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The States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc. (SPRC) is an alliance of 24 State and Regional Transportation Officials and Passenger Rail Authorities from across the United States who work together to promote the development, implementation and expansion of intercity passenger rail as a part of an integrated transportation network. SPRC members have worked together to develop principles we believe should be considered during the development of a federal surface transportation bill.

SPRC Principles

Amtrak Board members charge must include consideration of all service lines, including the interests of State-Supported and Long-Distance Routes. This is critical in regard to State-supported, Intercity Passenger Rail services which account for nearly 50% of Amtrak's total annual ridership.

Establish a dedicated capital funding program for intercity passenger rail that includes a formula funding program with match requirements to mirror the Federal Highway Program in addition to the discretionary grant programs. To improve and expand passenger rail service States, transportation authorities, and Amtrak should be eligible as grant recipients with project eligibility to include infrastructure improvements, rolling stock acquisition, and capital maintenance of equipment. Eligible project costs should be made available under multi-year federal support agreements, with partial funding of project elements (without independent utility) not impacting future applications for additional allocations.

Reauthorize funds for both the Amtrak National Network and the Amtrak Northeast Corridor to continue efficient and effective passenger rail mobility, recognizing that it is a national modal network, in the same manner as the Interstate and National Highway System programs.

Reauthorize the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grant Program, State of Good Repair Grant Program (SOGR), and the Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program at increased funding levels reflective of the immediate project needs (over \$8 billion) identified in the 2019 SPRC Member Survey of Ready-To-Go Projects in the Pipeline. Additionally, within the CRISI Program we highly recommend eligibility be extended to cover PTC maintenance activities and costs, as well as funding for emerging technologies which will enhance safety.

California
Colorado
Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission
Connecticut
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Louisiana
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
Nevada
New York
North Carolina
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
Wisconsin
Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority
San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority

Expand the eligibility of the State of Good Repair Program beyond “publicly owned assets” should be expanded to allow for funding of non-public assets with the requirement that such funding results in some guaranteed level of public access (e.g., railroad slots or shared public ownership. Eligibility should also be expanded to include capital overhauls of passenger rail equipment. Such an approach will incentivize privately owned railroads to partner with public agencies and potentially expand the provision of passenger railroad service in areas outside of the Northeast Corridor.

Establish clear timely mandates for the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) in the award and deployment of grant programs. Currently, federal grant programs are not deployed by USDOT in a timely manner resulting in limited ability for states to commit to and deliver programs. All steps to grant award selection, including the execution of grant agreements, should be completed within a fixed timeframe, with no penalty or constraints placed on grantees in the event of delays by USDOT.

Projects with over 50% match should not automatically receive priority selection preference. Awards should consider the overall service benefits and support improvements that aide in ensuring safety, ridership growth and/or maintaining sustainability of services. In addition, capital projects should be financed with no less than 80% federal source available for awards, and matched through a combination of state, local, regional, and private funding.

Federal credit programs should not be counted as part of the Federal financial share of projects.

Create a legislative resolution to the issue of “States as Railroads” and System Safety Program responsibility. States who sponsor, but do not operate, intercity passenger rail services, are not railroads nor are they railroad carriers. In 2017, Nebraska’s Senator Deb Fischer introduced the Railroad Advancement of Innovation and Leadership with Safety (RAILS) Act. Section 225 of the bill includes language that clarifies that States are not rail carriers if they do not operate a rail service. SPRC recommends the language be incorporated into reauthorization.

Establish and fund a Long-Distance Rail Route Task Force as identified under PRIIA Section 210.

Reauthorization of the following rail related entities and the authorization of funds necessary to ensure the continuity of their operations:

- the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee
- the Northeast Corridor Commission
- the Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

Updated: March 25, 2020