

OneRail

America's future is riding on it.



May 8, 2012

Representatives and Senators on the MAP-21 (H.R.4348) Conference Committee

Dear Conferees:

Congratulations on your appointment to the conference committee on the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill.

The OneRail Coalition is a diverse group of rail stakeholders who have come together to inform America about the benefits of a strong freight and passenger rail system. While this letter does not address all issues affecting OneRail Coalition members, it does identify certain issues where there is widespread agreement in the rail industry on the policies that will best enhance freight and passenger rail service in the United States.

OneRail believes that public and private investments in rail infrastructure and operations will create and maintain good domestic jobs, enhance productivity and the competitive position of the United States in the world economy, spur both near-term economic recovery and long-term prosperity, relieve road and air congestion, protect the environment, reduce our exposure to volatile gasoline prices and our dependence on imported oil, and contribute positively to public health and well-being.

OneRail urges the following outcomes on selected issues of importance to the rail industry:

- **Section 130 Rail-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Program:** OneRail supports the language in existing law and in the House T&I Committee-passed H.R.7 that maintains dedicated funding for the Section 130 program and maintains rail-highway grade crossing safety as a unique area of focus to protect the motoring public and railroad operations. This is a program that has documented success in saving lives and should be continued.

- **Flexibility for State DOTs:** OneRail supports the language in the Senate-passed MAP-21 legislation allowing State DOTs limited flexibility to use National Freight Program (*Sec. 1115*) and Transportation Mobility Program (*Sec. 1108*) funds for public or private freight rail, maritime, or intermodal projects when the project benefits freight movement, public benefit exceeds Federal investment, and the project provides a better return than a highway project.
- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ):** OneRail supports the language in the Senate-passed MAP-21 legislation (*Sec. 1113*) that allows states to continue using Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program funding for operating intercity passenger rail service. OneRail also supports providing additional flexibility to states by eliminating the three-year limit on the use of CMAQ program funding for operating support.

These rail projects not only meet CMAQ program eligibility criteria, the emissions benefits increase over time as ridership grows. State-sponsored intercity passenger trains continue to have the highest rate of ridership growth of any trains operated by Amtrak, and last year comprised 48 percent of all intercity passenger rail trips. As Congress shifts more responsibility to the states to plan, design, finance, construct, maintain, operate, and manage these services, states need the flexibility to use CMAQ funds for these purposes.

- **Projects of National & Regional Significance (PNRS) program:** OneRail supports the language in the Senate-passed MAP-21 legislation (*Sec. 1118*) establishing a program to provide grants for projects of national and regional significance. These competitively awarded projects will significantly improve the performance of the national surface transportation network, cannot be efficiently completed without Federal support, will generate national economic benefits, reduce congestion, and improve safety.
- **Project Expediting Provisions:** OneRail recognizes the value of expediting the delivery of critical transportation projects. While still maintaining environmental review and permitting processes, OneRail believes that these processes can be made much more efficient and timely. OneRail supports efforts to increase coordination among federal agencies, accelerate project delivery, incentivize innovative project delivery methods, and accelerate decision making.
- **Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA):** OneRail supports the language improving the TIFIA program in the Senate-passed MAP-21 legislation (*Sec. 2002*) and also the TIFIA improvements in the House T&I Committee-passed H.R.7. These provisions do not conflict with each other, and OneRail recommends a combination of the language from both bills.
- **Alaska Railroad FTA Formula Funds:** OneRail supports the language in existing law and in the House T&I Committee-passed H.R.7 that maintains FTA formula funds for the state-owned Alaska Railroad. The Public Transportation title in S.1813 (*Division B*) would cut these formula funds by at least 75%. It would be the only FTA state passenger rail recipient with such a large cut.

The Alaska Railroad is a state railroad providing passenger service and is an eligible FTA recipient. If faced with such a dramatic cut in funding, the Alaska Railroad would have to lay off about 33% of its employees, drastically cut passenger rail service, be unable to comply with the Positive Train Control mandate, and be forced into a default on its FTA-approved GARVEE bonds backed by its current level of FTA formula funds.

- **Rail Planning Provisions:** OneRail supports the national, regional, and state rail planning language in the Senate-passed MAP-21 legislation (*Sec. 35101*) that will bring greater attention to the potential for expanding the role of rail in the nation's transportation system.

- **Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) Program:** OneRail supports the language modifying the RRIF program in the Senate-passed MAP-21 legislation (*Sec. 35408*) and also the RRIF program modifications in the House T&I Committee-passed H.R.7. These provisions do not conflict with each other, and OneRail recommends a combination of the language from both bills.
- **Transit and Parking Commuter Benefits Parity:** OneRail supports the language in the Senate-passed MAP-21 legislation (*Sec. 40204*) restoring parity for pre-tax parking and transit commuter benefits. This issue was also the subject of a bipartisan letter sent by 30+ Representatives to House Ways & Means Committee leadership stating that if parity is not restored, “This inequity will force many commuters out of trains, buses, and vanpools, and back into their cars, leading to increases in congestion, fuel consumption, lost production, and wasted time.”
- **University Transportation Centers (UTC) Program:** To ensure that rail related programs have an equal opportunity to compete in any future UTC grant announcements, OneRail supports modifying the UTC program language to include the Administrators of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in the decision making process for competitive grants along with the Administrators of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The OneRail Coalition appreciates your consideration of our recommendations for strengthening and improving the nation’s surface transportation programs. We would be pleased to discuss the benefits of these policies in greater detail with you.

Sincerely,



Anne Canby
Director, OneRail Coalition

About OneRail:

OneRail is a diverse group of rail stakeholders who have come together to educate America about the benefits of a strong freight and passenger rail system. Our members include the American Public Transportation Association (**APTA**), American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (**ASLRRRA**), **Amtrak**, Association of American Railroads (**AAR**), Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (**BRS**), National Association of Railroad Passengers (**NARP**), Natural Resources Defense Council (**NRDC**), National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association (**NRC**), Railway Supply Institute (**RSI**), States for Passenger Rail Coalition (**SPRC**), Surface Transportation Policy Partnership (**STPP**), Sheet Metal Workers International Association (**SMWIA**), Transportation Communications International Union/International Association of Machinists (**TCU/IAM**) and the United Transportation Union (**UTU**).

Our growing list of Associate Supporters includes **AECOM**, **Alstom**, **General Electric**, **HNTB**, **Parsons**, **Parsons Brinckerhoff** and **SYSTRA**. These global companies represent the engineering and manufacturing sectors that are an essential component of private sector job creation in the transportation industry in the United States.