

November 10, 2004

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In preparation for completion of the FY2005 Transportation and Treasury Appropriations Bill, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) would like to express our strong support for the full funding of the nation's transportation programs. While the Governors appreciate the difficult decisions placed by constrained budgets and limited financial resources, we urge you to provide a \$34.9 billion highway obligation limit, \$7.758 billion for the Federal Transit Program, and at least \$1.217 billion for the nation's intercity passenger rail system.

To further the progress made in recent years to improve the safety and condition of the nation's highways, bridges and transit systems, the Governors urge the Congress to provide a \$34.9 billion obligation limit for the Federal Aid Highways Program, and \$7.758 billion for the Federal Transit Program. In addition, continued balance in advancing the highway and transit programs is important to ensure a vital, vibrant and comprehensive transportation network that can address existing and emerging challenges faced by urban and rural communities. The Governors also urge Congress to direct the Secretary of Transportation to ensure that any apportionments made under an appropriations bill, and the temporary extension of existing TEA-21 legislation, be made available in a timely manner to states and/or public transportation systems.

The Governors urge Congress to provide at least \$1.217 billion in FY2005 funding for the nation's intercity passenger rail system to meet immediate funding needs and to ensure the stability of existing service while the policy debate over the future of the system unfolds. Intercity passenger rail is a vital part of the nation's transportation system – providing critical mobility, much needed transportation options, and redundancy that is more essential than ever. States in the Northeast and across the nation currently provide substantial financial support for the intercity passenger rail system, and they view a strong federal-state partnership as critical to its future. As noted in the Senate Committee language, \$1.5 billion would be sufficient to meet Amtrak's federal funding requirements during FY2005. This funding level could permit continued capital investment in equipment and infrastructure to advance and improve the safety and reliability of passenger rail service. In addition, the Governors encourage Congress to provide the maximum amount available in FY2005 funds for the Next Generation High Speed Rail Program which advances new technologies that offer critical opportunities in improving speed, efficiency and safety.

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The CONEG Governors thank you for your past support of these vital programs, and again urge you to advance an FY2005 transportation appropriation that serves and strengthens the critical highway, transit and rail infrastructure of our nation.

Sincerely,

/o.s./
John Baldacci
Chair
Governor of Maine

/o.s./
Donald L. Carcieri
Vice-chair
Governor of Rhode Island

Identical letters were sent to House and Senate Leadership, as well as chairmen and ranking members of both House and Senate Appropriations Committee's and Subcommittee's on Transportation and Treasury.