

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

As we begin the hard work of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, we agree that investing in our nation's infrastructure should be a top priority of the federal government. Passenger rail, including the service operated by Amtrak, is a prime candidate for infrastructure investment. We ask that your infrastructure plan include at least \$55 billion in federal funding over the next ten years for necessary capital investments in the Northeast Corridor (NEC), as well as robust support for the national network of passenger rail service through Amtrak. An ambitious investment in passenger rail infrastructure across the country will expand commuting zones, forge closer ties between cities, expand job opportunities, make housing more affordable, and provide clean, convenient transportation to Americans.

A national rail network is a critical part of a modern nation's transportation infrastructure, connecting large cities to each other and to the smaller communities in between. It unlocks economic opportunity, shortens commutes, and provides access to jobs, city centers, and international airports. It also helps meet climate goals: according to the U.S. Department of Energy, Amtrak is 47 percent more energy efficient than traveling by car and 33 percent more energy efficient than domestic air travel.¹ For these reasons, rail travel is becoming more popular every year in the U.S. This trend is evident in the growing ridership of Amtrak, the corporation owned by the U.S. government that provides passenger rail service in 500 communities across 46 states. Up until the COVID-19 crisis, Amtrak was serving more riders than ever before – more than 32.5 million in 2019. These millions of riders are travelling on railways, tunnels, and bridges that are over 100 years old in some places. We must renovate our rail infrastructure to maintain safe and effective service for a growing ridership.

Our counterparts overseas have already committed fully to modern rail transportation systems. Rail infrastructure in Japan and in much of Europe is already well-developed, and residents are proud of their reliable, high-speed trains. As part of its plan to become the world's leading economy, China is spending over \$100 billion annually on new high-speed rail lines to unlock economic growth. Despite recent increases, Congress provides just over \$1 billion annually for federal rail programs, leaving our rail infrastructure far behind that of our peers. We must invest in passenger rail to also remain competitive in the global economy.

Just as Amtrak allowed you to commute to the U.S. Senate from Delaware, hundreds of thousands of people a day take a train on the NEC, one of the busiest and most complex rail lines in the world that is primarily owned by Amtrak.² The state-of-good-repair backlog in the NEC

¹ <https://www.amtrak.com/travel-green>

² <https://nec.amtrak.com/>

has climbed to over \$40 billion, and Amtrak and other infrastructure owners lack the long-term funding to address it. Unlike our highway and airway systems, our rail system lacks a dedicated funding stream, and instead relies on Congress to appropriate sufficient funds each and every year. Working with Amtrak, states, and stakeholders, the Federal Railroad Administration developed a comprehensive long-term corridor-wide vision to bring the NEC into a state of good repair and provide expanded passenger service, but lacks the resources to execute this plan. As a result, Amtrak and other rail carriers on the NEC are trying to deploy a long-term infrastructure plan with a one-year budget outlook that is subject to ever-shifting political priorities.

That is why we are encouraged by the NEC Commission's work to develop "CONNECT NEC 2035," a consensus-based plan for NEC stakeholders to identify and sequence the capital investments. Early estimates suggest implementing the plan will cost approximately \$55 billion over the next 10 years. We encourage your Administration to support the long-term funding needed to restore and revitalize the NEC in your infrastructure proposal, and ensure that stakeholders in the corridor are empowered to identify, prioritize, and sequence projects in the state of good repair backlog.

Investing in rail infrastructure will open up corridors of booming economic growth, help meet our climate goals, and increase our international competitiveness. Expanding passenger rail service across the country should be a top priority for any clean infrastructure agenda.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Chris Murphy
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



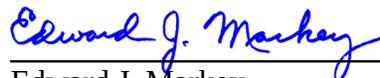
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United States Senator



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United States Senator



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United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
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Jack Reed
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