



Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

July 5, 2023

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

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chair Schatz, Chair Cole, Ranking Member Hyde-Smith, and Ranking Member Quigley:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), and the totality of rail labor as represented by our affiliated unions, I write to request that Congress provide Amtrak with \$3.65 billion in the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations bill. That level is consistent with Congress' authorized level in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Providing Amtrak with this level of funding will ensure that our national passenger rail system has the staffing and operating capacity necessary to maintain current service and move forward with the BIL's generational investments.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO
815 Black Lives Matter Plaza, NW / 4th Floor / Washington, DC 20006
Tel: 202.628.9262 / www.ttd.org
Greg Regan, President / Shari Semelsberger, Secretary-Treasurer



Amtrak's overall financial performance in FY2022 improved significantly, continuing its trend of recovery since the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ Total ridership in the seven-month period ending on April 30th was 84% of 2019 levels and ticket revenues were 95% of 2019 levels.² Ridership on certain routes in states like Virginia is at an all-time high.³ Responding to increased demand, Amtrak hired roughly 3,700 new employees in FY2022 and is working to hire more than 4,000 employees in FY2023 so it can start or expand rail service in many states. Now is the time for Congress to help Amtrak continue to build on this progress, not undermine it.

While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law granted advance appropriations totaling \$4.4 billion for FY2024 to the Northeast Corridor and National Network Grants, the law prescribes that those funds can only pay for discrete capital investments such as new rolling stock, Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance, or eliminating deferred maintenance, rather than for operating expenses. Therefore, Amtrak still needs annual funding to meet critical operating expenses, including retaining and hiring the staff necessary to provide and expand passenger rail service as envisioned by Congress when it passed the BIL. Amtrak also uses its annual funding to leverage key federal grant opportunities such as the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements and Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant programs. Congress should give Amtrak the flexibility to use its annual funding as the required match for these programs.

In recent months, Amtrak has begun to use BIL funding to make long-overdue and critical investments in our country's passenger rail infrastructure. That includes investments in Amtrak's Long Distance services for new overnight trains⁴ and in infrastructure on the Northeast Corridor, such as a replacement for the Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Tunnel, which was built during the 1870s, and the Portal Bridge replacement in New Jersey. Amtrak has also applied for \$716 million in BIL funding for 16 proposed projects that would improve Long Distance reliability, reduce travel times, and expand service across the country.⁵

Lastly, we must convey our strong concerns with any funding level less than the \$2.45 billion that Amtrak received in FY2023. We are very concerned about proposals in the House Appropriations Committee to enact funding cuts upwards of 25% to the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) bill, including potentially to Amtrak. Anything less than the FY2023 appropriated level risks Amtrak's ability to maintain current service levels, let alone expand or start new service. If Amtrak's funding is reduced, especially upwards of 25%, it will have to reduce its existing service, which would likely disproportionately affect Long Distance services. That would be particularly devastating to rural and economically-disadvantaged communities, many of which rely on Amtrak's Long Distance services since air service and intercity bus service is either limited or unavailable in their communities.

¹<https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/corporate/reports/Amtrak-General-Legislative-Annual-Report-FY2024-Grant-Request.pdf>

²<https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/us-passenger-railroad-amtrak-ceo-says-ridership-near-pre-pandemic-levels-2023-06-06/#:~:text=Gardner%20told%20a%20U.S.%20House,up%20about%2030%25%20since%20then.>

³ <https://www.nbc12.com/2023/06/21/amtrak-breaks-ridership-record-virginia-ahead-summer-travel/>

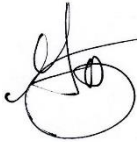
⁴ <https://media.amtrak.com/2023/01/amtrak-starts-the-process-for-new-overnight-trains/>

⁵ <https://media.amtrak.com/2023/06/amtrak-applies-for-federal-grants-to-improve-long-distance-network/>

When Congress passed the historic BIL, it committed to delivering a world-class national passenger rail network that supports and creates good jobs. We urge you to maintain your commitment to this vision by providing a funding level of \$3.65 billion. With your support, Amtrak can continue to rebound to pre-pandemic service and staffing levels while expanding our passenger rail network in communities across the country. Let's continue to make the necessary investments in Amtrak to achieve the bold vision set forth in the BIL.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Regan', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Greg Regan
President