

**Statement of
The Honorable Corrine Brown, Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials
Hearing on
“The Historical Preservation of Railroads Property and Facilities”
June 5, 2008**

The Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials is meeting today to hear testimony on the Historical Preservation of Railroad Property and Facilities.

Today’s hearing is in response to an amendment offered and withdrawn during Full Committee consideration of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. The amendment would prevent Federal historical protection for an entire railroad line or corridor in response to claims by the Alaska Railroad and the North Carolina Department of Transportation that the historical protection process has led to costly delays in capital improvements with no benefits to historical preservation.

I believe the committee’s goal should be to ensure that any action it takes respects the valuable process of protecting our Nation’s heritage while ensuring a fair process to rail providers that allows them to adapt to future needs without undue costs and delays. The testimony of the Advisory Council and the National Trust points out that there are administrative remedies to resolve the problems raised by both parties. This hearing has brought the problems raised by the Alaska Railroad and North Carolina to the attention of the Advisory Council. I think there is a willingness to resolve these concerns administratively, and I would encourage all the parties involved to work towards an equitable solution to any policy disagreements that are raised.

We must ensure that we are not looking for a solution to a problem that may not exist. Prior to the markup, the issue of historical preservation and its impact on the rail system was never raised with me or the Committee, and we haven’t heard from other rail providers facing similar problems.

However, I look forward to learning more about these problems from the witnesses appearing today, and pledge to work with my colleagues to ensure that the Alaska Railroad, the state of North Carolina and all other rail providers are being treated fairly. I want to thank our panelists for agreeing to join us today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.