



A bold voice for transportation workers

February 11, 2015

Support the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act of 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge your support for the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act of 2015 (PRRIA) when it is considered by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. This important legislation funds and sustains a key component of our national transportation system, and we commend Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member DeFazio, Subcommittee Chairman Denham and Subcommittee Ranking Member Capuano for their leadership in crafting this bipartisan, compromise legislation. We also ask that you oppose any amendments that would compromise the integrity of the national passenger rail network, or that undermines the bipartisan compromise reached in this bill.

This bill reauthorizes Amtrak for the next four years, improves rail infrastructure, and provides greater certainty to Amtrak and its employees as they implement long-term modernization plans. The bill also authorizes an additional \$300 million for the Intercity Passenger Rail Program – to be split between the Northeast Corridor and other national routes – that will help strengthen our national passenger rail network, and create more diverse and reliable travel options for the public. The bill also codifies Buy America standards for the purchase of Amtrak’s rolling stock and track improvements through the established RRIF financing provisions.

Most importantly, PRRIA rejects wrongheaded reform proposals to privatize Amtrak, break up the operation, and outsource good middle class jobs. In doing so, the legislation affirms the need for a national Amtrak system as part of America’s interconnected transportation infrastructure.

We do, however, have concerns that PRRIA does not provide Amtrak with the funding levels required to meet the needs of an aging system and the demands of Americans for more passenger rail options. Amtrak carried a record 31.6 million passengers in FY 2013, and has set ridership records in 10 of the last 11 years. This comes at a time when insufficient budgets and bare-bones federal appropriations have allowed the system to age and deteriorate. As Amtrak’s annual budget requests have established, its aging fleet needs replacing and the system faces significant and disruptive renovations to tracks, bridges, tunnels, and other infrastructure in the coming years. The authorization levels set in this bill – which would level out funding at current appropriations levels – do not provide the funds needed for these long term improvements.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer



We also urge you to reject any amendments that would undermine Amtrak's role as the national passenger rail carrier. Specifically, we ask that you vote NO on the amendment that Rep. John Mica is expected to offer that would seek to privatize high speed passenger rail on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) should it come up for a vote. The NEC is the busiest passenger rail corridor in the country, and a critical component of the Amtrak system. Any efforts to bid out or privatize the NEC would dramatically compromise Amtrak's ability to operate as a national carrier, and would threaten the jobs of the men and women who work on the NEC every day. This amendment, and any others like it, would threaten the effectiveness of this important bipartisan legislation.

The introduction and markup of this legislation is an important step in bringing long-term stability and investment to Amtrak and its workforce. We urge you to support PRRIA in Committee, and look forward to working with you to create the transportation network that Americans want and deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Edward Wytkind
President