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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

Virtual Hearing
Back on Track: Investing in Passenger Rail
Tuesday, April 13, 2021 | 1 p.m.

Hosted by
State Representative Joe Ciresi

1 p.m.

PANEL ONE

Jennie Granger, Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation
PennDOT

Jody Holton, Assistant General Manager of Planning
SEPTA

Rudy Husband, Vice President
Norfolk Southern

Questions from legislators

1:45 p.m.

PANEL TWO

Jim Mathews, President & CEO
Rail Passengers Association

Brian Pitzer, Executive Director
All Aboard Erie

Questions from legislators

2:15 p.m.

PANEL THREE

John Weidenhammer, President
Berks Alliance

Lawrence C. Malski, President
Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Rail Authority

Mark Spada, President
Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail

Questions from legislators



Testimony of

Jennie A. Granger, AICP, Deputy Secretary of Multimodal Transportation

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Public Hearing: Back on Track – Investing in Passenger Rail

House Democratic Policy Committee

April 13, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Bizzarro, Representative Ciresi, and members of the committee, my name is Jennie Granger and I serve as Deputy Secretary of Multimodal Transportation at PennDOT. I am happy to be here today to share my thoughts on the importance of transportation in our quality of life. An affordable, accessible, and interconnected transportation network that gives people options is critical to our economic growth and prosperity.

Our System Today

Pennsylvania's public transit system is open, accessible, and affordable to Pennsylvanians in every single county regardless of gender, age, income, disability, race, etc. People can move within their communities to shop, visit friends, work, attend classes and access medical appointments. And when people want to travel longer distances, the intercity passenger rail network we have built in Pennsylvania provides a competitive, economic, and environmentally friendly mobility option, compared to a traditional personal vehicle.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a long history of supporting intercity passenger rail through strategic capital investments and operating assistance to provide safe and reliable passenger rail to millions of travelers annually. In Pennsylvania, 13 round-trip trains per day provide service between Harrisburg and Philadelphia through the Keystone Service and one round-trip train per day provides service from Pittsburgh to Harrisburg and on to Philadelphia and New York City through the Pennsylvanian service.

Historical Improvements

In 2006, PennDOT and Amtrak completed a \$145 million Keystone Corridor Improvement Program on the 104-mile Keystone Corridor between Philadelphia and Harrisburg. The improvements facilitated an increase in maximum speed to 110 mph and reduced travel time on express service to just 95 minutes, which is significantly less than the same trip by automobile. Since then, the Commonwealth has continued strategic infrastructure investments to increase speeds to 125 mph and further reduce travel time by making improvements to stations, track, signals, and power systems to modernize the Keystone Corridor. These investments have shown a substantial return for Pennsylvania, with ridership increasing by nearly 70 percent since 2006 to a total of 1.56 million passengers in FY 2018-19.

In 2008, President George W. Bush signed the Passenger Rail Investment and Infrastructure Act (PRIIA) into law. PRIIA, through Section 209, required Amtrak and the states to develop a nationwide standardized methodology for establishing and allocating the operating and capital costs of “state-supported” rail corridors, shifting the burden for both capital and operating expenses to states.

With the inception of PRIIA, PennDOT is responsible for fully funding capital replacements for all service operated by Amtrak in Pennsylvania. Fortunately, Act 89 of 2013 and the Multimodal Transportation Fund created a specific line item for passenger rail that provided sufficient resources to assist in funding the operating and capital impacts of PRIIA on the Commonwealth. Additionally, PennDOT has been working closely with Amtrak to implement strategic fare increases on the Keystone Service to increase revenues and offset the required subsidy. Prior to COVID-19, these benefits were compounded due to increasing ridership.

On the capital side, Amtrak is beginning its procurement to replace its rail car fleet and the Commonwealth will be responsible for the purchase or financing costs associated with this infrastructure. Since the department is responsible for this cost, we have been dedicating investments within the Public Transportation Trust Fund (PTTF) toward this purchase as opposed to seeking other revenue sources or requesting bonding. The current estimate for this purchase is \$300 million -- \$350 million. Additional monies within the PTTF will be funding construction projects in the next several fiscal years that have been in the planning and design phases over the last several years. Those projects include, but are not limited to; completion of

the Middletown Train Station, construction of the Coatesville Train Station; parking and pedestrian bridge expansion at the Lancaster Train Station, and transit facilities for Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA), County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) and Capital Area Transit (CAT). Just these six projects total over \$250M.

Where are we today?

Over the past decade, we have worked steadily to rehabilitate and reconstruct stations along the Keystone Corridor to get them into a state of good repair, but more importantly, make them accessible for all Pennsylvanians. Similar to our need to plan to pay for new train sets, our responsibility to fund or match federal dollars on station capital projects means we have these monies set aside within our existing funds.

- **Elizabethtown Train Station**- Completed in 2011, the \$9 million project restored the historic station, brought the station into ADA compliance with elevators and level boarding platforms, created 120 parking spaces, improved site lighting and included passenger features to the station such as restrooms, a water fountain, and an Amtrak ticket kiosk. PennDOT also completed a paved shared bicycle pedestrian path in 2015 that connected the train station to the downtown central business district for approximately \$1.3 million.
- **Mount Joy Train Station**- Completed in 2019, the \$33 million project built a new ADA accessible station adjacent to the old platform with two level boarding platforms, elevators, a pedestrian walkway, and expanded parking.
- **Paoli Transportation Center**- Completed in 2019, the \$36 million project combined efforts from PennDOT, Amtrak, and SEPTA to build an ADA accessible station with level boarding, elevators, pedestrian overpass, improved lighting and drainage, and rehabbed the historic 1953 station building.

- **Coatesville Train Station:** 3rd & 4th Avenue Streetscapes- Completed in 2018 and 2020 respectively, the approximate \$3 million project provided improved ADA accessibility, expanded bicycle and pedestrian facilities, improved traffic operations, and enhanced aesthetics and safety between the new train station site and downtown Coatesville.
- **Exton Train Station-** Completed in 2020 and led by SEPTA, \$23.4 million project included an ADA compliant station building on the eastbound (south) side of the tracks. The building provides an indoor waiting area, ticket office, and accessible restrooms. An accessible path connects the parking lot, station building, and platforms.
- **Lancaster Christian Street Parking Lot-** Completed in 2021, the \$533,000 parking lot provides 53 monthly parking spaces for the Lancaster Train Station. PennDOT transformed the 30-space gravel lot into an ADA accessible paved parking lot with improved drainage, lighting, and site security. The South Central Transit Agency (SCTA) is managing the parking lot while providing bus connections to the station.

Future Planned Projects/Projects Underway

We continue that work today as we expand our station construction program. The following projects are in design or under construction today.

- **Middletown Train Station-** This project is in construction and anticipated to open in Fall 2021. It will provide a new ADA accessible station with a high level boarding platform, elevators, pedestrian overpass, more than 300 parking spaces and intermodal connectivity to Harrisburg International Airport and the greater Harrisburg area through Capitol Area Transit (CAT).
- **Harrisburg Train Station-** This project will replace the roof on the historic train station and rehabilitate the Observation Room with a new HVAC system. The project is in final design and anticipated to be completed in 2022.

- **Lancaster Keller Avenue Parking-** This project is in design and will transform the property located to the north of the station into a 250-space parking lot with an elevator/stair tower connecting into the existing historic train station. This project is anticipated to be constructed in 2023-2024.
- **Coatesville Train Station-** This project is preparing for construction in 2021 and estimated to cost more than \$65 million. It includes construction of a new ADA accessible station with high level boarding platforms, elevators, surface parking, improved lighting and drainage, and the addition of a freight bypass track to allow the safe transportation of freight through the station area.
- **Downingtown Train Station-** This project is in preliminary design and entails construction of a new ADA accessible station for both SEPTA and Amtrak use. It will include high level boarding platforms, increased parking, improved site lighting and drainage, and multimodal connectivity. Construction will be determined in the future as design progresses.
- **Parkesburg Train Station-** This project is in design and will expand parking, improve water control measures, and improve ADA station access. It is anticipated to be constructed in 2023-2024.
- **Ardmore Train Station-** This \$36 million project is in construction and being led by SEPTA. The new station building will provide ADA accessibility with high level boarding platforms, improve multimodal connectivity, and enhance aesthetics and passenger amenities. It is anticipated to be completed in 2022-2023.

As we look to the future, it is the intention of the Department to continue its strategic investment in passenger rail, leveraging federal and state funds in a responsible manner that benefits Pennsylvanians.

What is next?

There have been many proposals and studies on how best to improve rail service in western Pennsylvania, ranging from expanding existing Amtrak service to launching new rail service between interim cities, such as Johnstown to Pittsburgh. Due to limited available Federal funding streams and ownership and geography challenges, we have been limited in making significant investments in station projects west of Harrisburg. While we recognize the desire to expand passenger rail service west of Harrisburg, funding sources for operating or major capital construction have not been identified to date. We believe that getting our existing rail service to a state of good repair will have significant long-term economic benefits.

Additionally, there are a multitude of projects that have been proposed and studied that are not part of the Keystone and Pennsylvanian lines between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. While we acknowledge that those projects are important to those communities and the region, we again face the lack of capital and operating funding. The long-term sustainability of these projects would be dependent on the identification of operating funds and maintenance funds into the future. Rail service will require operating subsidies to make them affordable.

COVID-19 Impacts to service intercity passenger rail

I do need to acknowledge the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on public transportation in Pennsylvania. Voluntary and required work-from-home practices, job losses in the service and other sectors, and the closure of most public places caused ridership to plummet.

On March 6, 2020, Governor Wolf reported the first case of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, and on March 21, a statewide shutdown began for all “non-life-sustaining” businesses. Transit agencies across the United States experienced significant reductions in ridership and the associated fare revenue. Revenue from the majority of sources that comprise state and local transit funding has declined, and the future status or impacts of those reductions cannot be immediately known.

Many Pennsylvania public transit agencies experienced an approximate 50 percent drop in ridership, while the *Keystone* and the *Pennsylvanian* ridership fell 85 percent and 55 percent respectively. PennDOT coordinated with Amtrak and suspended the Keystone service on March

18, 2020, and the Pennsylvanian service on March 19, 2020. Both resumed service on June 1, 2020; however, the *Keystone* operated at a reduced service. Regardless of the suspended services and significantly reduced revenue, PennDOT had to continue to pay Amtrak for maintenance of the railroad and equipment according to PRIIA.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will continue to support the strategic investment in the passenger rail transportation network throughout the Commonwealth in a way that focuses resources on the greatest return for Pennsylvania taxpayers and the potential for the most positive impact to the transportation network.

Testimony of Jody Holton
Assistant General Manager of Planning & Strategic Initiatives
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)

Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee
Hearing on Passenger Rail

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

1:00 PM

[Virtual – Microsoft Teams]

Rail Passenger Service Policy Committee Hearing

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

Testimony of Jody Holton, SEPTA Assistant General Manager of Planning and Strategic Initiatives

Good afternoon, my name is Jody Holton, and I am the Chair of the Pennsylvania Transportation Advisory Committee and the Assistant General Manager of Planning & Strategic Initiatives at SEPTA, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

On behalf of SEPTA and the State Transportation Advisory Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the importance of Pennsylvania passenger rail and the strategic issues we face in maintaining and expanding service.

The SEPTA Regional Rail System

The SEPTA Regional Rail system is an irreplaceable asset of the Commonwealth and the United States. Many regions around the world would love to have the system that the Commonwealth has, in part because the region has grown up around its rail lines. SEPTA Regional Rail serves five counties in Southeastern Pennsylvania plus parts of New Jersey and Delaware. SEPTA's railroad is on a par with major rail systems in Boston, New York, Washington DC, Chicago, and Los Angeles, but capital investment levels in SEPTA are half as much as these systems. Like those cities, the SEPTA rail system supports the economy. The Regional Rail system is comprised of:

- Thirteen routes.
- One Hundred and Fifty-five (155) stations.
- Over 400 miles of track.
- Three-hundred and ninety-six (396) passenger rail vehicles.

SEPTA provides all-day service for a wide range of trips:

- In 2019, the Regional Rail system transported over 34 million riders. Most peak hour trains had standing room only.
- Over 1.6 million people live within one mile of SEPTA's railroad service.
- Rail stations added \$33B to the value of adjacent housing, which is eleven percent of the total housing valuation of the region.

SEPTA is an all electric railroad, helping provide cost-effective operation and clean air. SEPTA has entered into a long-term power contract with two solar farms in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, offsetting nearly 20 percent of SEPTA's annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from electricity.

A Fleet from the 1970s Must be Replaced

While the SEPTA system is comprehensive, it is also aging. Sixty percent of the rail fleet was built in the 1970s – the Nixon Era. These rail cars have served faithfully but they are antiquated and at the end of their service life. If these cars are not replaced with new trains by 2030 then SEPTA will be forced to close 100 rail stations and four routes, cutting off transportation for customers, businesses, and

communities. Closing rail stations will lower home values, push traffic to clogged highways, and hurt Pennsylvania businesses and overall economic competitiveness.

SEPTA Needs Sustainable, Bondable Capital Funding

Capital funding is necessary to keep the system intact and to expand. SEPTA can immediately begin to replace its 1970s fleet if bondable funding is provided. A cost-effective opportunity exists to order new rail vehicles as part of a procurement by NJ TRANSIT. However, the purchase price (estimated at \$1B) must be financed over a number of years, just as a person might finance the purchase of an automobile in monthly payments. If SEPTA does not commit to a purchase within the next 24 months, the opportunity to order these new trains will be lost. SEPTA's current capital budget is approximately \$700M annually, with a backlog of \$4.6B, underscoring the need to finance major capital investments.

With Adequate Funding and Support Expanding the Rail System Makes Sense.

Many communities are asking SEPTA to expand the rail system. SEPTA service expansions are investments in transportation that will accelerate the recovery and strengthen the statewide economy. Transit funding is inherently an investment that pays us all back with fairer access to jobs, healthcare, and education opportunities; cleaner air; fewer traffic deaths; and better public health outcomes.

Studies of passenger rail between Phoenixville, Pottstown, Reading, and Philadelphia estimate daily ridership between 3,000 and 6,400 riders per day, providing access to jobs, healthcare, schools, shopping, and enabling regional mobility. The parallel US 422 is very congested. The Reading metro area has a population over 400,000 but lacks bus and rail connections to the SEPTA region.

Like Reading, other communities are interested in restoring passenger rail services closed in the 1980s. Leaders in West Chester, the county seat of Chester County, have asked SEPTA to restore the electric rail service discontinued in the 1980s. West Chester is the only county seat in the SEPTA region lacking SEPTA rail service. Likewise Quakertown and Perkasie in Bucks County have pursued extending rail too.

These proposed rail services would increase the tax base, improve mobility, and support economic development, but they require funding to construct and operate.

Passenger Rail in the Reading – Pottstown – Phoenixville - Philadelphia Corridor.

In 2019 the Transportation Advisory Commission published a study titled *Keystone Connected: Intercity Passenger Rail Success Factors*. The Reading to Philadelphia corridor has many of the success factors identified by the TAC, such as:

- Increasing jobs and population in the corridor: In just one year, 2019, communities in Montgomery County built 487,000 sf of commercial space, 155,000 sf of office space, and approximately 3,000 new housing units along this corridor.
- Large employers: The US 422 Corridor is home to major employers including SEI, Lockheed Martin, GSK, and Pfizer along with hospitals and colleges which are major ridership generators.

- Congested highways: US 422 has significant traffic congestion that unfortunately hinders bus service and automobile commuting. Rail service can provide a fast and reliable alternative.
- Transit connections: The Reading corridor has excellent connecting service operated by SEPTA, PART, and BARTA transit systems. Riders can make convenient connections to the Amtrak Northeast Corridor at 30th Street Station.

The TAC report, *Risks to Transportation Funding*, emphasized the chronic underfunding of public transportation in Pennsylvania. PennDOT estimates \$1.2 billion in additional funding per year is necessary for public transportation capital, operations, and maintenance. Securing adequate funding is the key to providing rail service in Pennsylvania.

Just this month, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a study, *Commuter Rail: Information on Benefits and Funding Challenges for Service in Less Urbanized Communities*. The GAO confirms the benefits of commuter rail services in less-urbanized areas (such as attracting major employers and providing access to healthcare). It also outlines the funding challenges for new commuter rail service extensions nationwide. For example, when routes stretch across jurisdictions or into rural areas funding becomes complicated, and therefore funding from state and federal partners is critical for success.

In closing, in order to advance Regional Rail extensions, we need the following:

1. Sustainable, bondable funding to replace the Act 44/89 Turnpike funding for public transportation.
2. State funds dedicated to the expansion of passenger rail service in order to provide a match to federal funding and cover operating costs.
3. Enabling legislation for county-level options to raise local funding for transit and passenger rail.

SEPTA and the TAC applaud the formation of the Governor's Transportation Revenue Options Committee to advance solutions in these areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Testimony of

Jim Mathews

President & Chief Executive Officer

Rail Passengers Association

Before the

Pennsylvania General Assembly

House Democratic Policy Committee

Hearing on Passenger Rail

Tuesday, April 13th, 2021

Rail Passengers Association

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Introduction

Good morning, and thank you to Representative Ciresi and Chairman Bizzarro, and all of the members of this Policy Council for holding today's hearing to focus attention on Pennsylvania's intercity rail network at this critical juncture. In my opinion your timing could not be better, since I firmly believe what the Congress decides to do about rail and transit over the coming months will have important and lasting impact for hundreds of Amtrak-served communities and millions of Americans. I encourage leaders in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to prepare *now* to take full advantage of future funding opportunities.

My name is Jim Mathews, and I am President and Chief Executive Officer of the *Rail Passengers Association*, the oldest and largest national organization giving a voice to more than 40 million rail passengers in the U.S. Our mission is to improve and expand conventional intercity and regional passenger train services, support higher speed rail initiatives, increase connectivity among all forms of transportation and ensure safety for our country's trains and passengers. I am honored to have the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of our 28,000 members from all across the U.S., over 1,300 of whom live in Pennsylvania.

Today, I will talk about the challenges this once-in-a-generation threat has posed for America's rail passengers, and the once-in-a-generation opportunities presented by infrastructure proposals currently being developed in Washington, D.C.

Washington Gets Serious About Infrastructure

Our Association was thrilled by the level of passenger rail investment laid out in the White House's American Jobs Plan and in the U.S. House's Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2), which passed the House last summer. These plans provide \$10 billion and \$11 billion per year for intercity passenger rail, respectively, and represent a seismic shift in the federal approach to investing in passenger trains.

The White House has proposed \$80 billion across eight years for intercity rail, with \$39 billion going to modernize the Northeast Corridor; \$16 billion for the National Network; \$20 billion for Intercity Passenger Grants; and \$5 billion for Freight Rail and Safety Grants.



This proposal would theoretically come *on top* of the five-year baseline outlined in H.R. 2, which provided \$13 billion for the NEC, \$16 billion for the National Network, and \$29 billion in intercity rail grants.

While funding certainly isn't everything—and I'll briefly go through a selection of *Rail Passengers'* policy proposals further on in my testimony—closing the massive deficit between investment in passenger rail and other transportation modes is a necessary step in empowering states to build out regional rail networks. Pennsylvania has already done a lot of the hard work of developing a comprehensive state rail plan, and I encourage the assembly to continue to support planning work and environmental review processes to create a pipeline of actionable projects that could benefit from these new federal funding streams.

Americans Are Ready to Travel Again

With distribution of the vaccination speeding up, a line of thinking has emerged that telecommuting for work might be the “new normal” as the U.S. begins to think about how the coronavirus pandemic will permanently alter everyday life. The governor of Connecticut, of all places, has expressed the belief that the Monday through Friday commute to New York City for work may well be behind us, especially if you can do “two-thirds of your job from home in Stamford.” Lamont is not alone in his thinking, with many business executives echoing this idea.

For [rail operators this would be a sobering reality](#)—hurting ridership on the Northeast Corridor, State-supported corridors and commuter services. Cutting back on those services based on this assumption, however, would be a policy mistake. And like many policy mistakes in U.S. transportation, it would be based on a narrow-minded view of who travels, why they travel and whether serving those travelers is worth the time and trouble.



I certainly understand the basis of this argument. A lot of employees in a range of industries have discovered just how much they can do from their laptop—including ourselves here at the Rail Passengers Association.

Thanks to technology we were able to keep our message in front of congressional leaders, and that counted for a lot when we were able to help secure more than a billion dollars in relief funds for Amtrak and \$25 billion for transit and public transportation in the first major round of coronavirus relief.

But even with this success, it's important to recognize that whether you're building a barn, an office tower or a business relationship, remote-control only goes so far. Not everyone is a knowledge worker. And not all business relationships can be grown, nurtured and expanded [while sitting in front of a screen as your children or pets frolic behind you](#)...or in some cases, in front of you.

Moreover, some kinds of work simply can't be done on a screen. Building things, negotiating a complex agreement, delivering hands-on patient care in a medical setting and many other tasks require humans to be face-to-face.

There's a kind of narcissism at work in these types of arguments, the presumption among those who have been able to stay at home and work from a laptop that everyone else is just like them and works the same way. Of course, many workers have not had that luxury—and make no mistake it **IS** a luxury. Police officers, nurses, emergency medical technicians, grocery store workers, construction workers, even transit operators themselves are all required to be in a particular place to do their jobs.

Furthermore, a lot of folks will resent being forced to absorb even more of the burdens of providing basic office infrastructure—a burden that used to be shouldered by employers.

Some workers will be happy to stay home, but many others will demand that collective, collaborative experience of rewarding work with a great team. A lot more will simply be unable to sustain the telecommuting lifestyle, either because of small children or [poor Internet connectivity](#).



After a full year of telecommuting, there are many employees now pining to go back to a workplace. The novelty of working from home has worn thin. While introverts may be thrilled to finally stay at home, much of America’s stay-at-home workforce is growing tired of the forced telecommute. My own prediction is that some employers will try to pare back on offices and facilities, but that commuting in some form will stay with us. Humans need to interact with one another, and we need to ensure they are able to move about in the physical world so that can happen.

The Power of Network Effects

Pennsylvania is uniquely positioned to understand, from first-hand experience, the way that Amtrak’s three business lines combine to support a healthy ridership ecosystem. Philadelphia and Cornwells Heights are served by the *Northeast Corridor*. The NEC provides useful connections for passengers of SEPTA’s regional rail system and the State-supported *Keystone* and *Pennsylvanian* corridors. And Amtrak’s *Capitol Limited* provides connections to points west through its connection with the *Pennsylvanian*, while the *Lake Shore Limited* provides an east – west connection to the northeastern part of the commonwealth. All these corridors support each other. And while these connections would benefit from additional frequencies—particularly on the *Pennsylvanian*—together they provide a transportation network that delivers higher utility for lower cost per passenger than they any single corridor could provide.

This is a helpful antidote to the all-too-common argument that gets made in Washington that every dollar spent on passenger rail outside of the NEC is a dollar stolen from the NEC, and vice versa. Just last week, an inside-the-Beltway Politico writer responded to Amtrak’s 2035 growth map by asking “is there any reason for Amtrak executives to propose a new route from New York City to President Biden’s beloved birthplace of Scranton, Pa., other than the obvious reason?” Apparently, this journalist thinks the only people traveling to and from Scranton are there to find the fictional offices of Dunder Mifflin Paper Co. But we know Scranton is part of a larger population center that includes Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton, with several colleges. Its share of disabled or handicapped residents is nearly 60% higher than



the U.S. overall – people with powered wheelchairs and medical oxygen and vision problems and lots of other reasons that make it hard for them to fly or drive.



Figure 1 – Amtrak Connects US 2035 Network Proposal. [Navy-blue lines: existing services; light-blue lines: new services; yellow lines: upgrades to existing services.]

These people—and the people in Allentown, and Reading, and western Pennsylvania—are real, their infrastructure needs are worthy of consideration, and we applaud the commitment shown by President Biden and Amtrak to connect them through quality train service.

The True Benefits of Passenger Rail Investment

I’ve said it in testimony before, and I’ll say it to anyone who’ll listen—it’s not a question of if trains make money, it’s about who trains make money for. Rail corridors generate value by acting as economic engines in the communities they serve—through jobs, retail, mobility, tourism and real-estate



development. The “profit” goes not to Amtrak, but to the communities served, often to the tune of billions of dollars.

We decided it’s not enough to say it, we’ve got to put our money where our mouth is. That’s why I invested our association’s resources in 2018 to co-develop a rigorous economic model with the University of Southern Mississippi’s Trent Lott Center. We’ve used that model to quantify the economic return on passenger rail corridors in a way that hasn’t been done previously.

Our analysis found that the long-distance routes alone generate over \$74.4 million in economic benefits for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania every single year. That number is only a fraction of the total benefits Amtrak brings to the state every year if we were to expand our analysis to include the NEC, the *Keystone Service*, and the *Pennsylvanian*.

These benefits take many forms, which our model attempts to capture. Whether traveling for vacation, personal reasons or business, visitors spend money at their destinations, paying for hotels or other lodging, patronizing restaurants, shopping or buying local items. By doing this they support the hotel workers, the restaurant waiters and cooks, retail and entertainment outlets, and they generate sales tax revenues for the communities they visit. The local workers also contribute to the local tax base, further spreading the economic benefit. Meanwhile, because those visitors have left their cars behind, they're not imposing wear and tear on highways and roads, and they're avoiding the risk and cost of injuries or even death from car crashes.

Policy Proposals for Passenger Rail

Rail Passengers is working closely with committees in the U.S. House and Senate to ensure that the bold infrastructure proposals laid out by the Biden Administration and H.R. 2 are enacted into law. These bills are being drafted as I speak, and I’ve highlighted a few federal proposals that we believe to be critical for advancing passenger train service in Pennsylvania:



Passenger Rail Trust Fund: *Rail Passengers* reiterates its call for an Intercity Passenger Rail Trust Fund (IPRTF) to provide predictable, dedicated funding for passenger rail. With advance appropriations for passenger rail grants, Amtrak and states can better plan capital expenditures and manage infrastructure projects. The IPRTF should be used to fund Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor and National Network Accounts, as well as formula-based distribution of funds to states for planning and capital renewal payments to host railroads.

Increased Funding Levels for the Passenger Rail Account: *Rail Passengers* is calling for a significant increase in passenger rail investment to address decades of stagnant funding. Members of Congress have introduced several strong proposals—including the Moving Forward Act’s PRIME Grants, the American High Speed Rail Act, the BRAIN TRAIN Act, and others. We see these proposals as complementary, providing a varied set of strategies to address a range of challenges: state of good repair, adding frequencies and capacity expansion, service restoration and new corridor development. We encourage authorizers to take an “all of the above” approach to passenger rail financing.

Transparency in Pricing for State-Supported Services: *Rail Passengers* is calling for increased transparency in the cost allocation methodology Amtrak uses to charge states for corridor service, and a shift from the use of fully allocated costs to direct route costs, in addition to a proportional share of costs that benefit more than one route, to reasonably reflect relative use. The updated costing methodology should establish a clear relationship between service-level decisions and state contributions into the system and incentivize ridership growth and increased efficiencies to improve financial performance.

On-Time Performance and Fairness for Passengers: Given the dramatic rise in host railroad interference and passenger delays, *Rail Passengers* is asking Congress to grant preference enforcement. This would give Amtrak the ability to bring an action in U.S. District Court when its statutory right of preference is violated, protecting American passengers’ right to be on time by ensuring they aren’t stranded illegally for hours behind slow-moving freight trains.



Creation of New Services: To allow for the timely expansion of the intercity passenger rail network, Congress must:

- **Update and clarify the procedure for Amtrak to access host railroad infrastructure** to ensure a fair and speedy process for determining the amount of capital investment needed to ensure any additional Amtrak trains do not unreasonably impair the host railroads; and
- **Establish a Corridor Development Program** to allow Amtrak to rapidly launch new state-supported services, funding initial infrastructure costs while helping states cover operating costs for the first five years. Amtrak has identified Scranton – New York City, Allentown – New York City, and Philadelphia – Reading as potential corridors for new service in its 2035 growth map.

Conclusion

Rail Passengers is working for “A Connected America,” a concept our association developed that aims to put 80 percent of Americans within 25 miles of a rail station within 25 years. A Connected America is not only good for passengers but good for America’s cities and towns, an economic engine in the communities it serves. We believe passengers should be able to drive, bike, walk or take transit to those stations as they choose, whether traveling for work, school or leisure. They should have the choice of multiple frequencies each day in dense corridors. They should be able to take the train to airports to continue their journeys onward. In short, they expect a modern, frequent, reliable and safe service as part of a robust ecosystem of travel choices, from ride-sharing vehicles and bikes to cars, trains and jetliners. It’s what America deserves.

We stand ready to work with you to support a collaborative process involving all of Amtrak’s important stakeholders: state and federal lawmakers, mayors, employees, and yes, passengers. We are excited to work with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the U.S. Congress and Amtrak to redraw the map of America’s passenger rail network for 2035 and beyond.



Testimony Provided By

John P. Weidenhammer, Chairman

Berks Alliance

For

PA Democratic Policy Committee Hearing on Passenger Rail

April 13, 2021



Background

The Berks Alliance, a non-profit located in Berks County, was founded in 2016. With a focus on Community Development, it is a collaboration of anchor institutions located in the County. Many of Berks County's largest employers, including all five colleges, are investors in the Berks Alliance. John P. Weidenhammer is the Chairman of the Berks Alliance. Mr. Weidenhammer is a life-long resident of Berks County and will be providing the testimony to the Committee on behalf of the Berks Alliance.

Insights into the Berks Alliance Community Development work are expressed in our Vision, Mission, Aspirations and Work.

VISION

Creating a brighter future through a healthier, more vibrant and prosperous community.

MISSION

Established by a group of dedicated community leaders, the Berks Alliance serves as a catalyst for community development in the Greater Reading and Berks County Region. Anchored in our community, the Alliance investors appreciate that collectively they can employ their resources in creative ways to build a stronger community, while serving the interests of their organization.

ASPIRATIONS

The Alliance aspires to create a clean, safe, and dynamic community that stimulates and engages the community to form a bright future for all residents.

OUR WORK

The Alliance Investors have identified four initial targets for engagement:

- ✓ Fostering a Clean, Safe and Vibrant Urban Core
- ✓ Improving the Health and Wealth of the Community
- ✓ Enhancing Educational Attainment and Workforce Development
- ✓ Encouraging Community Engagement and Dialogue

Disconnected City

Like many former industrial cities in Pennsylvania, the City of Reading has seen its economy erode, property values decline and major demographic changes. Declining tax revenues have led to increasing challenges for the City to provide basic services and to maintain infrastructure. Reading finds itself somewhat isolated from surrounding communities and especially Philadelphia due to the ongoing elimination of transportation options and highly congested road systems. While Berks County is still a manufacturing center, the core of the city has suffered over the past several decades. But recent developments, such as Alvernia University launching an engineering program and a business incubator in a downtown location have begun to transform the city. Drexel University is establishing a Medical School near the downtown, which has the potential to attract several hundred medical students, medical residents and related faculty and staff. The Medical School is affiliated with the Tower Health System, which is

headquartered at the Reading Hospital, with affiliated hospitals in communities such as Pottstown, Phoenixville and Philadelphia.

Community Needs Assessment

A decade ago, the New York Times noted that Reading was the poorest city in the United States. While no longer true, poverty is still an issue for the city. Reading is the only majority Hispanic city in the Commonwealth. Many city residents lack access to affordable, reliable transportation, but many of the employment opportunities would require them to commute an hour or more each way to work. Many of the city residents have relocated to Berks County from metropolitan areas such as New York and Newark and still have important family connections in those areas. Equity and inclusion are among the important community needs identified by the Berks Alliance. We need access to affordable transportation for these disadvantaged residents that would enable them to cost effectively and freely move throughout the Schuylkill River Corridor to adjacent cities, Philadelphia and beyond to reach jobs, education, pursue entertainment and connect with friends, family and critical resources like healthcare. Restoration of passenger train service from Reading to other cities along the Schuylkill Corridor to Philadelphia and beyond provides a viable transportation alternative. With this in mind and consistent with our mission, the Berks Alliance made the critical decision to work with community partners to pursue the restoration of passenger rail service along the Schuylkill Corridor starting work in 2018. Passenger rail service will enable residents who may lack reliable transportation both increased employment opportunities and the ability to commute to work. In addition, restoring passenger trains will help foster a revitalization of the city, as it has done in other communities.

Reading and Passenger Rail

The last passenger train from Reading to Philadelphia departed on June 30, 1981. Since that time there have been numerous studies conducted regarding the restoration of passenger service in the Schuylkill Corridor. None of the studies have gained traction largely due to high cost of implementation and the requirement for financial subsidies both to establish the service and to keep it operating.

What is different this time? We propose an Inter-City service that provides a single-seat ride from Reading to Philadelphia and onto the Northeast Corridor to New York City and Washington, DC without needing to change trains. Such a service has the potential to operate without subsidy once steady state is achieved making it a much more appealing option to taxpayers and elected officials. It is possible that this Intercity service could be integrated with a regional commuter service as well.

The study commissioned by the Berks Alliance, showed that it was possible to use the existing rail corridor without disrupting freight service, with a relatively low capital finance requirement of about \$356 million. It also indicated that there would be sufficient ridership to make the service economically viable. And the ticket price for a trip from Reading to South Street Station in Philadelphia would cost less than \$15 which is less than the cost to park for one hour in center city Philadelphia.

It should also be noted that PennDOT has indicated its interest in restoring passenger rail service along this corridor by commissioning its own study, which was released shortly after the Berks Alliance report was made public. While there are some differences in the two plans, mostly related to adding a third rail along the corridor, which would double the capital needed to start the service, the PennDOT report supports the idea that there would be a significant number of riders interested in using the service.

Not Just About Transportation

It turns out that the restoration of passenger rail service in the Schuylkill Corridor is about more than transportation. This initiative is a large Economic Development project as well! There are many benefits beyond transport associated with this initiative including:

- \$1.1 Billion in property value increases along the Schuylkill Corridor
- 28,000 person years of new jobs
- \$1.4 Billion of increased income
- \$948 Million of increased Federal, State and Local Income Taxes
- 17% growth in per capita income

Moreover, the Transit Oriented Development that occurs within a half mile radius of where the train stops will surely be transformational.

Green Approach to Transit

In addition to the economic benefits of the project, there are also significant environmental impacts as well. The service would reduce vehicular traffic by at least 5%. We are proposing the use of environmentally friendly locomotives that will be powered by electricity including battery powered locomotives on those parts of the corridor not now equipped with overhead electric power. These locomotives are currently in use in Europe. As an alternative we are considering Hydrogen powered locomotives that have no carbon emissions. One related benefit for Berks County is that the developer of this technology is an international company headquartered in the county.

Proposed Route of Service

The proposed route of the rail service is shown in Figure 1. While all the locations depicted are possible, the initial plan is that the service would only have stops in Reading, Pottstown, Royersford, Phoenixville, Norristown and Philadelphia (4 stations).

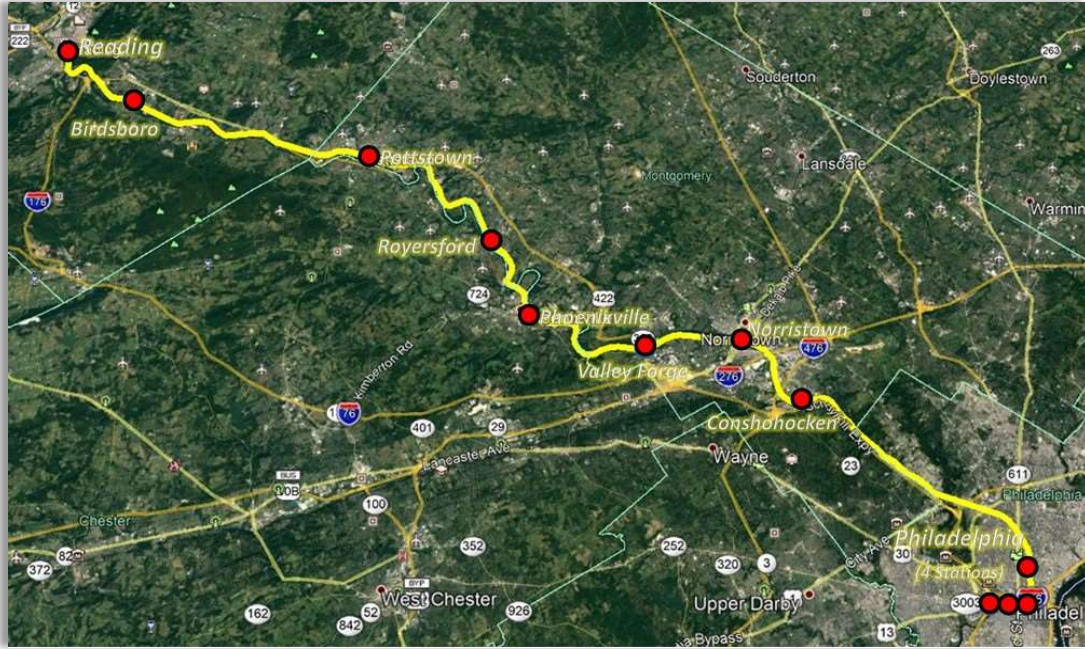


Figure 1

Travel Times

Travel time and distance between stations can be seen in Figure 2 below:

	Miles	Time	
Reading Franklin St	0	0:00	Dp
Pottstown	18	0:18	Ar
Royersford	26	0:27	Ar
Phoenixville	30	0:38	Ar
Norristown Trans Ctr	41	0:48	Ar
Temple Univ	56	1:06	Ar
Market East/Jefferson	58	1:11	Ar
Suburban	58	1:16	Ar
30th Street	59	1:22	Ar
Trenton, NJ	92	1:53	Ar
Newark, NJ	140	2:26	Ar
New York, NY	150	2:46	Ar

Figure 2

Rail Checks Lots of Boxes

Moving people by rail checks lots of boxes when it comes to initiatives that many people care about including:

- Reduces highway congestion
- Reduces carbon emissions
- Reduces commute times and makes commute times more predictable

- Uses sustainable / renewable energy sources
- Improves life-style
- Extend job opportunities
- Provides increased access
- Delivers equity
- Saves money
- Saves time
- Reduces noise and pollution
- Creates access to affordable communities
- Creates access to opportunities
- Creates new access

Studying the Rail Options

In late 2019, the Berks Alliance, contracted with Transportation Economics & Management Services (TEMS) to conduct a feasibility study for restoring passenger rail service between Berks County and Philadelphia. TEMS completed its study in the July of 2020 with a positive outlook for the potential of this service. Berks County has taken the lead in working collectively with its Southeast PA neighbors on the critical next steps. The County Commissioners in Berks, Chester and Montgomery Counties have formed a committee to explore the creation of a Tri-County Municipal Authority to develop the service.

Key Findings of Berks Alliance Study:

- There is sufficient capacity along the corridor to absorb this passenger service without interfering with existing and even expanded freight transportation. Recent upgrades along the corridor would allow trains to move at speeds up to 79 mph - higher than earlier studies had indicated.
- Two types of service are being considered: Commuter service to Philadelphia and intercity service through Philadelphia to the Northeast Rail Corridor providing intercity service.
- Some form of dual energy locomotives will be required with non-fossil fuel options preferred.
- Agreement from Norfolk Southern for use of the corridor will be required.
- The TEMS plan proposes stops in Reading, Pottstown, Royersford, Phoenixville and four stops in Philadelphia. The potential exists for adding stops in Wyomissing, Birdsboro, and Valley Forge. Upgrades would be required at these stations and some upgrades along the corridor.
- The capital cost for restoring service is estimated to be \$356 million – substantially less than prior studies.
- The intercity model has the potential to operate without subsidy due to slightly higher fares.
- Restoration of passenger train service will create significant environmental and economic benefits along the corridor. It will reduce vehicle travel along the highway corridors by five percent, increase property values by over \$1.1 billion, create over 28,000 person years of jobs and dramatically increase tax revenues.

The tri-county collaboration also includes the Phoenixville Mayor’s Task Force which is working to restore passenger service to that community. Phoenixville is one of the stations identified

along the proposed corridor. That plan has been focused on commuter service connecting to SEPTA.

PennDOT Rail Study

During 2020 PennDOT commissioned the consulting firm WSP to conduct a study regarding the restoration of rail service along the Schuylkill Corridor. The PennDOT study completed in December 2020 found that there is adequate demand for the service along the Corridor. And while the cost estimated included in the study range from \$616 Million to \$818 Million, the studies are very different in terms of the costs included in each. The PennDOT study assumes that the cost of all infrastructure upgrades, e.g., new stations, parking, roads, ADA accessibility, etc. are included in the cost of the project. Whereas the TEMS / Berks Alliance study assumes that the individual Counties and Municipalities will fund the basic infrastructure cost using various forms of Value Capture to fund the development. The PennDOT study also assumes that a third track will be installed for the full length of the Corridor and the TEMS / Berks Alliance study project the third track is unnecessary.

A key take away from the PennDOT study is that the passenger demand for the service is very similar to the TEMS / Berks Alliance study. It should also be noted that the study for restoring passenger rail service along this corridor was the only such study commissioned by PennDOT in conjunction with its work to update the State Rail Plan.

Next Steps:

Creation of a Tri-County Passenger Rail Committee: Restoration of passenger rail service is enabled through the creation of a tri-county municipal authority to govern the rail service. The County Commissioners in Berks, Chester and Montgomery Counties have created a Tri-County Committee to determine the next steps in the process which likely would lead to the formation of a Tri-County Municipal Authority. The Committee expects to invest the next 6 to 9 months investigating the feasibility for forming.

Conversations with AMTRAK, SEPTA and Norfolk Southern: There have been several conversations with the leadership of SEPTA and conversations are underway with AMTRAK concerning their role in the new service. Once the municipal authority has been formed, negotiations with Norfolk- Southern will begin in earnest. Some funding has been identified to support the required freight capacity analysis.

Federal Funding: Conversations are underway with the U. S. Department of Transportation, focusing on the availability of FTA and FRA funding and the inclusion of funding for passenger rail projects such as this one in future federal legislation. President Biden recently announced his infrastructure investment, which included substantial funding for passenger rail improvements, including a proposed eight-year commitment of \$80 billion for Amtrak. Immediately afterwards, Amtrak unveiled the core elements of its strategic plan, which included restoring passenger rail service from Reading to Philadelphia.

Inclusion in the State Rail Plan: To be eligible for federal support, projects must be included in the state plan as an active plan. PennDOT's 2020 plan includes identification of this study and listed it as a vision – a potential future project not in the active plan. Conversations with PennDOT are continuing and focused on how to include restoration of passenger rail service

along the Reading to Philadelphia corridor and intercity service through Philadelphia to the Northeast Rail Corridor as an active project in the State Rail Plan. In turn, this would allow Amtrak to use the funds proposed by the President to help cover the capital costs of restoring this service.

Engagement with Elected Officials: Conversations are being held with local, state, and federal elected officials. Several state legislators have expressed support for the project as have several Congressmen and the offices of both U.S. Senators from Pennsylvania. Conversations have also occurred with the Governor's Office soliciting the Governor's support for the project. We would enjoy the support from the members of the General Assembly.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information about this important work.

A full copy of the Passenger Rail Feasibility Study can be found on the Berks Alliance website: www.BerksAlliance.org

Additional Resources

Additional information about the restoration of Passenger Rail Service from Reading to Philadelphia and then on to the Northeast Corridor can be found at these links:

Berks Alliance / TEMS Study – July 2020

[Restoring Passenger Rail Service to Berks County - Berks Alliance](#)

PennDot Study – December 2020

[Reading-Philadelphia Passenger Rail Analysis \(planthekeystone.com\)](#)

PennDOT Pennsylvania Rail Plan – October 2020

[PA State Rail Plan \(planthekeystone.com\)](#)

Berks Alliance Community Conversation on Passenger Rail – July 2020

[Video Archive - Berks Alliance](#)

AMTRAK 2035 Plan: A Vision to Grow Rail Service Across America

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END

Lawrence C. Malski, Esq., President
Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority
Testimony to the PA House Democratic Policy Committee on Passenger Rail
April 13, 2021

Regarding the Restoration of Passenger Rail Service Which Is Currently Under Construction to
Northeastern Pennsylvania

Thank you for the opportunity to update this Committee and the Pennsylvania Legislature on the progress of the Passenger Rail Restoration Project between Scranton, the Pocono region, Northeastern Pennsylvania and New York City.

This project is in the construction phase which greatly differentiates it from other proposed rail passenger projects which are in the study phases or proposed phases in Pennsylvania.

The Scranton to New York City rail corridor is completely owned by two state public agencies, Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority (PNRRA) between Scranton and the Delaware Water Gap and New Jersey Transit (NJT) between Delaware Water Gap and New York City. This is significant because it does not require access to private Class I rail carrier properties or facilities which has been an impediment to other proposed new passenger rail proposals in Pennsylvania.

New Jersey Transit is currently in construction of the first 7 mile phase of the project between Port Morris, NJ and Andover, NJ and construction of the new Andover station at that site. This first phase is fully funded mostly by a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant. Phase II will proceed with construction of a 21 mile segment between Andover, NJ and PNRRA owned tracks to Slateford, PA, near the Delaware Water Gap. Phase III of this project will use PNRRA existing and owned tracks that are currently used for rail passenger and freight service between Slateford, Mt. Pocono and Scranton.

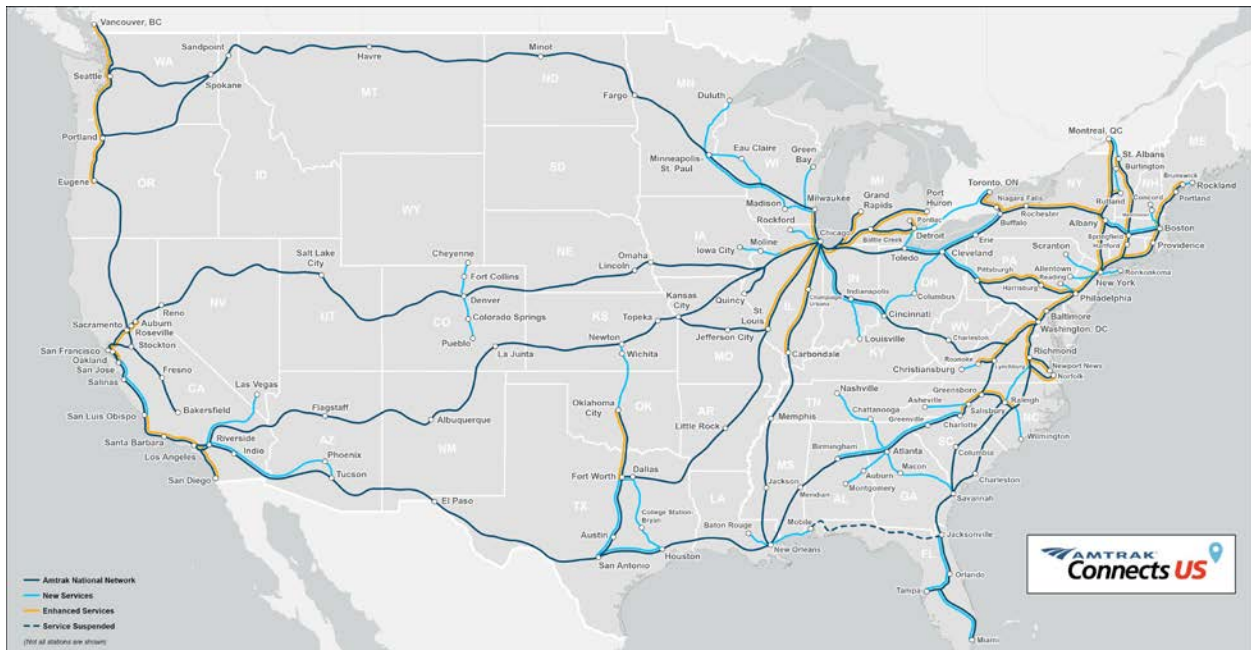
Over 20,000 Pennsylvania residents currently live in northeastern Pennsylvania and commute to workplaces in northern New Jersey and New York City by bus and car and the dire daily and increasing congestion they face on Interstate 80 threatens their ability to get to work. The commuter rail aspect of our project will provide a safe, secure, all weather and reliable transportation alternative to these Pennsylvania residents and will help relieve congestion on I-80 for New Jersey residents travelling on I-80 during rush hour times.

The other significant benefit of the project involves Amtrak's proposed new rail route between New York City, the Poconos and Scranton. This Amtrak service will benefit the tourism, recreation and educational markets in the Pocono Region and Scranton and allow Pennsylvania residents and northern

New Jersey residents to access the national Amtrak rail network to travel to the over 500 Amtrak stations in the United States and Canada. This Amtrak service is denoted in Exhibit A attached hereto and made a part hereof.

We are, respectfully asking the Pennsylvania Legislature to provide the continued funding for the requisite continued construction of this rail passenger corridor that is vital to all of northeastern Pennsylvania. The Federal Government through the FTA, the States of Pennsylvania and New Jersey and Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority have already expended \$94,538,759 on acquisition and construction for getting this project completed. Again, this is not only a “shovel ready” infrastructure project, but actually a “shovel in the ground” infrastructure project that will pay back major economic development, transportation alternative and enhancement and tourism and recreation benefits to northeastern Pennsylvania and the Commonwealth for many generations to come.

EXHIBIT A



Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee Public Hearing Testimony

Role, Benefits and Potential of Passenger Rail in Pennsylvania

April 13, 2021

Submitted by Mark Spada, President, Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail

My name is Mark Spada, President of Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail (WPPR), a non-profit organization dedicated to the improvement and expansion of passenger rail service throughout western Pennsylvania. I am here to discuss the potential of enhanced passenger rail service in the Harrisburg-Pittsburgh corridor. On behalf of WPPR, thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present the following testimony.

Why passenger rail is important and beneficial to western Pennsylvania

- * It connects the state's two largest employment and business cities - Pittsburgh and Philadelphia – not only with each other, but also to the many smaller communities along the route of the *Pennsylvanian*. It makes economic sense for the state Pennsylvania to invest in the enhancement of the connection between those two cities and the intermediate locations.
- * Many of the locations west of Harrisburg served by the train have little or no intercity public transportation alternatives. For example, Huntington, home to Juniata College, has no bus or airline service. Increased passenger rail service would allow travelers to or from western Pennsylvania better access to the many commercial, recreational, medical and academic facilities and attractions located across the state.
- * Passenger rail can enhance economic development and community revitalization for the communities it serves. During the 2016 groundbreaking of the new station at Mount Joy, then Secretary of Transportation Leslie Richards said, “These improvements will further enhance the center of Mount Joy and help boost the borough’s ongoing revitalization plans. Transit plays a crucial role in building communities, and we have seen the results from more than a decade of upgrades to the Keystone Corridor.” These economic benefits can be achieved through increased passenger rail in western Pennsylvania as well.
- * Passenger rail provides affordable, easily-accessible, and environmentally-favorable transportation for all communities and citizens. Enhanced intercity rail service can be a significant positive factor in fighting climate change.

Current developments to increase service along the *Pennsylvanian* corridor

Norfolk Southern (NS), via an agreement with PennDOT, is presently conducting an internal study to determine its proposed infrastructure upgrades and operating parameters, and the associated costs, between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg (NS Pittsburgh line) for one additional daily *Pennsylvanian*. Hopefully, following the completion of the study, discussions between NS and PennDOT will culminate in an agreement to increase to western Pennsylvania. Previous studies have offered a wide range of infrastructure improvement costs, some totaling in the billions of dollars. WPPR believes that to achieve increased frequency the state should focus its attention on modest improvements in terms of cost and implementation time.

The following studies offer several alternatives that meet that objective.

1) The 2005 Keystone West Passenger Train Study conducted by Woodside Consulting outlined improvements for approximately \$111 million (around \$150 million in present dollars) to increase passenger service from two to four daily trains between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. At the time, NS was operating over 100 freight trains daily along the route according to the study. Recent information offered by NS puts the number of daily freight trains on the Pittsburgh line at 60 -70. Adding one additional daily train as being studied by NS would thus basically increase service back to the level that was being handled successfully 15 years ago.

2) Further, the 2014 Keystone West High Speed Rail Study, which identified four costly alternatives for enhanced service, also included a Lower Cost Option estimated at \$457 million. Approximately \$300 million of that was for speed increases that reduced the Pittsburgh – Harrisburg time by a little over three minutes in each direction. We contend those reductions do not warrant that large an expenditure.

An agreement between NS and a state to initiate or increase passenger rail service along NS tracks has previously taken place. For example, in 2017 the state of Virginia began passenger rail service between Lynchburg and Roanoke, a segment that had not seen passenger trains since the inception of Amtrak in 1971. The new service was the result of an agreement between NS and Virginia that addressed infrastructure improvements and operating parameters.

Conclusion

Increasing passenger rail service between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg will provide greater mobility and improved economic development opportunities in a region lacking in non-automobile transportation choices. The results of the NS study will provide the railroad's proposed infrastructure improvements and associated costs for an additional passenger train. We look forward to the discussions that follow between NS and the state resulting in increased service to western Pennsylvania. WPPR thanks the Democratic Policy Committee for its continued interest in this subject and looks forward to the committee's on-going assistance and legislative support in achieving this goal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail Background Information

WPPR's goal is to increase the number of passenger trains between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg (and points east) from the current one daily train to three trains. Our efforts to increase began in earnest in late 2012 with our advocating for the state to include Amtrak's Pittsburgh – New York (444 miles) *Pennsylvanian* in its operating support of Pennsylvania intercity passenger rail. The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) required states to fund the majority of operating expenses not covered by revenues for short-distance trains, trains whose routes are fewer than 750 miles, starting October 1, 2013. Beginning on that date, the state commenced providing support to the *Pennsylvanian* as well as continued funding the Harrisburg - Philadelphia Keystone Service trains as it had done for many years.

Since then, WPPR has advocated for increased service to western Pennsylvania through numerous presentations, public rallies, and letters of endorsement from the region's government, community and business entities, as well as previous testimony before other legislative committees in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Altoona. We have provided information and data for the *Pennsylvanian* showing strong previous (two daily trains until 2005) and on-going ridership figures, average speeds competitive with, and in several cases faster than, other state-supported trains, and train capacity numbers among the highest on the Amtrak system. This data suggests there is not only significant demand for the existing daily train, but also considerable unmet demand for additional service. Based on previous ridership for two daily trains as well as the experience of other state-supported routes, WPPR has maintained that the fastest and most cost effective way to increase ridership is to focus on increasing the frequency of the existing service and the associated infrastructure improvements.