U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

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SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials

FROM: Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Staff

SUBJECT: Hearing on "Expanding Passenger Rail Service"

PURPOSE OF HEARING

The Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials will meet on Monday, June 22, 2009, at 10:00 a.m., in room 6A of the United States Post Office and District Courthouse located at 700 Grant Street in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to receive testimony on the need for expanding passenger rail service across the nation and the benefits of expansion. The hearing will also highlight the need for more passenger rail service in Pennsylvania.

BACKGROUND

Our nation's transportation system is near capacity, with gridlock on our highways and in our airspace. In 2006, there were more than three trillion vehicle miles traveled, five times the level in 1955. This figure is roughly double the nation's total mileage traveled in 1980, and more than four times the total mileage traveled in 1957, the Interstate's first year.

According to the Texas Transportation Institute's *2007 Urban Mobility Report*, the wasted fuel and time resulting from this congestion has translated into a total congestion cost of $78.2 billion in 2005—$5.1 billion higher than in 2004. The report also found that congestion causes the average peak-period traveler to spend an extra 38 hours of travel time, 26 gallons of fuel, and amounts to a cost of $710 per traveler. According to the report, in the 14 largest urban areas in the nation, the amount of travel delay grew approximately 350 percent from 1982 to 2005. The average driver in 28

metropolitan areas experienced 40 or more hours of delay per year. Accidents and traffic delays cost Americans more than $365 billion a year – $1 billion a day – or $1,200 for every man, woman, and child in the nation.

Our nation's airways fared no better. Despite record passenger loadings of 765.3 million domestic and international passengers in 2007, delays in the nation's aviation system delivered a staggering blow to the economy, costing passengers, airlines and related businesses $41 billion, according to a congressional study. In FY 2008, U.S. airlines continued to meet demand, carrying 757.4 million passengers, but the impact of unprecedented fuel prices and a recession have caused airlines to cutback capacity through reductions and elimination of routes leaving consumers to vie for less choices and capacity.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has described the resulting increase in congestion as "chronic." Moving passengers to railways can have an immediate impact on highways and airways, alleviating congestion, and reducing the use of and pollutants from fossil fuels.

One 75-foot wide rail corridor can carry the same number of persons per hour as a 16-lane expressway, while emitting fewer pollutants and consuming less energy per passenger mile. Capacity can be added to many existing rail corridors at a lower cost with track and signal improvements, modern train sets, or high-speed rail.

Rail travel is six times safer than highway travel, and worldwide is the one of the safest mode of transportation. In 2008, there were 2,414 train accidents (freight and passenger), resulting in 27 fatalities and 282 injuries. In addition, there were 2,391 train accidents at highway-rail grade crossings, resulting in 286 fatalities and 935 injuries. In comparison, in 2007, there were more than six million police-reported motor vehicle traffic crashes, resulting in 41,059 fatalities and nearly 2.5 million injuries.

Increased travel by rail stimulates economic activity and spurs private investment in urban areas and central business districts around rail stations. Rail service grants the freedom of mobility to those unable to easily use our air and highway systems because of age, physical disabilities, health problems, or economic circumstances, while reducing our dependence on foreign oil.

Investment in the expansion of passenger rail service will also encourage economic growth through the creation of highly skilled, good paying jobs. In March 2009, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the roles of the unemployed swelled to 13.2 million. When part-time and discouraged workers who want full-time jobs are included, the number of unemployed/under-employed workers increases to 24.3 million. In Pennsylvania, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 499,911 people were unemployed in April 2009 (7.8 percent), compared to 290,266 in December 2007 (4.6 percent).

Since the recession began in December 2007, one of the hardest hit sectors has been in construction where unemployment rates have reached over 21 percent. Since that time, over 1,050,000 jobs have been lost in the construction sector. Expanding passenger rail infrastructure will create jobs, not only in the construction sector of the economy, but in the manufacturing and service sectors as well.

To address our nation's economic, energy, environmental, and transportation challenges, our nation needs to continue expanding passenger rail service and invest in high-speed rail. In 2007, the Passenger Rail Working Group of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission reported that the total capital cost estimate of re-establishing the national intercity passenger rail network between now and 2050 is approximately $357.2 billion or $8.1 billion annually.

Passenger Rail Expansion Needs

After decades of declining passenger rail service and consequent revenue decline from intercity passenger trains, Congress created the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, more commonly known as Amtrak in 1970. Amtrak was tasked with taking over passenger services nationwide and rebuilding the rail passenger system into a modern, efficient conveyance.

Today, Amtrak operates a rail network across 46 states, serving more than 500 destinations on 21,000 miles of routes with its nearly 18,000 employees. In its sixth straight year of record ridership, Amtrak served around 78,000 passengers per day on it 300 trains, totaling more than 28.7 million passengers nationwide during fiscal year 2008. With ongoing concerns over congestion and our dependence on foreign oil, rising gas prices, and greenhouse gas emissions, both Amtrak and the States continue to look for opportunities to expand passenger rail service

Adequate investment in passenger railroad infrastructure is crucial for national economic growth, global competitiveness, the environment, and quality of life. Continued efforts to expand passenger rail services are critical to maintain an effective nationwide system as well as to advance Congress' and the President's vision for the development of high-speed rail in the United States.

Legislation

On October 16, 2008, Congress addressed the need for the development of passenger rail by signing the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (P.L. 110-432) (PRIIA). PRIIA reauthorized Amtrak and provided a total of $13.06 billion over five years to encourage the development of new and improved intercity passenger rail service through an 80-20 Federal/State matching grant program and help to bring the Northeast Corridor to a state-of-good-repair.

Of the $13.06 billion, PRIIA authorized $5.315 billion (an average of $1.063 billion per year) to Amtrak for capital grants, and $2.949 billion (an average of $589.8 million per year) for operating grants. It also authorized $1.9 billion for a new State Capital Grant program for intercity passenger rail projects. This program provides $325 million for "congestion grants" to Amtrak and the States for high-priority rail corridors to increase capacity along certain lines to reduce congestion and facilitate ridership. PRIIA further provided $1.5 billion over five years for development of high-speed rail on the 11 designated corridors.

On February 17, 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-5) (Recovery Act) was signed into law. The Recovery Act provides $64.1 billion of infrastructure investment of which $9.3 billion is dedicated for passenger rail. This includes $8 billion in grants to States for development of intercity passenger and high-speed rail, with the President's budget proposing additional funding for each of the next five years for the advancement and development

of high-speed rail throughout the nation. In addition, the Recovery Act provided $1.3 billion for capital improvements to Amtrak.

Pennsylvania Passenger Rail Service

Pennsylvania is currently served by five key Amtrak intercity rail corridors and routes. These routes include the Keystone Corridor, Capitol Limited Route, Pennsylvanian, the Lake Shore Limited Route, and the Northeast Corridor. In 2008, three of Amtrak's busiest stations were in Pennsylvania: Philadelphia 30th Street Station was ranked the third busiest station; Harrisburg was ranked 21st; and Lancaster 22nd. At the end of FY08, Amtrak employed 2,539 Pennsylvania residents. These five routes are detailed below:

The Keystone Corridor is a 104-mile Amtrak-owned line between Harrisburg and Philadelphia (through Lancaster). The DOT has designated the Keystone Corridor as a high-speed corridor. Amtrak runs between 11 and 14 trains per day in each direction.

The Capitol Limited Route operates from Chicago to Washington, D.C. with only one Pennsylvania stop in Pittsburgh. From Washington D.C. to Pittsburgh PA, Amtrak runs on track owned by the CSX Corporation (CSX), a freight rail company. From Pittsburgh, PA to Chicago, IL, Amtrak operates on track owned by Norfolk Southern. This route operates one train east and one train west each day.

The Pennsylvanian service run by Amtrak operates from Chicago, IL to New York City, NY through Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Philadelphia, PA. From Chicago, IL to Harrisburg, PA, Amtrak operates on both CSX and Norfolk Southern owned track. It then connects with Amtrak owned track on the Keystone Corridor line. Amtrak operates this service once daily. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has designated the Pittsburgh to Philadelphia portion (including the Keystone Corridor) of this route as a high-speed rail corridor.

The Lake Shore Limited route operates from Chicago, IL to one of two final destinations, either New York City, NY or Boston, MA. Amtrak has only one stop in Pennsylvania along this route in Erie, PA. Amtrak operates on CSX track along the Pennsylvania Panhandle. Amtrak operates service on the Lake Shore Limited route once daily in each direction.

The Northeast Corridor operates between Washington, D.C. to Boston, MA through Philadelphia, PA. This route is run on Amtrak-owned track. Amtrak operates 17 trains, weekdays in each direction (Washington D.C. to Boston, MA) with stops in Philadelphia; on weekends, seven trains stop in Philadelphia, PA on Saturday and 10 trains on Sunday.

In total, in the State of Pennsylvania, Amtrak operates approximately 120 trains a day through its Acela Express, Keystone Corridor, and Regional Service. In addition, Amtrak operates the following long and short-distance routes:

Long Distance:

- Capitol Limited (daily Washington-Pittsburgh-Chicago)
- The Cardinal (tri-weekly New York-Washington-Cincinnati-Chicago)

- The Crescent (daily New York-Atlanta-New Orleans)
- The Lake Shore Limited (daily New York/Boston-Erie-Chicago)
- The Palmetto (daily New York-Philadelphia-Savannah)
- The Silver Meteor (daily New York-Philadelphia-Miami)
- The Silver Star (daily New York-Philadelphia-Tampa-Miami)

Shorter-distance routes:

- The Pennsylvanian (daily New York- Philadelphia-Harrisburg-Pittsburgh)
- The Carolinian (daily New York-Richmond-Charlotte)
- The Vermonter (daily Washington, DC-St. Albans, Vt.)

As a State, Pennsylvania enjoys a higher-than-average level of passenger rail service. However, in Western Pennsylvania, there is very little rail service. There are only three lines, with stops in Western Pennsylvania (Capitol Limited, Lake Shore Limited, and Pennsylvanian), and each line has only one daily roundtrip. Of those three lines, only the Pennsylvanian serves the communities west of Harrisburg, including Lewistown, Huntingdon, Tryone, Altoona, Johnstown, Latrobe, and Greensburg.

Section 224 of PRIA requires Amtrak to conduct a study of several routes including two in Pennsylvania. First, Amtrak must study the route between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to determine whether to increase frequency of passenger rail service along the route or along segments of the route. Second, Amtrak must study the Capitol Limited route between Cumberland, Maryland, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to determine whether to reinstate a station stop at Rockwood, Pennsylvania. These studies are due to be completed by October 16, 2009.

WITNESSES

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