



NORTHEAST CORRIDOR COMMISSION

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December 9, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President-Elect
Biden-Harris Transition
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

On behalf of the Northeast Corridor Commission, congratulations on being elected the 46th President of the United States. We appreciate your longtime interest in transportation policy and your many years of riding the rails on the Northeast Corridor. Few people better understand the importance of the commuter and intercity passenger rail services operated by the Commission's members to the region's economy. We write to you today regarding the corridor's short and long-term challenges and the opportunities available to "build back better."

Urgent need for pandemic-related funding assistance for transit and intercity passenger rail.

We are experiencing some of the most difficult times in our nation's history, and the impact on the transportation network and the people who rely on it has been dramatic. The COVID-19 pandemic and its ripple effects have caused ridership to drop by as much as 80%, put local economies at risk, and pushed our organizations to the brink of financial disaster. Despite these challenges, our agencies and employees have continued to provide safe and reliable service, which has permitted the essential workers who have kept our healthcare system and our economy functioning to have critical transportation options.

The emergency CARES Act funding has been crucial to sustain these core near-term operations. However, these funds are not enough to prevent the looming decisions about laying off and furloughing workers; reducing service; and deferring much-needed capital investments. Without additional federal emergency aid, the worst may be yet to come. Budget cuts will place further strains on our metropolitan economies and make restoring service difficult even though it will be essential to post-pandemic life. Pre-pandemic, over 800,000 people a day depended on these services to get to work and school; visit family; and travel to meetings, medical appointments, and cultural events. We look forward to working with your administration and Congress to secure additional emergency assistance for transit agencies and Amtrak in FY21.

Long-term, predictable funding to renew and modernize our infrastructure. As you know, the Northeast Corridor is a vital economic asset for the Northeast and the nation that, pre-pandemic, supported 800,000 daily passenger trips on eight commuter railroads and Amtrak. Unfortunately, aging infrastructure puts our service at risk. Major bridges, tunnels, and key infrastructure systems that were built in the late 1800s and early 1900s have not seen adequate investment in well over half a century. Many of these outdated assets cause train delays, restrict train speeds, and limit capacity for growth.

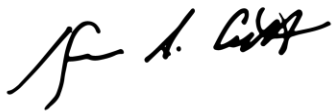
Our members welcome your support for new federal infrastructure investment. Rather than a one-time infusion, the corridor needs long-term, predictable funding for a plan that will create jobs,

improve quality of life, reduce carbon emissions, and generate economic growth for generations to come.

To make this happen, the Commission has been developing a fifteen-year plan called CONNECT NEC 2035. This will be the first comprehensive regional plan to provide a detailed sequencing of projects created cooperatively among all rail service providers. Key to this planning process is an unprecedented project delivery analysis—an assessment of the track outage and workforce requirements to build all identified infrastructure projects by 2035 while maintaining, at minimum, pre-COVID-19 service levels. The Commission will also map out how a new funding program could help its members implement the plan. We expect to finalize the CONNECT NEC 2035 plan in the summer of 2021 and would be happy to provide a briefing on its status at any time.

A modernized, reliable Northeast Corridor rail line is critical to restoring and growing the region's \$4 trillion economy. A strong federal funding commitment combined with the existing commitment by the states would solidify our region's status as a global economic powerhouse. Our agencies have collaboratively advanced many critical projects over the last several years and are ready to move forward to put shovels in the ground, create jobs, and build a better rail system for today and for generations to come. We look forward to working with you and your new administration.

Sincerely,



Kevin Corbett
Co-Chair, Northeast Corridor Commission
Executive Director, New Jersey Transit



Stephen Gardner
Vice-Chair, Northeast Corridor Commission
President, Amtrak

cc: Phillip Washington, Team Lead, Biden-Harris Department of Transportation Agency Review Team