



Nov. 16, 2023

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

(copy via electronic mail)

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RE: Docket No EP 774, *Notice of establishment of a Federal advisory committee on passenger rail service*

Dear Chairman Oberman:

The *Rail Passengers Association* very much welcomes the announcement today of the Board's intention to create a passenger rail advisory committee.

Also known as the National Association of Railroad Passengers, *Rail Passengers* is the nation's oldest and largest organization speaking for the nearly 40 million Americans who rely on passenger rail of all kinds every year. Created in 1967, this Association played a pivotal role in the creation of Amtrak in 1971, and continues to carry the voice of the passenger to decisionmakers at every level.

Every day, our professional staff in Washington, DC, works on behalf of travelers to support more trains, to more places, for more people, most recently helping to influence the drafting of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law as the culmination of decades of grassroots rail advocacy.

Our mission is to improve and expand intercity, regional, and urban passenger train services, to support higher speed rail initiatives, to increase connectivity among all forms of transportation and, to ensure safety for our country's trains and passengers. We work with all levels of government – Federal, state, local and tribal. Our work makes communities safer, more accessible, and more productive, improving the lives of everyone who lives, works, and plays in towns all across America.

Rail Passengers has long argued that the existing relationship between Amtrak, the host railroads, and the states has failed to deliver the frequency and dependability needed to attract large numbers of travelers. The current relationship, while it has varied by region, has generally been an unreasonable hurdle to adding new passenger train service onto shared-used corridors. Towards that end, our Association called for the creation of a shared-used corridor advisory committee during the last surface transportation reauthorization cycle. We believe this kind of committee could develop improved regulatory standards through a collaborative process, with all segments of the rail community working together to establish consensus based on facts and data and fashion mutually satisfactory solutions on shared-use operations.

The Association congratulates the Surface Transportation Board for taking this step to bring stakeholders together in a meaningful way as we all begin to work together to realize the truly historic opportunities

and game-changing funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to begin to build a rail network worthy of the United States. We firmly believe that strong freight rail and passenger rail networks are not only compatible, but requisite. We stand ready to assist in the work of this committee.

Respectfully,



Jim Mathews
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CC: The Honorable Karen J. Hedlund, Vice Chair
The Honorable Patrick J. Fuchs
The Honorable Michelle A. Schultz
The Honorable Robert E. Primus

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