



## **IMPLEMENTING HIGH SPEED RAIL INITIATIVE**

Transportation labor has endorsed a broad agenda to rebuild and expand our national transportation system. One of the priorities previously endorsed by the Executive Committee was passage of a robust economic stimulus bill that included massive new investments in transportation. Transportation labor's agenda was enacted, in part, with the infusion of \$48 billion for transportation in the stimulus legislation eventually signed into law by the President. Similarly, the Executive Committee has repeatedly called for adequate investment in high-speed rail and Amtrak, an objective achieved in the stimulus bill and last year when Congress completed the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA).

Now it is time to ensure that these initiatives are implemented correctly and to make the case for Amtrak as the centerpiece of any high-speed rail program. Not surprisingly, the response to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) High Speed Rail Program has been overwhelming, with the application process yielding over \$50 billion worth of requests from more than 30 states. The FRA will have to decide how best to allocate the \$8 billion already appropriated for this program.

It is critical that the FRA vigorously enforces the statutory requirements attached to this program, especially those designed to protect the jobs and rights of workers. Specifically, the FRA must ensure that any recipient of funding make certain that rail workers are covered under the appropriate rail and labor statutes. Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements must fully apply to all covered construction work. Buy America requirements must be applied and strongly enforced. Labor protections for displaced workers and requirements to preserve existing collective bargaining agreements must be administered fairly and consistent with the law.

Amtrak and its workforce must be fully utilized as the FRA seeks to quickly roll-out its high speed rail initiative. Amtrak is America's national passenger rail carrier and the only current provider of high speed rail. The carrier has an established national network which includes an extensive reservation system, existing rolling stock, statutory relationships with the freight railroads, a physical infrastructure that could be leveraged to support various high speed rail initiatives and decades of demonstrated compliance with all federal rail laws including Railroad Retirement, the Railway Labor Act and railroad safety laws. Amtrak has also partnered with state and local governments to provide passenger rail service for decades. Amtrak understands and has a track record of adhering to the various grant requirements imposed by the federal government and specifically included for the funds provided for high speed rail.

Most importantly, Amtrak has a dedicated and experienced workforce that will be critical in rolling out and operating high speed passenger rail service. Experienced conductors, mechanical shop employees, signalmen, train dispatchers, Carmen and onboard service workers – to name just a few – are all employed by the company and understand what it takes to run a passenger rail system. These employees have delivered Amtrak service to a growing national ridership, are the best trained passenger rail workers in the nation, and are well positioned to implement a high-speed rail program of this scope and size.

**Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO**



As Congress and the Administration focus on high speed rail, funding for Amtrak and its current services must not be cut. Specifically, transportation labor calls on Congress and the Administration to fully fund Amtrak's capital and operating needs at the current authorized level. The PRIIA authorized Amtrak after a six year lapse and it would send the wrong signal to the carrier and its employees to cut back on funding at a time of passenger rail expansion.

Transportation labor is committed to working with the President and Congress to create a robust and successful Amtrak and high speed rail system. Such a system must build upon and cultivate the national network, partnerships and historic expertise that Amtrak has established and ensure that the jobs created by this program are good jobs that will help grow and sustain our economy.

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