

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 12, 2024

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

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

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Transportation, Housing and Urban  
Development, and Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

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

As you work to finalize the fiscal year (FY) 2024 spending legislation, we urge you to support no less than \$100 million for the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (IPR) 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 IPR grant would hinder ongoing work to improve rail infrastructure in the Northeast and across the country.

The IPR was reauthorized in the 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 Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (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 IPR grants 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 IJJA 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 IJJA, many of the NEC's most critical projects will not advance. Below are just a few examples of NEC projects that FRA Project Inventory has identified to begin construction by 2025:

- Connecticut River Bridge Replacement Project in Connecticut;
- Stamford Station Improvements in Connecticut;
- Norwalk River (Walk) Bridge Replacement Project in Connecticut;
- East River Tunnel Rehabilitation Project in New York;
- Elements of the Gateway Program in New York and New Jersey;
- Harrisburg Line Interlocking, Catenary and Signal projects in Pennsylvania;
- Philadelphia Gray 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station Improvements in Pennsylvania;
- Susquehanna River Bridge Replacement Program Phase 1 in Maryland;
- Baltimore Penn Station Improvements in Maryland;
- B&P Tunnel Replacement Project (Frederick Douglass Tunnel) in Maryland; and
- Washington Union Station Improvements in the District of Columbia

### **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 IJJA provided \$12 billion via the Federal-State Partnership grant program as an initial down payment on non-NEC rail expansion. While this IJJA 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 FY24 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:

- *Vermont* 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

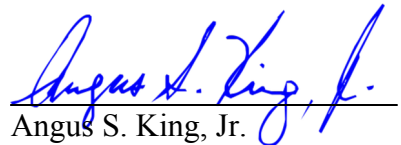
- Oregon;
- A new Front Range Corridor in Colorado and Wyoming connecting Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo and Cheyenne;
  - A new Massachusetts Inland Route service;
  - More frequencies on the Hiawatha Corridor in Wisconsin and Illinois and extension to Madison, Green Bay, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 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.
  - 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 \$100 million appropriation for FY 2024 for the Federal-State Partnership for IPR program.

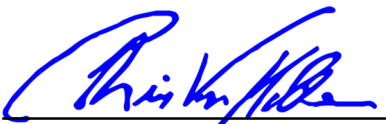
Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



John Fetterman  
United States Senator



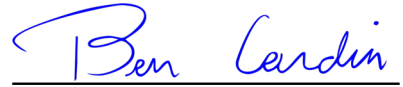
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator