



October 3, 2002

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Byrd:

We are writing to express our grave concern that funding levels contained in the House version of the FY '03 Transportation Appropriations bill will plunge Amtrak back into the type of financial crisis that Congress and the Administration only narrowly averted in July. Amtrak is an essential element of our national transportation system, and every national rail system in the world depends on adequate, predictable government funding. We strongly urge the House to match the Senate's funding levels in the full-year appropriations bills, and set aside any new policy directives, which should be thoroughly debated and voted upon in the authorizing committees, not imposed through "riders" on the appropriations bills.

The Senate Committee's full-year allocation of \$1.2 billion is the minimum needed to sustain Amtrak's national network for another year. This amount is consistent with the recommendation of Department of Transportation Inspector General Kenneth Mead, who told Congress in January 2002 that Amtrak "will require significant capital investment on the order of \$1 billion or more each year for the foreseeable future ... if rail service is to continue." It is also consistent with the total level of Amtrak's federal funding in FY '02 when all sources are considered.

An appropriation below \$1.2 billion will jeopardize Amtrak's national network and create major uncertainties for all of the commuter and freight rail services across the country that depend on Amtrak. In particular, the Administration's proposed level of \$521 million is not enough to keep Amtrak in business for more than a few weeks into FY '03. Likewise, the House-proposed level of \$762 million will only guarantee another mid-year cash crisis.

Moreover, the House bill's requirement that certain long-distance routes must be terminated if additional state funding is not secured by July 2003 is inappropriate for several reasons. It does not factor in the severance payments that would be required for terminated employees, which would cancel out any savings; it does not reflect the reality that the entire network would run out of cash before the July

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deadline; it imposes a new unfunded mandate on the states at a time when many are in dire financial straits; and it usurps the authority of the states and the Congressional authorizing committees to determine the scope of the interstate passenger rail network.

We respectfully urge the House and Senate appropriations committees to:

- Provide at least \$1.2 billion in full-year funding for Amtrak in FY '03; and
- Set aside policy "riders" and refer decisions on the scope of interstate passenger rail service to Cities, States and the Congressional authorizing committees.

With strong backing from mayors across the nation, we stand ready to work with you on this urgent national policy issue.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor of Boston  
President  
U.S. Conference of Mayors

Kenneth L. Barr  
Mayor of Fort Worth  
Chair, Transportation and Communications  
U.S. Conference of Mayors

J. Thomas Cochran  
Executive Director  
U.S. Conference of Mayors

cc: Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees  
Members of the House and Senate Leadership Teams