

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 9, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs Collins and Hyde-Smith and Ranking Members Murray and Gillibrand,

As you work to finalize the fiscal year (FY) 2026 spending legislation, we urge you to support no less than \$75 million for the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant program—the amount included in the committee-passed Senate Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill. The House of Representatives has proposed zeroing out this account. Eliminating funding for the Federal-State Partnership grant program would hinder ongoing work to improve rail infrastructure in the Northeast and across the country.

The Federal-State Partnership grant program was reauthorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) “to fund capital projects that reduce the state of good repair backlog, improve performance, or expand or establish new intercity passenger rail service.” In general, not less than 45% of annual funding is reserved for projects along the Northeast Corridor (NEC), which are to be consistent with the most current NEC Service Development Plan. In addition, not less than 45% of annual funding is reserved for projects not located along the NEC, with preference given to projects included in a corridor development (i.e., service improvement and expansion) plan previously selected by the FRA. In addition, a share of the funding provided to non-NEC projects must also benefit, in whole or in part, one of Amtrak’s fifteen Long-Distance routes.

While the IIJA provided five years of guaranteed funding for the Federal-State Partnership grant program, this funding was always intended to be supplemental to annually appropriated dollars. The IIJA also authorized up to \$1.5 billion for Federal-State Partnership grant program in fiscal year 2024. The IIJA investment alone is not sufficient to fully address the nation’s rail state-of-good-repair (SOGR) backlog nor to fully improve and expand intercity passenger rail in a way that America deserves.

Why the Northeast Corridor needs robust funding

The NEC’s SOGR backlog stands at well over \$40 billion, representing a serious threat to the nation’s economy. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Amtrak and commuter railroads on the NEC transported more than 800,000 people per weekday, and the workforce that travels on the NEC contributes roughly \$50 billion annually to the economy. However, the specter of the SOGR backlog causing delays or track closures is a constant concern. According to the Northeast Corridor Commission, “[t]he loss of the NEC for a single day could cost the country \$100 million in added congestion, productivity losses, and other

transportation impacts.” If Congress does not make the necessary investments, disruptions will become more frequent and more severe over time.

While the IIJA made a significant down payment to help address this SOGR backlog, it is simply not enough given the years of underinvestment and the age of the assets. Without sufficient annual appropriations to supplement the IIJA, many of the NEC’s most critical projects will not advance.

Why non-NEC projects need robust funding

In 2021, Amtrak released a \$75 billion, 15-year vision to bring more trains to more people across the nation. This vision was meant to start an important conversation about the need for robust federal investment in passenger rail, especially in underserved and unserved communities. Congress responded by authorizing the FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program and the IIJA provided \$12 billion via the Federal-State Partnership grant program as an initial down payment on non-NEC rail expansion. While this IIJA funding is a critical first step, to fully realize the type of passenger rail network that the country deserves, the Federal-State Partnership grant program will require robust additional funding in FY26 and beyond. Below is an illustrative list of types of non-NEC corridor development and related projects that federal investment could advance, assuming support from relevant states and communities and approval by the FRA:

- *Vermonter* route expansion to Montreal;
- Chicago Access Program projects in Illinois to reduce trip times and improve capacity for existing and future Midwest routes and connections to the south and east;
- More frequencies and enhanced service on Cascades Corridor in Washington and Oregon;
- A new Front Range Corridor in Colorado and Wyoming connecting Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo and Cheyenne;
- A new Massachusetts Inland Route service;
- More frequencies on the Hiawatha Corridor in Wisconsin and Illinois and extension to Madison, Green Bay, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, as well as St. Paul, Minnesota;
- A new Phoenix-to-Tucson corridor in Arizona;
- More frequencies on the Downeaster Corridor in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine;
- A new “3C+D Corridor” in Ohio connecting Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati;
- Rebuilding of an abandoned higher-speed rail corridor between Richmond, Virginia, and Raleigh, North Carolina;
- *Heartland Flyer* route extension to connect Kansas communities, including Wichita, with Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Fort Worth, Texas;
- Upgrades to the rail corridor between Chicago, Indianapolis and Cincinnati, potentially including new service to Louisville;
- A new corridor in Texas, connecting Dallas/Ft. Worth, Austin, and San Antonio;
- Multiple new rail connections in California; and,
- A multi-corridor network from a new Atlanta Hub station, including new corridors to Nashville, Tennessee; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Savannah, Georgia; and elsewhere

in the South; and

- Reestablish passenger rail service between Scranton and New York via New Jersey.

On behalf of our millions of constituents who depend on a safe and reliable passenger rail network, and also those who deserve access to passenger rail but do not have it as a meaningful option today, we urge the Subcommittee to vigorously defend the \$75 million appropriation for FY 2026 for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant program.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator