

**STATEMENT OF  
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS  
HEARING ON  
“AMTRAK REAUTHORIZATION”**

I am pleased to be here today to consider Amtrak reauthorization legislation, including H.R. 6003, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, which Ranking Member Mica, Chairwoman Brown, Ranking Member Shuster and I introduced last week. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses on this proposal.

This legislation is long overdue. Congress last reauthorized Amtrak in 1997; that authorization expired in 2002. Since that time, this Subcommittee has held 11 hearings on Amtrak. The Committee has acted on three reauthorization proposals in the 107<sup>th</sup>, 108<sup>th</sup>, and 109<sup>th</sup> Congresses. In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, this Subcommittee has held four hearings on Amtrak. It is time to act to reauthorize Amtrak.

Today, we are at the cusp of a “renaissance” for intercity passenger rail in this nation. For example, Amtrak’s FY2007 ridership was at record levels for the fifth year in a row, exceeding 25.8 million passengers. Additionally, its ticket revenues rose 11% to more than \$1.5 billion, the third straight year of revenue growth. This record of achievement is even more impressive if you consider that for the past eight years Amtrak has contended with an Administration committed to its bankruptcy and federal support that has remained inconsistent to a large extent.

Further, these achievements are occurring at a time when there is a greater need than ever for intercity passenger rail. The Department of Transportation states that congestion on our highways and in the air is “chronic,” while the Texas Transportation Institute reports that each year we waste 3.5 billion hours of extra travel time due to traffic congestion. The total annual cost of congestion has risen to nearly \$70 billion, a rise of \$4.5 billion more than the previous year. Improving our intercity passenger rail system is an important tool to address these problems. For example, Amtrak removes almost eight million cars from the road annually. Amtrak also eases air congestion by eliminating the need for 50,000 fully loaded airplanes each year.

However, we must provide Amtrak and the States with the opportunity and ability to grow their passenger rail services if we want to provide a system of public benefit moving forward. That is why I introduced the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act to reauthorize Amtrak. This legislation will provide a total of \$14.4 billion for Amtrak and for States to develop intercity passenger rail systems. It will go a long way to meeting growing demand for intercity passenger rail and help address concerns due to the growth of ridership on our rail network.

For one, this bill will provide \$6.7 billion to Amtrak in capital grants.

Inconsistent federal support has forced Amtrak to delay many important maintenance and legacy projects. This bill will provide Amtrak the funding necessary to end these delays and move forward to complete many of these projects, such as replacing the catenary system along the Northeast Corridor, completing replacement of the Thames River Bridge in Connecticut, and replacing wood ties with concrete ties along its infrastructure. It will allow Amtrak to bring its infrastructure to a state of good repair in fifteen years and begin a much needed equipment procurement process to replace much of its aging rolling stock. This will mean better service reliability and on-time performance for Amtrak, reduced trip times, added capacity and lower maintenance costs, which will allow Amtrak to better attract and retain ridership.

Further, this bill will provide Amtrak with \$3 billion in operating grants, which will help Amtrak pay salaries, health costs, overtime pay, fuel costs, facilities, and train maintenance and operations.

Additionally, this bill will create a new State Capital Grant program for intercity passenger rail capital projects to encourage State investment. States are uniquely qualified to understand their own mobility needs and connectivity requirements through statewide and metropolitan area intermodal and multimodal transportation planning. Indeed, over the past 10 years, ridership on intercity passenger rail routes that benefitted from State support grew by 73 percent. For example, California has

invested \$1.9 billion since 1991 and seen its Amtrak ridership increase 128% since that time.

However, over the past ten years, ridership on Amtrak routes without States support only increased by 7 percent. The Department of Transportation reports that the greatest single impediment to encouraging State support is the lack of a Federal/State partnership—similar to what exists for highways and transit—for investing in the capital needs of intercity passenger rail. This bill creates that partnership and provides \$500 million per year through 2013 in grants to a State, or a group of States, to pay for the capital costs of facilities and equipment necessary to provide new or improved intercity passenger rail at an up to 80 percent Federal match, the same as for highways and for transit.

This legislation will also demonstrate Congress' commitment to promulgate high speed rail projects in this country. It will provide \$350 million per year in grants to States and to Amtrak to fund high speed rail projects that will operate at speeds of at least 110 mph along federally-designated high speed rail corridors. This will benefit projects such as the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, sponsored by nine Midwest state governments to provide a “hub-and-spoke” model of intercity passenger rail service out of Chicago and into surrounding metropolitan and regional communities, including St. Paul, Detroit, St. Louis, and Cincinnati, among other cities and

communities. Once completed, this project will provide train service at speeds up to 110 mph, utilize multi-modal connections to improve interconnectivity across the region, and improve reliability and on-time performance. Already, these States have invested over \$100 million to this project, and funding from the high speed rail grants of this bill will help support their efforts. It will also help the efforts of California to develop a Shinkansen-style high speed rail system running from Sacramento to San Diego, and to develop the Southeast high speed rail corridor from Washington, DC to Charlotte, NC.

I look forward to exploring these issues further with the witnesses and working with my colleagues as we move this legislation forward.