

## **Intercity Passenger Rail Policy June 2003**

**The Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) strongly supports a safe, efficient and reliable passenger rail system as part of an integrated, adequately financed national transportation system.**

Intercity passenger rail offers opportunities for improved mobility, options, and access in travel corridors across the nation. Investments that improve the quality of intercity passenger rail service contribute to better performance by other modes as well as improved economic competitiveness. Intercity passenger rail can also stimulate economic development and sound community development by increasing mobility, creating jobs, and influencing decisions on business and housing location.

**Intercity passenger rail – the Northeast Corridor and its feeders – is a critical component of the transportation network that provides mobility and supports economic development throughout the Atlantic Coast region.**

This Corridor network – a public asset owned by the federal and state governments and valued at over \$3 billion – is one of the nation’s premier transportation corridors. It is the world’s most complex and heavily used transportation corridor – serving over 100 million intercity and commuter travelers annually, and moving freight in a corridor that traverses 12 states and provides rail connections to points South and West. In the Northeast, Amtrak is already transporting over 60 percent of the total air/rail business travelers between the Washington and New York City region.

Efficient use of the Northeast Corridor and its feeders dramatically affects the overall viability of the highway, aviation, freight and commuter rail transportation networks that serve the region and the nation. The ultimate beneficiary of these intermodal options is the traveling public – in the Northeast and across the nation. For example, efficient intercity passenger rail can help manage congestion at some of the nation’s busiest airports by allowing scarce airport slots to be used for more efficient, longer distance flights. In addition, the disruption of the nation’s aviation networks in September 2001, vividly illustrates the importance of intercity passenger rail in providing critical mobility in the nation’s transportation systems, as more travelers continue to turn to intercity passenger rail. Attention should be paid to maintaining the Corridor in safe condition by addressing the backlog of modernization and safety needs, especially by escalating the safety improvements of the critical tunnels accessing Penn Station in New York City and Baltimore. Preserving the critical infrastructure of this multi-state asset is important to the national economy.

**The federal government must be a strong and consistent partner in the common goal of providing the policy leadership and stable, long-term funding for intercity passenger rail. States are partners, but cannot bear the primary responsibility for intercity passenger rail investment.**

The CONEG Governors strongly believe that the federal government has an ongoing responsibility to invest in developing and maintaining intercity passenger rail. The federal government has historically provided vital leadership and funding for highways, public transportation, aviation and water transportation as part of a transportation system that promotes the efficient movement of people and goods.

At the same time, States recognize their responsibility to provide a share of the financial investment for services that promote state and regional economies. Throughout the Northeast and Atlantic Coast region, States continue to make significant infrastructure investments that benefit intercity passenger rail – providing hundreds of millions of dollars for tracks, signals and other rights-of-way improvements, developing new approaches to passenger rail equipment, renovating and constructing multi-modal stations, and improving the safety of highway-rail grade crossings. These investments – over \$2.8 billion invested by these states in infrastructure since 1992 – have improved passenger and freight rail systems that serve state, multi-state and national interests.

Intercity passenger rail corridors, with their need for coordinated planning and investment strategies, require predictable, long term federal financing tools that recognize the specific skills, experiences and institutions of the funding partners. A strong federal partner, stable and effectively designed investment tools, and collaborative institutional arrangements will, over time, enhance the states' ability to build long-term, comprehensive regional rail strategies that can capture the economic, social and environmental benefits of the rail alternative.

**The CONEG Governors urge the Congress and the Administration to provide the policy leadership and sustained funding support that will maintain and strengthen intercity passenger rail as a vital part of the nation's integrated transportation system.**

Intercity passenger rail has repeatedly demonstrated its vital contribution to the Northeast's transportation system and economic well-being. The model of incremental investment in intercity passenger rail by state-federal and private partnership is being repeated across the nation. These successes are now jeopardized by the cumulative effects of competing demands on inadequate capital resources. New approaches to generating significant and sustained capital investment are required to ensure safe, reliable and efficient intercity passenger rail service.

The national debate over the role, responsibility and funding of intercity passenger rail in the nation's transportation system is underway. As Congress and the Administration consider these questions of federal policy and funding support, the CONEG Governors urge the Congress and Administration to:

- commit federal policy in support of intercity passenger rail as part of the nation's integrated transportation system;

- maintain the right of access of intercity passenger rail service to rail lines;
- enhance safety and reliability through federal support for the integration of passenger rail infrastructure and operations;
- ensure that past state investments and funding and operating agreements with Amtrak are protected;
- ensure adequate levels of predictable, long-term capital funding to support and maintain intercity passenger rail, particularly for systems of regional and national significance; and
- create new program and financing tools that encourage effective federal, state and private sector partnership for coordinated development and funding of expanded intercity passenger rail corridors, consistent with the legal, institutional and financing conditions of the state partners.

Approved - Advisory Committee: June 21, 2002  
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