



November 29, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I'm writing to convey the immense gratitude of the Rail Passengers Association and the millions of America's passengers on the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) into law. Your leadership in the bipartisan negotiations between the House and the Senate played a critical role in shaping the IIJA's Passenger Rail Expansion and Rail Safety Act of 2021, which promises to launch a new era for intercity passenger rail in the U.S.

This historic legislation—paired with efficient management by your administration and effective oversight by Congress—will help modernize the existing U.S. passenger rail network; add additional frequencies, offering more convenient travel options and connections; reduce harmful emissions, increase energy efficiency, and improve safety across the U.S. transportation system; and lay the foundation for dozens of new passenger rail corridors across the U.S.

*Rail Passengers* particularly applauds you on the ambition displayed in the IIJA, which will do more than simply bring existing rail assets into a state-of-good-repair. This legislation also ensures that historically under-connected communities can share in the economic benefits of frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service. This bill is an appropriate legacy for America's Amtrak Passenger-in-Chief.

Looking ahead, *Rail Passengers* believes there are several key steps that your administration can take in the coming year to ensure a successful launch to the rail programs included in the bipartisan infrastructure bill:

- **Work with Congress to fully fund rail programs at the levels authorized in the Surface Transportation Investment Act (STIA) for Fiscal Year 2022.** In addition to providing critical funding for Amtrak operations, funding passenger rail programs at the levels authorized in STIA will underline the broad political commitment that led to passage of the bipartisan infrastructure bill and establish an important precedent going forward. With fully a third of the IIJA's rail funding contained within STIA's authorizing language, the action taken by appropriators could well be the difference between simply bringing existing passenger rail assets into a state of good repair and expanding and transforming the U.S. rail network.
- **Ensure Amtrak continues forward on the path to restoring service to pre-pandemic levels.** Faced with labor shortages, Amtrak is openly contemplating temporarily reducing service in December 2021. We encourage your administration to leverage appropriations bills and USDOT oversight of enhanced grant programs to ensure that any Amtrak service disruptions are brief. An extended disruption of Amtrak service on corridors that affect hundreds of communities, mere weeks after the passage



of this historic bill, will undermine public confidence in these promising new passenger rail programs.

- **Ensure the U.S. Department of Transportation meets deadlines for developing project pipelines.** The IJJA has established several key deadlines that will be critical for ensuring the first tranche of funding is put to work in building better infrastructure. These include:
  - *Corridor Identification and Development Program - § 25101 - (May 14, 2022):* Establish a program to determine the level of readiness for Federal financial assistance of intercity passenger rail corridors and the creation of a pipeline of projects;
  - *Direct Grants to Amtrak (May 14, 2022):* Transmit a detailed spend plan, including a list of project locations, to Congress for projects Amtrak will undertake on the Northeast Corridor and the National Network utilizing FY22 funds.
  
- **Focus funding on projects capable of producing near-term benefits.** With only a five-year window to demonstrate that these new passenger rail programs can produce tangible benefits for America’s travelers, the first rounds of funding must flow to projects capable of breaking ground and launching additional frequencies and services in a meaningful timeframe. There are several projects of national and regional significance that are supporters have long been advocating for, including the replacement of Amtrak’s Superliner and Amfleet II fleets, Hudson Tunnel Project, Gulf Coast Rail Restoration, Long Bridge Project, B&P Tunnel Project, a second daily frequency between MSP – CHI, and South Bay Connect Project to name just a few. *Rail Passengers* is ready to assist your administration in whatever capacity we can to quickly advance these projects.

Our association appreciates your tireless work on behalf of America’s passengers, as well as the work of your staff. We look forward to working with your administration to make sure the IJJA sparks a revolution in safe, energy efficient, and convenient intercity transportation in the U.S.

Sincerely,

Jim Mathews  
President & CEO  
Rail Passengers Association