

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 9, 2008

Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation and
Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Senate

Honorable Christopher S. Bond
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation and
Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Senate

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We are writing to request that the Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act fund Amtrak's capital and operating accounts as well as the state passenger rail grants program at the levels included S. 294, the "Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007."

Earlier this Congress, the Senate demonstrated its commitment to improving Amtrak and intercity passenger rail service by passing S. 294 with overwhelming bipartisan support. This bill would authorize \$1.07 billion in capital grants, \$600 million in operating funds, and \$302 million in debt repayment funds for Amtrak in FY 2009. Additionally, \$246 million would be authorized for state capital grants to improve intercity passenger rail. The Senate-passed FY 2009 Budget Resolution assumes a funding level for Amtrak roughly equal to that which would be authorized by S. 294. We respectfully request that funding be provided at these levels.

Additionally, Amtrak recently reached agreements with the vast majority of its unionized workforce. Many of those agreements have already been ratified or are very close to ratification. We request that the Committee provide any additional funds necessary to ensure that Amtrak has sufficient funds in FY 2009 to meet its employee back-pay obligations.

The benefits of federal investment in intercity passenger rail have never been clearer. Passenger rail provides travelers with the option to avoid the high gasoline prices and congestion associated with highway travel, as well as the persistent delays at our airports. Further, rail is more energy efficient than other forms of transportation and produces fewer greenhouse gases.

As we work to enact the Amtrak reauthorization legislation passed by the Senate this Congress, it is critically important that we provide Amtrak with adequate funding so that it can continue its significant progress in replacing equipment, rebuilding infrastructure, returning assets to a state-of-good-repair, and minimizing operating losses. With these considerations in mind, we respectfully urge you to fully fund these important programs. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Evan Bayh



Gordon Smith