

May 11, 2009

The Honorable Raymond LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

The President's Vision for High-Speed Rail in America marks an important milestone for the Department of Transportation, and will accelerate the existing state-federal partnership for intercity passenger rail service. The strategic vision provides a policy framework to guide the investment of the economic recovery capital funds; the capital grant and partnership provisions of the Passenger Rail Infrastructure and Investment Act of 2008 (PRIIA); and the Administration's budget requests and support for appropriations in the coming years. We look forward to working with you, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Congress to translate this strategic vision into real improvements in the intercity rail corridors that serve the Northeast states and link them to the nation.

The Northeast Governors have long recognized that safe, reliable, and time and price competitive intercity passenger rail service provides the connectivity essential for economic competitiveness; livable communities; and energy and environmental sustainability. A sustained commitment to significant capital investment and coordinated planning are needed to achieve the reduced travel times, more frequent service, and better on-time performance that will attract and retain significantly more travelers to intercity rail. That is why we have consistently supported federal intercity passenger rail policy and funding, invested state resources, and participated in regional partnerships to improve the rail corridors that serve the Northeast mega region as well as its smaller cities and rural communities.

The Northeast is also unique with its "network of corridors." They include the Northeast Corridor Spine; designated high speed corridors serving Northern New England (Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont-Massachusetts), the Empire Corridor in New York and the Keystone Corridor in Pennsylvania; and linked routes to Canada and states south and west. The Northeast network is the nation's premier passenger rail system. It currently offers the nation's primary high speed service in corridors serving Boston to Washington, D.C.; New York City to Albany; and Philadelphia to Harrisburg. This network supports a mix of high speed and conventional intercity, commuter, long distance and regional freight services on rights-of-way that are owned by Amtrak, states and freight railroads. It serves over 14 million intercity riders annually; provides congestion relief to the highways and airports serving some of the nation's largest cities; offers intermodal connections that strengthen the entire transportation network; and connects our region's smaller cities and communities to the larger national rail network. The

federal government and our states have made and continue to make significant investments in this network to bring it to a state of good repair and build the expanded capacity necessary to meet the mobility needs and growth opportunities of the region. This network of corridors is a core component of the national rail policy and funding strategy.

The Administration's strategic vision can build on and accelerate the investments and partnerships that are already underway in the Northeast. For example:

- States across our region are working with Amtrak as it develops an NEC Infrastructure Master Plan that will define the projects and investment levels needed to improve reliability and expand capacity for all rail service on the NEC;
- Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont are working with Amtrak to develop project and operating plans for improved service on the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield segment of the Northern New England corridor that serves all three states;
- Delaware is participating in restoration of historic Wilmington train station, and has plans for a regional rail station in Newark;
- Maine has completed detailed plans to expand the successful Downeaster service on the Northern New England Corridor;
- Maryland is working closely with Amtrak to replace the busy BWI Airport Rail Station and add additional tracks along the Baltimore/Washington segment to improve speeds and reduce congestion on the NEC;
- Massachusetts is finalizing a plan that will facilitate the return of passenger services along the Connecticut River from Springfield, north to the Vermont, thereby allowing existing Amtrak intercity services to serve additional communities while also significantly reducing travel time;
- The New Hampshire Capital Corridor project would extend passenger rail from Boston to Nashua, Manchester and Concord, NH, on a segment of the Northern New England corridor connecting Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont to Montreal;
- New Jersey, in close consultation with Amtrak, has developed detailed plans for a major bridge replacement and signal system upgrades that will significantly improve the reliability of all passenger rail service on the NEC;
- New York's newly updated State Rail Plan lays out a program to expand the current high speed rail services between New York City and Albany on the Empire Corridor, with high speed rail service between Albany and Buffalo;

- Pennsylvania is building on its investment partnership with Amtrak that brought more frequent, high speed service to the Philadelphia – Harrisburg segment of the Keystone Corridor and better connecting service to the NEC;
- Rhode Island is working with neighboring states and Amtrak on track capacity enhancements on the Northeast Corridor that benefit intercity, commuter and freight opportunities; and
- Vermont is developing plans and projects that will enhance and expand existing Amtrak intercity services along the Western Corridor, linking more travelers directly to New York's Empire Corridor and the NEC.

Building on this foundation, our states are working together through the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) to identify projects and corridor programs and plans that can strengthen passenger rail service on these rail corridors. Individual states will be submitting proposals to the Department for project funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and related annual appropriations.

The Northeast Governors also stand ready to name our representatives to the Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Committee authorized by PRIIA to develop policy goals and recommendations that encompass passenger rail mobility, intermodal connections to highways and airports, and energy consumption and air quality improvements. Since these extensive responsibilities far exceed current state or Amtrak infrastructure planning initiatives, the Commission will need access to resources, data and expert analysis. Therefore, we have asked Congress to provide \$3 million for the Commission in FY2010 appropriations to ensure that it has access to the resources needed to undertake these assessments. We urge you to act promptly to create the Commission, and urge your support for this funding request.

The Northeast states are poised to advance the President's vision of high speed passenger rail as an integral part of the nation's transportation system. We have directed the CONEG staff to work with you and your team as you reach out to the Northeast states to implement the rail projects under ARRA. We look forward to a constructive relationship with the Department to realize this vision in the Northeast.

Sincerely,

/o.s./
David A. Paterson
Governor of New York
CONEG Chairman

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

/o.s./
Jon S. Corzine
Governor of New Jersey
CONEG Lead Governor –
Transportation