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February 4, 2024

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

Re: Docket No. EP 774 (Sub-No. 1), Notice of Passenger Rail Advisory Committee Vacancies

Dear Chairman Oberman:

As the Chair of Young Professionals in Transportation (YPT) International, I am writing to nominate myself to serve on the Passenger Railroad Advisory Committee (PRAC). My extensive background in transportation engineering and leadership in advocating for the advancement of passenger rail aligns with the goals of the PRAC. I am eager to bring my expertise and the unique insights of YPT International to help advance passenger rail in America.

I am willing to serve on the Passenger Railroad Advisory Committee as a representative of a rail passenger advocacy organization. I can be reached at chair@yptransportation.org or at (713) 363-0846.

YPT's Dedicated Efforts in Passenger Rail Advocacy:

YPT was founded with the mission to connect young professionals across the transportation industry and to cultivate future leaders in the field. Our organization currently has over 2,000 members in 25 chapters throughout North America.

While YPT represents emerging leaders across all modes, we recognize the importance of passenger rail in creating sustainable, connected, and accessible communities. Through hosting YPT events with industry leaders, participating in discussions on passenger rail accessibility, and advocating for policies that support the development of a robust passenger rail network, I have demonstrated a committed interest in the advancement of passenger rail and strengthened partnerships with leaders in the rail industry.

YPT has led insightful dialogues with Amtrak's leadership, including CEO Stephen Gardner, organized events with the California High-Speed Rail Authority, offering our members a deep dive into high-speed rail's advancements, and facilitated discussions on commuter rail challenges and opportunities in New York, Florida, and Texas. YPT is also represented on the Food & Beverage (F&B) Working Group, established by the IIJA to provide recommendations for improving food and beverage offerings on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, Long Distance, and State Supported services.

Central to our advocacy is the push for greater accessibility and ADA compliance across the passenger rail spectrum, ensuring inclusivity within transportation systems. Through comprehensive programming, YPT has championed initiatives to achieve full ADA compliance for the intercity and commuter passenger rail fleet and stations.

My Qualifications and Vision:

My role as a Transit Civil Engineer at AECOM, combined with my leadership within YPT, has afforded me a comprehensive perspective on the complexities and nuances of transportation infrastructure and policy. My work, ranging from bus rapid transit to rail design projects, such as leading the Dallas Area Rapid Transit's (DART) State of Good Repair project, underscores my commitment to resilient and inclusive transportation systems.

Diverse perspectives help us design transportation systems that best serve all members within our communities. My advocacy for equity, diversity, and inclusion has been a cornerstone of my career. I was heavily involved in establishing AECOM's Asian Employee Resource Group, MOSAIC, during the COVID-19 pandemic and currently serve as a steering member for Asian American Leadership in Mobility (AALM).

As an Asian American living in Houston, Texas for most of my life, I have been fortunate to visit my family in East Asia numerous times. Riding on our Asian counterparts' rail networks opened my eyes to the possibility of similar passenger rail systems in the United States. I'm a firm believer that communities across America are ready for an effective alternative to flying or sitting in traffic for hours each day.

Through my involvement in YPT, I have developed a keen understanding of the critical issues facing passenger rail today, including the need for strategic investments in passenger and freight rail infrastructure, the importance of advocating for policies that support rail development and expansion, and the imperative of fostering a culture of innovation and inclusivity in transportation.

Commitment to the PRAC's Mission:

I am committed to leveraging my technical knowledge, leadership experience, and insights gained through YPT's advocacy work to contribute to the PRAC's objectives. My goal is to serve as a bridge between the next generation of transportation professionals and the broader goals of enhancing passenger rail services in the United States. I believe that my participation on the PRAC can help foster a more collaborative, forward-thinking approach to addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities within the passenger rail sector.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to contribute to the PRAC's work and to advance the interests of passenger rail.

Sincerely,

Christopher Lau, P.E., M.B.A.
Chair, Young Professionals in Transportation International