

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 26, 2018

Mr. Richard H. Anderson, President and CEO
National Passenger Rail Corporation
1 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Anderson:

We write to express our deep concern that Amtrak is considering suspending operation of the Southwest Chief passenger train and is focusing on a plan to replace long-distance train service along the route with bus service. The potential suspension of rail service has raised serious concerns among our constituents who depend on the Southwest Chief. We strongly disagree with such a decision and urge you to uphold Amtrak's commitment to intercity rail service across the entire national network, particularly through our rural communities.

Amtrak was created by Congress in 1970 to preserve intercity passenger rail service, while relieving private railroad companies of the obligation to provide passenger service. Long-distance passenger rail routes provide much-needed transportation access for over four million riders in 325 communities in 40 States. Replacing train service through rural communities with buses is troubling, particularly for a quasi-governmental entity entrusted with an important public transportation mission. The suspension of rail service along the Southwest Chief route raises serious questions as to whether passenger rail service will be eliminated in rural communities across the country.

The Southwest Chief runs daily between Chicago and Los Angeles and connects towns and cities in Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. This connectivity is vital to the people and communities the Southwest Chief serves. In many cases, the line is the only affordable alternative transportation option to the highways for our citizens, and is a critical link to public and private services in larger cities along the route for rural residents. Every summer, the Southwest Chief also transports thousands of Boy Scouts from across the country to Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron, N.M., generating economic activity for businesses in these rural areas along the way.

We recognize that capital investment is necessary to maintain the current route. We are pleased that the Department of Transportation (DOT) has awarded multiple grants to replace segments of aging rail line on which Amtrak's Southwest Chief operates and we request that Amtrak uphold its commitment to the TIGER IX grant. Further, we want to bring to your attention a recent Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program that includes more than \$318 million in grant funding.

While local stakeholders are working to find a responsible solution to ensure rail service, we urge you to consider the needs of our constituents, and Amtrak's commitment to preserving the national rail network, and apply for CRISI funding. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



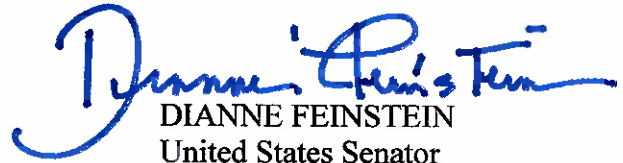
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