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Written Testimony of Joan McDonald
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Good morning. I am Joan McDonald, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss with you today the efforts of Governor Cuomo and NYSDOT as they relate to mutual cooperation, planning and investment pertaining to the rail operations and related activities of the Northeast Corridor (NEC).

We're all aware that realizing a bolder vision for the future requires unprecedented collaboration among states. NYSDOT is working through the Northeast Corridor Commission on comprehensive corridor planning. This is a daunting task for a corridor that spans eight states and the District of Columbia, supports nine passenger rail operators – including four of the five largest commuter rail services in North America, serves four freight railroads, and has four separate infrastructure owners. It is also a challenge to ensure that near-term capital projects align with long-term infrastructure and service plans.

Yet we've risen to this challenge and made the most of the resources available and the expertise of the professionals who are dedicated to realizing our mission. Our goals are varied, but they are all crucial components of what we are ultimately striving for: economic growth, connectivity, improved service reliability and travel time.

While more resources are always needed to continue the good work we've already begun, the NEC benefited from the \$1.3 billion in capital funds appropriated to Amtrak in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and another approximately \$1 billion in high-speed rail program grants from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for projects on the Northeast Corridor main line between Boston and Washington. In addition, Northeast states received almost \$700 million in grants for connecting rail corridors.

In New York, under the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo, construction is underway on a new grade-separated "flyover" at Harold Interlocking, where Amtrak, New Jersey Transit, and Long Island Rail Road trains, 783 per day, converge north of Penn Station at the busiest junction in North America. The \$368.5 million removal of this bottleneck is funded in part with a recently awarded \$295 million

FRA high-speed rail grant. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority also contributed a healthy \$73 million in state funds to the project.

In addition, with the support of \$83 million in federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant funds, and \$30 million in FRA funding, New York, in partnership with Amtrak and private developers, has begun construction on \$297 million of improvements to passenger access under what is planned to be a new "Moynihan Station" on the site of the former Farley Post Office adjacent to the existing Penn Station. This is the busiest rail station in the country, with over 1,000 daily trains and over 500,000 daily passengers.

Today construction is underway on the East River Tunnels Track and Signals; we're increasing capacity, reducing delays and improving safety by replacing the aging signal system as well as replacing track structure and drainage systems at a cost of approximately \$200 million.

As we look further ahead, much more is on the horizon. The Gateway project to expand capacity across the Hudson River and within Penn Station is in the preliminary design phase, as is Phase II of the Moynihan Station project to construct the new train hall in the former Farley Post Office. To borrow a phrase: it's clear that "New York Works."

While I think it's appropriate to take pride in the accomplishments of my home state, my work as the former Chair of the Northeast Corridor Commission for the past two years has been focused on the much bigger picture that the vast needs of the Corridor entail, as well as the necessary and fulfilling task of strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones. I'm just as proud of the way we have committed to and endorsed each others' projects while never losing sight of our core mission and goals. Connectivity is a key element of what we are working to improve in transportation and connectivity is what we have achieved in this collaborative relationship. We have numerous states and jurisdictions and the most complex ownership and operating arrangements of any railway in the world; yet we are linked. This is why I'm certain that the Commission's goals will be met and the mission fulfilled: we're all in this together.

We know the Northeast Corridor must balance critical investment needs just to maintain the safety and reliability of current services with the concurrent need to address consistently growing passenger service demands. The fact that commuter services and Amtrak services intersect at common facilities and on common trackage creates a situation where delays to any one service will quickly cascade and adversely affect the on-time performance of other rail services. Without significant and sustained levels of infrastructure investment, rail operations on the Corridor will suffer and economic benefits of the Corridor will shrink.

Today, the reality is that deferring replacement of key components of the Corridor is no longer an option – infrastructure inherited from past generations can no longer provide the mobility needed to support continued, robust economic growth. New investment is essential to modernize systems, reduce failures, ensure safety and reliability, and expand capacity for increased service.

We often think about what might happen if we lost this invaluable resource. Hurricane Sandy provided a stark illustration of the chaos that would ensue without these vital rail assets that are so critical to our region, our citizens and our economy. Transportation systems must be balanced. Each piece is critical and interdependent; and each piece is linked.

The PRIIA Act which created this Commission is about improvement, and this work is well underway, but PRIIA is also about investment and, while existing resources have been a blessing, and we've done a lot with a little, the challenges ahead are going to require much more dedicated support. The states are not going to be able to do it alone.

The Northeast Corridor is a national resource and, along with the I-95 corridor, the transportation backbone of the entire Northeast region. However, the Corridor's current trajectory is unsustainable. The reliability of existing services is threatened by capacity chokepoints and significant state of good repair needs. And meeting future needs due to increasing demand for commuter, intercity, and freight service is simply not possible without significant and dedicated new investment in new capacity.

If we've committed to preparing our region to continue to grow, and we have, then we need to make significant, wise and bold investments in our rail system. I know the members of the Northeast Corridor Commission are committed to working together and with Congress and other stakeholders to ensure that the Northeast Corridor is up to the challenges of the future. We're already on the right track, with a solid record of achievement behind us and eminently realizable goals ahead. We're already succeeding, but what we need going forward is more support, greater investment and continued collaboration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.