

September 17, 2009

The Honorable John W. Olver  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and  
Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Latham  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and  
Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Olver and Ranking Member Latham:

As you prepare to conference the FY2010 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies appropriations bill, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) would like to thank you for your continued strong support for full funding of the nation's transportation and critical community development programs. We greatly appreciate the financial assistance provided to these programs through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). We recognize the unique situation the Committee faced this year in developing the FY2010 appropriations bill, including uncertainty for many surface transportation programs, as well as the opportunities offered by the new authorization legislation for the nation's intercity passenger rail programs. The Committee has also recognized the important role that transportation must play in our ability to manage energy more efficiently and improve the quality of our communities. We applaud your commitment to a strong, balanced transportation system through increased funding for key highway, transit and high speed intercity passenger rail programs in the FY2010 appropriations legislation.

### Highways and Transit

The Committee ensures important stability for the nation's highway and transit programs by assuming extension of the current program structure and funding levels through FY2010. We welcome the increased funding levels provided for the federal aid highway obligation authority and the public transit programs, including the Formula and Bus Grants and the Capital Investment Grants programs. This funding will allow states to sustain the current progress to improve the condition and safety of the nation's highway and transit systems, and to retain and create jobs and build a competitive economy.

### Intercity Passenger Rail

The FY2010 appropriations bill marks the first full appropriations cycle since the enactment of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) and ARRA. The states'

overwhelming response to the major infusion of ARRA funds demonstrates the strong latent demand for improved and expanded intercity passenger rail service in all regions of the country. The Governors welcome your recognition that sustained investment through a joint federal-state partnership is needed for an effective intercity passenger rail system. We deeply appreciate the continued and substantial investments in Amtrak, the Capital Assistance for High Speed Corridors and Intercity Passenger Rail Service program, and other PRIIA programs funded in the FY2010 appropriations bill.

The states are working closely with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) as it continues to refine and implement the intercity passenger rail provisions of PRIIA and the High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program (HSIPR). The ambitious requirements established by FRA will provide the insights and information needed for sound corridor and national intercity passenger rail plans and programs. Our states are working closely with each other, Amtrak and the FRA to advance projects and corridors that will achieve the shared objectives of an improved, expanded intercity passenger rail system. The additional resources and staffing provided to the FRA and the Surface Transportation Board for their expanded responsibilities under PRIIA are important for the timely implementation of these programs.

We welcome the increased funding level provided to Amtrak. We particularly appreciate the provision in the House bill that allows the Secretary of Transportation to retain funds to implement provisions of PRIIA, particularly Division B, Section 212, that calls for Amtrak to work with states and external experts in planning and developing corridors and routes. These funds are urgently needed to ensure that all the stakeholders on the Northeast Corridor can work together to access the resources, data and expert analyses required to advance the future of the nation's most complex intercity passenger rail corridor.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to significant increases in funding for the Capital Assistance for High Speed Corridors and Intercity Passenger Service program. These funds are vital for the states' ability to undertake the longer-term project and corridor development initiatives that cannot be completed within the time frame required by ARRA. The House level of \$4 billion recognizes the scope of the investments that will be required to achieve the goals of PRIIA and the related HSIPR Program. Developing rail corridors, particularly those that are multi-state and support multiple users, is a complex undertaking for which FRA requires extensive data and analyses. Therefore, we urge you to support the provision in the House bill that provides \$50 million of the capital assistance grant funds to be used for planning activities that lead directly to the development of passenger rail corridor investments. The joint federal-state activities currently underway to implement projects and corridor development are generating the analyses that are the foundation for a national rail plan. We urge you to ensure that the FRA can make awards to the states under this capital assistance program in a timely manner, even as a national rail plan is completed. We also encourage the Committee to ensure that the capital grant program funds are made available to all states, including the Northeast

Corridor states, for projects that advance plans for safe, reliable, frequent and trip-time competitive service in corridors, regardless of a maximum speed requirement.

The Governors welcome the Committee's recognition of the importance of higher speed locomotives, improved fleets, and enhanced safety technologies as part of a national commitment to safe and improved higher speed intercity passenger rail. We appreciate the continued investment in research programs that advance these technologies.

### **Community Development**

We encourage the Committee to provide funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program at the \$4.1 billion level. This program enables states to provide funding for infrastructure improvements, housing programs, and projects that attract businesses to urban, suburban, exurban, and rural areas, thus creating new jobs and spurring economic development, growth and recovery in the nation's low income and rural communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to share these priorities and appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

/o.s./  
David A. Paterson  
Chair  
Governor of New York

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

*Identical letters were also provided to Leadership of the full House & Senate Appropriations Committee's, Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, and Northeast Senate Conferees.*