

July 14, 2005

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-128 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510-6025

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the Senate considers H.R. 2360, the FY2006 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) urges the Senate to give high priority to increased funding for the nation's critical transportation security needs, particularly rail security. The recent tragic attacks against the London rail and bus system, together with the attack in Madrid last March, point to the urgent need for a strong federal-state funding partnership that can address immediate deployment needs as well as longer term investment in the enhanced rail security technologies. We recognize the extensive demands being made upon federal security resources in the coming year. However, we urge the Senate to strengthen the federal role in securing the nation's multi-modal transportation system by providing in the FY2006 Homeland Security Appropriations bill a level of funding sufficient to address the immediate and unique security needs of our nation's passenger rail system – commuter, intercity and rail transit.

Efforts to strengthen the nation's security, particularly its multi-modal transportation system, are of paramount importance to the CONEG Governors. States, local governments and public transportation authorities have invested significant non-federal resources to enhance the security of passenger rail systems while also maintaining the open access of these systems that move millions of riders daily. These investments benefit national security interests as well as national, state and local transportation needs. The federal government must be a strong funding partner with the states to reduce the vulnerability of the nation's passenger rail systems to security threats by providing increased, flexible federal funding for immediate deployment needs, such as canine units and enhanced security monitoring, as well as advancements in security technologies suited to passenger rail systems.

In the interest of national security and a safe, multi-modal national transportation system, we urge the Senate to provide timely, flexible appropriations for rail security programs sufficient to address the immediate and unique security needs of passenger rail systems in the Northeast and across the nation. The Department of Homeland Security must be a strong, effective partner with states, local governments and public transportation authorities in ensuring that these vital rail systems remain accessible, reliable – and safe.

The CONEG Governors thank you for the opportunity to share this concern and appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

/o.s./

John E. Baldacci
Chairman
Governor of Maine

/o.s./

Donald L. Carcieri
Vice-Chairman
Governor of Rhode Island

Identical letters were also provided to the Senate Leadership, leadership of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Homeland Security Subcommittee.