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TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

February 18, 2010

The Honorable Ray H. LaHood
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

Thank you for meeting with me last week to discuss Maryland's transportation priorities. As you know, Maryland is committed to jobs creation and economic growth. I believe transportation infrastructure projects including passenger rail offer a path to economic recovery and a stronger, more competitive future. In light of the announcement this week that Florida will be returning \$2.4 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) funds, I would like to reiterate our desire to secure additional funding from the ARRA HSIPR program to serve the needs of Maryland and the Northeast Corridor (NEC).

Maryland and the NEC would benefit greatly from receipt of the federal high speed rail funds recently rejected by the Governor of Florida. The NEC has over \$52 billion in needs to improve the existing system. As such, additional ARRA funding could complete the construction of critical infrastructure projects including the Baltimore and Potomac Tunnel (B&P), which is nearing the end of its useful life, and the BWI Station Area improvements, both of which were awarded planning funding under the HSIPR program. In addition to remedying existing problems and improving and expanding rail service far into the future, these projects offer the promise of thousands of direct jobs in planning and construction. At just over \$1 billion, the B&P Tunnel replacement could support and generate over 7,300 jobs, while the BWI Station project at its full build-out cost of more than \$250 million could impact around 1,800 jobs.

ARRA monies could also advance several other Maryland projects that were found to be eligible for ARRA HSIPR funds but remain unfunded. We would like funding consideration for the replacement of three NEC bridges in northeast Maryland; the reworking of a freight line connection to the NEC for capacity improvements, known as the "Chesapeake Connector"; and capacity improvements along the CSX Brunswick Line to improve passenger service. All of these projects met the criteria for selection but US DOT was unable to fund them due to limited resources. Collectively, these additional projects total over \$2.3 billion in planning and construction costs and will contribute directly to more than 16,000 jobs.

As the home to the only existing high speed rail service in the nation, the NEC received far less than other corridors in both the original HSIPR awards and recent redistribution of unused funding. With the maintenance, construction and operations structure already in place, the NEC is a logical place to prioritize HSIPR funding to show immediate results, serve one-third of the U.S. population, and bring an end to the transportation service breakdowns related to aging, insufficient and failing infrastructure. In addition, due to Amtrak's ownership of the majority of the infrastructure on the NEC, the federal responsibility for these improvements is more apparent here than in any other passenger rail corridor in the nation. We urge you to reflect that obligation in future federal investment where US DOT has discretion in awarding funding.

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Finally, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is beginning work on a new Environmental Impact Statement for the NEC. This plan is a critical step in the process to expand rail service throughout the NEC -- for Amtrak's Acela trains, regional trains, commuter rail and Norfolk Southern freight trains. Additional money is needed to ensure that this multi-state planning project is fully funded.

Your consideration of these important Maryland-based projects is appreciated. Our Department of Transportation is already hard at work progressing the two existing ARRA planning projects. With the assistance of additional federal resources, we stand ready to work with Amtrak, the FRA and the other NEC region states to initiate additional planning and construction projects that are so vital to this Corridor. Given the criticality of NEC projects to the region, I urge USDOT to prioritize these projects for the unused funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin O'Malley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "O".

Martin O'Malley
Governor