



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

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Republican Staff Director

October 20, 2020

Mr. William J. Flynn  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Amtrak  
1 Massachusetts Ave, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Flynn:

Over the past few months, former Vice President Joe Biden has utilized Amtrak resources for his presidential campaign. In August, the Biden campaign released an ad that used footage of Amtrak's trains, facilities, and employees.<sup>1</sup> The campaign subsequently chartered an Amtrak train for Mr. Biden to make campaign stops in Pennsylvania and Ohio.<sup>2</sup> According to Amtrak's guidelines, charter trains are not a part of its "primary objective" of operating its "core train service safely, punctually, and efficiently."<sup>3</sup> Amtrak's guidelines for operating charter trains include requirements that the use of Amtrak's resources will not impact its regular operations, and that the train "must generate sufficient financial benefit for Amtrak to justify the Amtrak resources and assets."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BidenHarris2020 Campaign Video (Aug. 17, 2020) available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQCJkICxOPk> (last accessed Oct. 16, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Will Weissert, *Amtrak rider-in-chief Biden embarks on Rust Belt train tour*, AP NEWS (Sept. 30, 2020) available at <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-joe-biden-donald-trump-pennsylvania-latrobe-a9de72369754152f98e0ee740161fd9f>.

<sup>3</sup> Amtrak, *Guidelines for Charter Trains Operated by Amtrak*, (Sept. 18, 2018) available at <https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/Amtrak-Charter-Train-Guidelines-032818.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

The Biden charter train included several Amtrak cars and made multiple stops for campaign events where guests were invited aboard the train.<sup>5</sup> The Biden campaign distributed plastic identification cards to riders designed like actual Amtrak tickets.<sup>6</sup> News reports suggested freight train interactions with the stopped charter train and the potential for delays at campaign stops.<sup>7</sup>

We are concerned that the Biden campaign's use of Amtrak's charter train redirected Amtrak's scarce resources during a time of record losses, employee layoffs, and service cuts during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, Amtrak has started cutting its workforce by roughly 2,000 employees.<sup>9</sup> On October 1, 2020, it began sharp reductions in several of its routes due to the drop in ridership and the need to conserve resources.<sup>10</sup> Amtrak also more than doubled its original congressional funding request for Fiscal Year 2021 to an unprecedented \$4.9 billion to maintain service through the year.<sup>11</sup> We are concerned that the apparent use of a struggling, resource-deprived, publicly-run service for political gain does not serve the best interests of Amtrak or the American taxpayers at this time. Given that the Biden campaign declined to disclose what it paid to use Amtrak's resources, we want to ensure that the campaign paid a full, non-discounted rate.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, freight trains have proven essential and resilient in transporting essential goods, including medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), during the pandemic.<sup>13</sup> However, we question whether the Biden campaign's use of Amtrak caused delays of freight trains at a time when supplies are crucial. Accordingly, please provide the following information to the Subcommittee by no later than November 2, 2020:

1. The total cost to Amtrak, including in equipment, resources, and salaries, to operate the Biden campaign charter train.
2. The total cost paid to Amtrak for the Biden charter train and whether the Biden campaign received any financial discount, reduced fares, special treatment, or special services for using Amtrak's resources to campaign through Pennsylvania and Ohio.

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<sup>5</sup> Annie Linskey, *Back in his comfort zone, Joe Biden hits Amtrak and the campaign trail*, WASH. POST, (Oct. 1, 2020) available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/biden-train-campaign-debate/2020/09/30/fd370ffa-0330-11eb-897d-3a6201d6643f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/biden-train-campaign-debate/2020/09/30/fd370ffa-0330-11eb-897d-3a6201d6643f_story.html).

<sup>6</sup>*Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Weissert, *supra* note 2.

<sup>8</sup> See Testimony of William Flynn, Pres. and CEO, Amtrak, before the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (Sept. 9, 2020) available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/PW/PW14/20200909/110974/HHRG-116-PW14-Wstate-FlynnW-20200909.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Flynn, *supra*, note 10.

<sup>10</sup> Updates to Amtrak Service, Amtrak (Aug. 17, 2020), available at <https://media.amtrak.com/2020/08/updates-to-amtrak-service/> (last accessed Oct. 13, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Flynn, *supra*, note 10.

<sup>12</sup> Will Weissert, *Amtrak rider-in-chief Biden embarks on Rust Belt train tour*, AP NEWS (Sept. 30, 2020) available at <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-joe-biden-donald-trump-pennsylvania-latrobe-a9de72369754152f98e0ee740161fd9f>.

<sup>13</sup> See Jeff Berman, *Railroads are keeping goods rolling amid COVID-19 pandemic*, LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT (Apr. 22, 2020) available at [https://www.logisticsmgmt.com/article/railroads\\_are\\_keeping\\_goods\\_rolling\\_amid\\_covid\\_19\\_pandemic](https://www.logisticsmgmt.com/article/railroads_are_keeping_goods_rolling_amid_covid_19_pandemic).

3. Whether the Biden campaign's charter train delayed any Amtrak trains or disrupted any Amtrak services.
4. Whether the Biden campaign's charter train received track preference over any freight trains or other trains.
5. Whether riders on the Biden campaign's charter train purchased tickets to board the train.
6. The number of Amtrak employees taken off their regular duties to staff the Biden campaign charter train, including any overtime hours worked.
7. A copy of standard operating procedures or similar documents utilized by Amtrak and its employees in operating standard charter trains.
8. A copy of any documents, standard operating procedures, or guidelines Amtrak has for trains chartered for campaign and/or political events, particularly presidential campaigns.
9. A historical list of any time Amtrak trains have been previously chartered for campaign usage and the costs of those resources and costs paid by the individual candidate's campaign.
10. A written response on how the Biden campaign charter train remained in compliance with Amtrak guidance and procedures on COVID-19.

If you have questions, please contact the Republican Office of the Subcommittee on Rail, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials at (202) 225-9446.

Sincerely,



Rick Crawford  
RANKING MEMBER  
Subcommittee on Railroads,  
Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials



Bob Gibbs  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Scott Perry  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Lloyd Smucker  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS