



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Transportation Labor Condemns Amtrak Board Proposal to Decimate Amtrak**

**Washington, D.C.** *The following statement was issued today by Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, in response to today's unveiling of the Amtrak Board of Directors' proposal to restructure Amtrak.*

In a stunning display of self-destructive behavior, the Amtrak board has actually asked Congress to dismantle Amtrak and undermine its mission to provide national passenger rail service for millions of Americans. The Board has simply abandoned its fiduciary responsibilities to the company it is pledged to serve and advance and has demonstrated its inability to separate itself from the ideological directives of the White House.

Not even Enron's board, with all its malfeasances, sought the destruction of its own company. It defies common sense that Amtrak's Board would have the nation believe it can succeed by subjecting itself to destructive competitive bidding and privatization.

The Amtrak board plan is also an assault on Amtrak workers and their families. Its attempt to use Congress to renege on its collective bargaining commitments is outrageous. Its call for legislative reforms to deprive newly hired Amtrak and other passenger rail employees of their pension, disability, unemployment and survivor benefits will create a financial train wreck for the Railroad Retirement System. And its not so veiled threat to repeal Amtrak employees' worker compensation protections is unconscionable.

Given the fact that Amtrak was created because private railroads shed passenger service, it is no wonder that corporations are not exactly lining up for the opportunity to run passenger trains. If any do get in the business, they are more likely to be politically-connected, well-heeled government contractors, creating the potential for cronyism, corruption and Halliburton-style scandals. And states, suffering from their own fiscal crises, are hardly likely to put any more of their own money into intercity passenger rail.

The Amtrak Board's plan also sets the stage for the wholesale elimination of long-distance train service for 4 million passengers in 41 states, covering over 18,000 miles. The Board's proposal to force the states to put up more money or lose long-distance service is nothing more than a good old fashioned shakedown.

Transportation labor will do everything within our power to prevent Amtrak's Board from destroying Amtrak from within. Our members and the 25 million passengers they serve will not allow politics and ideology to destroy our national passenger rail system.

**Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO**

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