

WASHINGTON – Lawmakers from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont urged U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator Joseph C. Szabo today to support a High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grant application that would transform the Amtrak-owned New Haven-Hartford-Springfield line for high-speed service and provide an important gateway for expanding passenger rail throughout New England.

In a letter to Secretary LaHood and Administrator Szabo the lawmakers stressed the importance the grant would play in connecting the citizens of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont and spurring economic development in communities along the rail line.

The full text of the letter is as follows:

April 14, 2011

Honorable Ray LaHood
Szabo
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
Administration

Honorable Joseph C.
Administrator
Federal Railroad

Dear Secretary LaHood and Administrator Szabo:

We write to you in support of the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grant application submitted by the State of Connecticut, in partnership with Amtrak, Vermont and Massachusetts, to fund Phase 3 of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS) rail project. This important project will transform the Amtrak-owned NHHS rail line into a major passenger rail gateway connecting the communities of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont, and will create an integrated passenger rail network across New England and the broader Northeast Corridor.

Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont, in partnership with Amtrak, are all committed to a vision of expanded high-speed passenger rail in New England. Completion of the NHHS project is essential to achieving this vision. The NHHS corridor is located in the most densely-populated region of the country and will link communities along the rail line, relieve road congestion, and benefit the environment by reducing harmful emissions. Along with important environmental and energy use benefits, the project will create an estimated 12,940 new construction-related jobs. Once the project is completed, it will serve as a catalyst for transit-oriented development and will lay the foundation for sustained economic growth. Most importantly, the improvements will facilitate development of one of the best intercity passenger rail networks in the nation and enhance multi-modal connections to regional commuter and high-speed trains, Bradley international Airport, and the planned New Britain-Hartford Busway.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has awarded two grants to Connecticut totaling \$160.9 million to upgrade the NHHS rail corridor. This funding, along with \$162 million in matching funds from Connecticut, is only sufficient to upgrade phases 1 and 2 of the line between New Haven and Hartford. Phase 3 is required to extend the improvements to Springfield, and to provide the capacity for increased Amtrak service to Vermont and Massachusetts. Thus, completing the NHHS rail project is essential not only to achieve Connecticut's passenger rail plans, but to achieving the transportation objectives of the entire multi-state region.

Connecticut is applying for \$227 million in federal funding to complete the NHHS rail project and to provide the rail corridor with the capacity to meet the long-term needs of all three states. This will be matched with \$97.3 million in state funds. Together with Connecticut's matching funds for Phases 1 and 2 of the project, the state is contributing a total of \$259.3 million – 40 percent – towards the cost of upgrading the NHHS rail corridor. In addition, Connecticut is providing the train equipment and maintenance and yard facilities in New Haven at no expense to the project. This level of state funding and in-kind match exceeds that of any other state applying for HSIPR funding.

The NHHS rail project includes increasing train speeds to 110 mph, restoring a second track removed in the 1980s, implementing important rail operations and at-grade crossing safety improvements, and upgrading stations in both Connecticut and Massachusetts. These improvements can be implemented within five years. The Environmental Assessment will be completed before the end of this year, design work will be completed in 2013, and Amtrak is planning to install the new track in 2014. Connecticut already owns the equipment that will be used initially on the line and new service is expected to start by 2016. Once completed, the rail line will support approximately 50 daily passenger trains providing fast,

frequent, and reliable service.

This project is worthy of federal support and can serve as a successful example of high-speed passenger rail service for the rest of the country. On behalf of our states and the communities we serve, we urge you to positively consider Connecticut's application to complete the NHHS Rail Project and to assist in the resurgence of passenger rail throughout New England.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN
United States Senator

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator

JOHN F. KERRY
United States Senator

PATRICK J. LEAHY
United States Senator

BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator

ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress

JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

CHRISTOPHER MURPHY
Member of Congress

JAMES A. HIMES
Member of Congress

RICHARD E. NEAL
Member of Congress

JOHN W. OLVER
Member of Congress

JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress

MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress

STEPHEN LYNCH
Member of Congress

WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

Cc:

Dannel P. Malloy

Governor of Connecticut

Joseph H. Boardman

President & CEO, Amtrak