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Honorable Martin J. Oberman
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: Docket No. FD 36472

Dear Chairman Oberman,

As the Surface Transportation Board reviews CSX Corporation's application to acquire Pan Am Systems, Incorporated, I urge the Board to carefully consider the significant public interest in supporting passenger rail service in the Northeast. As a longtime champion for expanded passenger rail service, and as a representative of communities that stand ready to build-out new passenger rail service, I ask the Board to pay close attention to the impact of any further rail consolidation on passenger rail priorities before issuing a decision.

By enacting the single largest investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, both Congress and President Biden have made clear that building a world-class passenger rail network is a national priority. Massachusetts, and New England as a whole, are ready to lead that effort through the advancement of carefully studied proposals, like the East-West Passenger Rail Project, which would connect Boston to Pittsfield through Worcester and Springfield in Massachusetts, and the Inland Route to connect Worcester and Springfield to Hartford and New Haven in Connecticut, on the way to New York. Such projects would dramatically expand economic opportunity and regional equity while reducing emissions and meeting demonstrated public demand.

Key to these projects is the prioritization of passenger rail service on established corridors and effective cooperation between public and private entities regarding right of way. As you are aware, CSX currently controls a significant portion of right of way in the Northeast, especially in the corridor between Worcester and Springfield, Massachusetts – a critical section for expanded passenger service. Further consolidation of trackage and assets, without explicit understandings among stakeholders of future right of way, could compromise the viability of President Biden's vision for an expanded passenger rail network.

Through the development of a proposed use agreement, the Board can foster a positive dialogue between CSX and public entities and ensure the success of projects like East-West Rail and the Inland Route. Such an agreement ought to affirm the fundamental public interest in preserving passenger rail right of way on all relevant trackage, with a minimum of at least eight trains per day in each direction. As infrastructure improvements may be necessary while Amtrak and its partners expand services, it is essential that a proposed use agreement also encourage cooperation on such projects.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your consideration of this request. I am grateful for your work to strengthen America's surface transportation, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

CC: Honorable Patrick J. Fuchs
Honorable Michelle A. Schultz
Honorable Robert E. Primus
Honorable Karen J. Hedlund