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## Via Email

Date: March 27, 2020

### Person Submitting Testimony:

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Passenger Rail Manager, Wisconsin Department of Transportation

### Submitted to:

The Subcommittee on the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

### Agency the testimony is addressing:

U. S. Department of Transportation  
Office of the Secretary and the Federal Railroad Administration

During this unforeseen and most difficult period in our nation's - and the world's - history we remain hopeful for the timely restoration of our quality of life built upon connected communities, strong government institutions, and a vibrant, growing economy. One critical factor in our nation's recovery will be the resiliency of our integrated transportation network. The efficient movement of both freight and people by rail will fill a critical role in revitalization. As we take on the challenges we will face in the coming months, and beyond, a strong intercity passenger rail system will be one of the key components needed to assist in our nation's recovery. Therefore, we respectfully submit the following FFY21 testimony on behalf of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition.

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc. (SPRC), established in 2000, consists of 24 State departments of transportation and passenger rail authorities from across the United States who work together to support the development and growth of passenger rail service.

In addition to the Amtrak National System routes our Members sponsor 29 intercity passenger rail routes serving 296 communities across America. Last year State Supported trains carried almost 15 1/2 million passengers, representing 47% of Amtrak's total ridership. This contributed more than \$800 million in revenue to Amtrak, through \$521 million in passenger revenues plus \$280 million in state contract payments.

SPRC members are steadfastly committed to safety, service quality and reliability. Safety is critical to our service, passengers, employees, host railroads and the communities we serve.

We are extremely grateful for the Subcommittee's continued leadership in advancing rail program funding levels. This investment in rail will enable our States and Rail Authorities to build upon their well-documented success in strengthening our national intercity passenger rail network.

As you turn your attention to FFY21, we urge the Senate THUD Subcommittee to build upon the crucial rail transportation infrastructure investments in the following programs through increased levels of funding reflective of the needs, (over \$8 billion) identified in a recent coalition survey (which includes responses from 20 of 24 SPRC members) of ready to go projects in the pipeline:

- **Amtrak's National Network, which supports both the national long-distance intercity passenger rail network and the existing 29 state-supported routes.** These investments are the life blood our passenger rail system. The funds are used to maintain existing equipment and infrastructure, invest in improvements that support faster, safe, frequent and reliable service, replace the aging fleet of locomotives and passenger rail cars, improve station accessibility under the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and implement safety and security projects.

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- **Amtrak's Northeast Corridor**, which supports our nation's vital rail corridor from Boston, MA to Washington, DC. In addition to connecting the Northeast's major metropolitan centers nearly half of the nation's rail commuter trips depend on the Northeast Corridor infrastructure.
- **Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI)** grants program, which includes eligibility for a broad range of rail projects and activities such as the deployment of vitally needed rail safety technology including Positive Train Control (PTC), track upgrades to address congestion challenges for both passenger and freight service, rail line relocations, projects to improve multimodal passenger connections, rail research, and highway-rail grade crossing improvements.
- **Federal-State Partnership of State of Good Repair (SOGR)** grants program, to replace or repair critical rail assets suffering from a backlog of deferred maintenance. We also propose expanding eligibility to private assets used to support public intercity passenger rail operations and to include capital overhauls of passenger rail equipment.
- **Restoration and Enhancement** grants program, to restore intercity passenger rail routes to underserved communities in need of economic development and mobility that a connection to the nation's rail network would bring and enhance existing corridors.
- Competitive, merit-based **BUILD Grants** which enable State and local governments to build innovative multimodal and multi-jurisdictional projects, where possible in partnership with private contributions, which are unlikely to receive support from other federal sources.
- **New Starts/Small Starts Capital Investment Grants**, which communities use to leverage local investments to build and expand commuter rail, light rail, and heavy rail systems. There is tremendous demand for these rail systems - far more than is available even at the FFY20 appropriations level.
- **Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF)** Loan Program has been an underutilized loan program with great potential benefits that will be enhanced with a FFY21 appropriation that is more consistent with the needs and at levels greater than those appropriated in FFY20.
- **The State Supported Route Committee (SAIPRC)**, created by the FAST Act, which is essential for the growth and well-being of the national intercity passenger rail system that provides a vital connection to metropolitan regions with rural communities.
- The **Section 305 Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee, (NGEC)** reauthorized in the FAST Act, which continues to advance the development and maintenance of standardized next generation passenger rail equipment specifications in support of lowering operating and maintenance costs, extending vehicle life expectancy, and reinvigorating the US Rail manufacturing and supply industry.
- Continued investment in **Positive Train Control (PTC)** with the inclusion of operations and ongoing maintenance costs as eligible expenses.
- We also support enabling both **Right-of-Way acquisition and rebuilding and refurbishment of passenger rail equipment as eligible expenses** thereby providing increased opportunity to expand intercity passenger services and capacity while enabling economic benefits to accrue within America's railroad supply industry by supporting job growth and retention.

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition stands ready to assist the Subcommittee and the full Appropriations Committee as you look to build upon the FFY20 investments in rail infrastructure, both public and private.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this critical topic. We would be more than happy to provide additional information as requested.

Sincerely



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