

June 25, 2002

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. President:

Absent immediate action, all intercity passenger rail service and many commuter rail services in this country will come to a halt in just a few days time. We feel it is essential that urgent measures be taken to ensure that Amtrak, and the many commuter rail services that depend on it, continue to operate through the remainder of this fiscal year. Our short-term actions to solve this crisis will define us as a government. We can either provide Amtrak the money it requires to maintain operations or face the termination of intercity passenger rail service and many commuter services across the country. We know that you share our view that such a catastrophe must be avoided. As such, we intend to work through the conferees on the pending Supplemental Appropriations Bill to include a \$205 million supplemental appropriation for Amtrak. We ask you to support our effort.

Many of us know first hand the critical role that Amtrak plays in our States. All of us know the role Amtrak played immediately following September 11<sup>th</sup>, when it carried thousands of stranded airline passengers to their destinations. A shutdown of Amtrak will cause severe ripple effects throughout our transportation system. Initially, hundreds of thousands of Amtrak passengers and commuters will be stranded. Then, thousands of additional vehicles will crowd onto our already congested highways and thousands of additional air travelers will take to the airways, putting additional stress on our aviation system during the busiest travel season of the year.

Our nation's economy and morale have suffered enough since September 11<sup>th</sup>, especially in areas such as New York City and Washington, D.C., which rely heavily on efficient Amtrak and commuter rail service. We do not need to impose additional suffering by terminating rail service and throwing more than 23,000 Amtrak employees out of work across the nation. In the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, we provided a \$15 billion bailout to the airlines. We are asking you to support slightly more than 1 percent of that amount to keep passenger rail service alive in our country.

The immediate crisis requires that we provide funds for Amtrak now. Just a few days ago, Amtrak's new CEO David Gunn testified before the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee that he will begin shutting down the railroad in just a few days time if funds are not provided immediately. "The urgency of this is enormous" he said, "we are very near the point of no return." Perhaps most importantly, Mr. Gunn pointed out that, should Amtrak enter bankruptcy, it will cost the taxpayers far more than \$205 million to bring intercity rail service back on line.

Your Administration indicated that it would support needed funding for Amtrak only if "reforms" are implemented. However immediate funding must be provided to simply get Amtrak through the end of this fiscal year. While we agree that long-term passenger rail transportation policy needs to be addressed, any changes or "reforms" need to be considered in the context of a long-term authorization. As you know, S. 1991, the National Defense Rail Act, was reported by the Senate Commerce Committee by a bipartisan vote of 20-3. If Amtrak does not receive the funds it needs in the near term, it will cease to exist. And we cannot "reform" a dead railroad.

We look forward to working with you on legislation to provide long-term solutions for the future of rail passenger service in the U.S. However, quick, decisive action is needed in the short-term to provide the \$205 million needed now for Amtrak to survive. Again, we ask you to join us in this urgent endeavor to include such funding in the pending Supplemental Appropriations Bill.

Sincerely,