communities around the country are eager for federal funds to help advance rail projects.
Last year, the Department of Transportation received nearly 100 applications for high-speed rail funding, but they were only able to fulfill fewer than half of those requests. In the short-term, this funding will provide targeted investments to support state rail programs, aid economic recovery efforts and lay the foundation for the high-speed passenger rail network.

As you continue working on the FY 2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, we urge you to reject the House’s cuts and to maintain the funding provided to Amtrak and high-speed intercity passenger rail in the Senate bill. We appreciate your consistent support of Amtrak and the passenger rail programs and look forward to working with you on this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter  Frank R. Lautenberg
U.S. Representative  U.S. Senator
Co-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus  Co-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus

Richard J. Durbin  Corrine Brown
U.S. Senator  U.S. Representative
Co-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus  Co-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus

David Price  Zoe Lofgren
U.S. Representative  U.S. Representative
Co-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus  Co-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus

Tim Walz  John B. Larson
U.S. Representative  U.S. Representative
Co-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus  Vice-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus
Robert Andrews
U.S. Representative
Vice-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus

Earl Blumenauer
U.S. Representative
Vice-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus

Laura Richardson
U.S. Representative
Vice-Chair Bicameral HSIPR Caucus
Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator

Tom Udall
U.S. Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator

Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator
Peter DeFazio
U.S. Representative

Rosa DeLauro
U.S. Representative

John Dingell
U.S. Representative

Keith Ellison
U.S. Representative

Sam Farr
U.S. Representative

Bob Filner
U.S. Representative

Al Green
U.S. Representative

Alcee L. Hastings
U.S. Representative

Maurice Hinchey
U.S. Representative

Rush Holt
U.S. Representative

Mike Honda
U.S. Representative

Jesse L. Jackson Jr.
U.S. Representative

Sheila Jackson Lee
U.S. Representative

Henry C. Johnson Jr.
U.S. Representative
Bill Pascrell Jr.
U.S. Representative

Chellie Pingree
U.S. Representative

Steven Rothman
U.S. Representative

Dutch Ruppersberger
U.S. Representative

Bobby L. Rush
U.S. Representative

Tim Ryan
U.S. Representative

Jan Schakowsky
U.S. Representative

Adam Schiff
U.S. Representative

Allyson Y. Schwartz
U.S. Representative

Robert C. Scott
U.S. Representative

Albio Sires
U.S. Representative

Paul D. Tonko
U.S. Representative

Edolphus Towns
U.S. Representative

Mel Watt
U.S. Representative
Gary C. Peters  
U.S. Representative

Richard E. Neal  
U.S. Representative

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
U.S. Representative

Henry A. Waxman  
U.S. Representative

Cc:  Senator Murray  
Senator Collins  
Representative Latham  
Representative Oliver