

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chairwoman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Transportation, Housing and Urban  
Development, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Transportation, Housing and Urban  
Development, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairwoman Collins, and Ranking Member Reed,

As you continue negotiations regarding a Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Omnibus package, we write to urge you to increase funding for the Northeast Corridor (NEC) Grants program to at least \$500 million. The NEC is a national asset the country is at dire risk of losing absent serious and sustained investments. The effects of that potential loss would reverberate through every aspect of our economy, while roiling the commutes of the tens of millions of Americans who rely on the NEC every year.


The economic impact of the NEC cannot be overstated: seven million jobs are located within five miles of a station on the line; workers who ride the NEC contribute \$50 billion annually to the U.S. economy; and a loss of the NEC for a *single day* costs the U.S. \$100 million in travel delays and lost productivity. However, as the full Committee noted in its report accompanying the FY17 THUD bill, the NEC has a state of good repair backlog of over \$28 billion. The NEC's most heavily trafficked bridges and tunnels are well over a century old: the Norwalk Bridge in Connecticut was constructed while Grover Cleveland was president, while construction of the Baltimore and Potomac Tunnel began while Ulysses S. Grant was president. The investment we seek in the Omnibus package would begin to address the yawning backlog of state-of-good-repair projects to help Amtrak, Metro-North, and other commuter railroads meet future ridership along the corridor.

Congress strongly affirmed its commitment for robust investments in passenger rail in the NEC by passing the *FAST* Act in December 2015 with broad bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. As you know, the bill included the five-year authorization of both passenger and freight rail transportation programs, thereby bringing all surface transportation modes together within a single authorization bill for the first time. The bill also included new grant programs that improve rail safety, like the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program, and that incent collaboration among stakeholders along the NEC. Unfortunately, to date,

Congress has yet to appropriate funds to the *FAST* Act's newly authorized rail accounts. (As you recall, the *FAST* Act was signed into law shortly before Congress passed the FY16 Omnibus spending bill, and to date Congress has not passed an FY17 spending bill.) Simply put, we cannot let the third year of this widely supported five-year authorization pass by without appropriating the NEC Grants program to at least its maximum authorized level.

On behalf of our millions of constituents who depend on a safe and reliable rail network, we once again urge you to include this increased investment in the NEC. We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



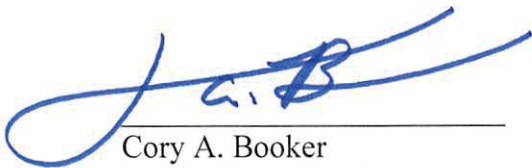
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



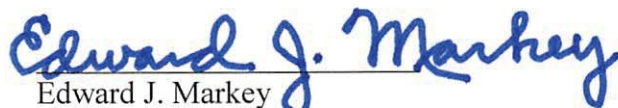
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

*Kirsten Gillibrand*

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United States Senator