



August 16, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Request to Expedite Procurement of Long-Distance Passenger Railcars

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I am writing on behalf of the more than 499 thousand passengers that traveled on Amtrak to Florida during the year ending September 30, 2024. The railcars on Amtrak trains are old, worn out and overdue for replacement. We urge you to prioritize recapitalizing the long-distance fleet funding which was provided for in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

As far back as 2010 Amtrak outlined the need to begin recapitalizing its long-distance railcar fleet:

- **“The need to commence recapitalization of the fleet is an urgent one.”**
- **“A steadily increasing burden has been forced upon the maintenance organization.”**
- **“Some equipment is not well suited to delivering reliable service.”**
- **“Customers perceive an aged and tired fleet which has consequences for ridership and revenue.”**

Source: Amtrak Fleet Strategy-Building a Sustainable Fleet for the Future of America’s Intercity and High-Speed Passenger Railroad, February 2010, page 4.

Fifteen years later the consequences of a failure to reinvest are, more than ever, becoming readily apparent and stark. Amtrak reports “high shop counts” reflecting the fact that the fleet is, more than ever, maintenance intensive and prone to failure. An entire fleet of aged railcars were suddenly withdrawn from service earlier this year and, apparently, condemned. The inability of maintenance personnel to service equipment in a timely manner is manifesting itself in delays or outright cancellation due to the lack of spare rail cars.

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The long-distance train network is, fundamentally, a public service. These trains stop and serve 323 communities across the country. In FY24 3.2 million passengers de-trained at these locations, many of which are smaller rural communities. Passengers get on and passengers get off as these trains traverse the country with relatively few traveling all the way from the train's origin point to termination. Many travelers commence their journey on one train and complete it on another supporting the premise that Amtrak operates a transportation network.

Today, the interstate bus network in rural areas is patchy. Greyhound (now owned by FlixBus) operates fewer long-distance routes, often linking only larger regional centers. Many rural connections survive only through state-supported services, regional carriers (such as Jefferson Lines, Burlington Trailways, or Salt Lake Express), and programs like the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program, which subsidizes rural-to-urban links. However, these services are not nationally integrated in the way the Greyhound–Trailways network once was, making transfers more difficult and schedules less coordinated. Service is infrequent, routes are limited, and ticketing often lacks the seamless national connectivity that existed decades ago leaving Amtrak as the sole remaining network serving many of these communities.

Amtrak's long-distance network services many more communities and transports far more passengers for substantially less avoidable cost than the Essential Air Services program. Last October U.S. D.O.T. reported that the annual cost of the program to the federal government was approximately \$550 million with the total number of communities served totaling 112 and passengers enplaning totaling 1.5 million (FAA T-100 reporting). A substantial reduction in EAS service is all but certain in the months ahead based upon the Administration's budget request to Congress further reinforcing a renewed Amtrak long-distance service.

In closing, I again ask that you accelerate efforts to commence the task of placing equipment orders. Amtrak's long-distance network is increasingly fragile and will be difficult, if not impossible, to recreate once it commences to contract.

Sincerely,

James M. Tilley, President

Copies: Members, Board of Directors, The National Railroad Passenger Corporation
 Mr. Roger Harris, President, The National Railroad Passenger Corporation