

Statement of Arun Rao, Chair of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc. (SPRC)

to the

Senate Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, & Related Agencies

Agency the testimony is addressing:

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

On behalf of the 24 State and Regional Transportation Officials and Passenger Rail Authorities across the United States that are members of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC), I would like to thank you and your Committee colleagues for your leadership and commitment to intercity passenger rail as evidenced in the recently enacted FY22 Omnibus Appropriations Bill. SPRC is an alliance of state and regional transportation officials who works together to promote the development and growth of Intercity Passenger Rail as part of an integrated national transportation network. Additionally, our Coalition members sponsor 29 intercity passenger rail (IPR) routes serving 296 communities across America and represent nearly half of Amtrak national ridership. The members of SPRC include:

California	Missouri
Capitol Corridor	New Mexico
Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA)	New York
Colorado - Southwest Chief	North Carolina
& Front Range Passenger Rail Commission	Northern New England Passenger
Connecticut	Rail Authority (NNEPRA)
Illinois	Oregon
Indiana	Pennsylvania
Iowa	San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo	Vermont
Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN)	Virginia
Louisiana	Washington
Massachusetts	Wisconsin
Michigan	
Minnesota	

Intercity passenger rail is a key component of our Nation's transportation network and represents a safe, energy efficient, and economically beneficial transportation option. Each day, millions of passengers travel on regional and long-distance intercity passenger trains, and commuter rail. Our member states and intercity passenger rail authorities are the primary entities responsible for the initiation, implementation, oversight and/or management of regional intercity passenger rail service outside of the northeast corridor. As Chair of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, I encourage the subcommittee to consider the following as you work through the process of developing the FY2023 transportation spending bill:

- Sustain investment in the planning, design, and construction of railroad and facility improvements that support and enhance intercity passenger rail service across the nation as well as between the U.S. and Canada by fully funding the rail provisions authorized in the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act (IIJA). This includes fully funding the four following IIJA discretionary programs:
 - Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Grants,
 - Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grants,
 - Restoration and Enhancement Grants, and
 - Railroad Crossing Elimination Program.

- Continued investment in the merit-based National Infrastructure Project Assistance program, the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America program, and the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program which enable State and local governments to build critical multimodal and multi-jurisdictional projects, where possible in partnership with private contributions;
- Continued investment in Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC);
- Continued investment in Amtrak's National Network, which supports both the national long-distance intercity passenger rail network and the existing 29 state-supported routes that the majority of SPRC member states sponsor. The funds are used to maintain and improve existing equipment and infrastructure, invest in improvements that support faster, more frequent, and more 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 fund safety and security projects;
- Investment in programs and projects that will work to seamlessly link intercity passenger rail to other modes of transportation;
- Providing the authorized funding levels to support the activities of the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC), the state supported route committee, which is essential for the growth and well-being of the national intercity passenger rail system;
- Providing new funding to continue the activities of the PRIIA Section 305 Next Generation Equipment Pool Committee (NGEC), to advance the development and maintenance of standardized next generation passenger rail equipment specifications. These specifications support lower operating and maintenance costs, extending vehicle life expectancy, and reinvigorating the US Rail manufacturing and supply industry. The NGEC has judiciously used its previously appropriated funds (expending less than \$4 million over 12 years) to produce vehicle specifications that are being used as a basis for all new passenger rail vehicle procurements in the U.S. and beyond; including states, Amtrak, VIA Rail, Metro-North; Brightline, and other entities. It is critical to continue to fund the NGEC so that it can maintain the existing specifications, while exploring emerging technologies (such as zero emission/climate friendly propulsion alternatives) and developing additional next generation specifications that cover the full spectrum of passenger rail services in the US.

SPRC continues to advocate for formula funding for intercity passenger rail planning and project development activities for states. This will create a dedicated, sustainable, and reliable federal funding source for states to more efficiently advance projects to be ready for final design and construction and build institutional capacity within the states. This would bring the rail mode closer to being consistent with federal highway and transit funding programs.

SPRC has produced an extensive list of capital and planning projects to support its funding requests, demonstrate what can be achieved with the funding, and demonstrate funding amounts needed to complete the projects identified by SPRC members. In a joint effort with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), SPRC reached out to States to produce a list of passenger rail projects ready for final design and construction funds, and a list of projects that are in the planning/scoping phase. This "Projects in the Pipeline" list identifies 171 projects with total funding needs of \$58.8 billion. The list consists of 88 projects that are ready or close to ready for final design or construction with a cost of \$17.4 billion, along with an additional 83 planning projects costing \$41.4 billion.

Completing these projects would result in at least seventy-five additional daily round trips and include more than thirty new cities served by passenger rail. There would also be significant improvements to over seventy stations, more than 150 new or refurbished locomotives and passenger rail cars, and nearly 400 grade crossings with important safety, reliability, and capacity issues would be upgraded or have access changes. These projects will bring planned passenger rail improvements into reality while improving reliability for freight

rail. An updated project list with additional details on each can be found at <https://bit.ly/SPRC-Projects-Jan2022>.

SPRC understands Congress' responsibility to balance long-term infrastructure investment with scarce financial resources. We believe the states, working with their partners and Congress, can deliver fiscally responsible investments in the nation's passenger rail system and avoid the long-term costs and impacts to economic development, safety, security, reliable transportation, and the environment from underinvestment in the rail system.

As you move forward in advancing deliberations on the FFY2023 Transportation Housing and Urban Development Appropriation, the SPRC members stand ready to provide testimony and to meet with the Committee, your staff and you at your convenience.

Thank you for this opportunity and please let us know if you have any questions or would like us to elaborate further on our testimony as you work through the appropriations process.

Respectfully,

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