

September 20, 2005

The Honorable Christopher "Kit" Bond
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, and
Housing and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
130 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6037

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the Senate considers H.R. 3058, the Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, the District of Columbia and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act of 2006, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) urges the Senate to support the strong federal-state funding partnership that has been vital to strengthening the nation's multi-modal transportation system – its highways, bridges, transit systems and intercity passenger rail. The Governors recognize the extensive demands being placed upon federal resources in this coming year and the difficult choices facing the Senate; and we appreciate the inclusion of \$1.450 billion provided for intercity passenger rail by the Committee. This funding level is the minimum necessary to ensure reliable intercity passenger rail service as critical decisions are made in the coming months on the future of the nation's intercity passenger rail system and service.

However, the Governors are concerned with certain provisions in the bill that would immediately and unilaterally transfer Amtrak's costs to the states. Bringing about change to the nation's intercity passenger rail system in a safe, reliable and efficient manner will be complex and time consuming. Such changes directly affect the long-standing federal-state partnership that plans and jointly funds passenger rail service across the U.S. Constructive, orderly change in this federal-state partnership requires collaborative processes that use transparent data and rigorous metrics, and provide a neutral mechanism to resolve disagreements. We recognize that the Appropriations Committee, through its Committee Report, has demonstrated a willingness to tackle some of the difficult issues of managing Amtrak's funding needs. However, the Governors believe that these issues are more appropriately addressed through the authorization process.

As the Senate acts on the FY2006 appropriations for federal transportation programs, the CONEG Governors support the \$1.450 billion for intercity passenger rail, and urge that it be provided in a manner that maintains safe, reliable service and strengthens the federal-state partnership for intercity passenger rail.

Sincerely,

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

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

Identical letters were also sent to Ranking Member Murray, the leadership of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Senate Leadership.