



Northeast Innovation Brought to US by Rail

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The Northeast US is an innovation artery that fosters creativity and entrepreneurship throughout the country's economy. And the people, products and technology buttressing this innovation need to move in order to grow. Infrastructure needs to keep pace. Rail connections foster this vibrant, innovation economy.

The Northeast Corridor (NEC), the 457-mile rail network connecting Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington DC, is the backbone of rail movement. According to the Northeast Corridor Commission, the NEC provides over 750,000 trips a day, supporting \$50 billion in annual economic activity. The 457 miles of rails, ties, tracks, bridges, and tunnels, across a geography home to 50 million Americans, serves as the connective tissue for a region measured as the fifth largest economy in the world.

But how long will the Northeast remain the fifth largest economy? How can the Northeast remain an innovation leader? Part of the answer lies in how much rail infrastructure investments are prioritized and coordinated across state borders.

In its [2017 Infrastructure Report Card](#), the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) provided this assessment of the Northeast Corridor: *"Upgrades and repairs to basic infrastructure as well as service improvement projects to add capacity, are needed to meet growth in the northeastern economy and related travel demand. The condition of the NEC continues to deteriorate while projects are on hold pending funding. Amtrak has been left with little choice but to be reactive to maintenance issues due to inadequate funding."*

There exists a \$38 billion backlog of projects on the NEC just to bring it to a state of good repair. Several of these key projects are highlighted in Amtrak's recent [Ready to Build](#) video campaign, reminding us that smart investments are needed now to realize a renewed, modern passenger rail system in the Northeast and beyond. [In his testimony to the House Transportation Committee last month Amtrak CEO Wick Moorman](#) voiced an optimistic tone: *"The NEC is primed for an era of intensive renewal so it can effectively and efficiently serve customers well into the 21st century. Amtrak has worked*

with state and federal partners to proactively begin the necessary planning and reviews required for these complex, multiyear projects needed to address our state of good repair and improvement needs.”

Innovation inherently demands proactive measures not reactive measures. Investing in the future of rail infrastructure requires commitment and coordination across the stakeholder universe, and recognition of its crucial role toward the economic and environmental growth of the region.

If we think about the greatest innovations throughout our history: the Industrial Revolution, the Information Age, the Digital Revolution and now the Sharing Economy, new platforms and ideas have been successful because innovators have easy access to what they need: capital, talent, facilities and goods. Rail has been an important part of those success stories and hopefully will be for years to come.