

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2019

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

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

Chairwoman Collins and Ranking Member Reed,

We write to respectfully request at least \$111.4 million for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. This level is consistent with the FY2019 enacted level and \$1 million more than the President's budget request.

A series of tragic rail accidents in our region have highlighted NTSB's critical role in transportation safety, but without critical resources, the NTSB's mission could be significantly impaired. As you know, NTSB is mandated by Congress to address every civil aviation accident in the country, as well as significant railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline accidents. We cannot allow the Board's vital safety mission to be undermined by budgets that reduce its ability to respond to accidents, regardless of where they occur. NTSB's work in our region is helping to save lives, and we are committed to aiding that work in whatever manner we are able.

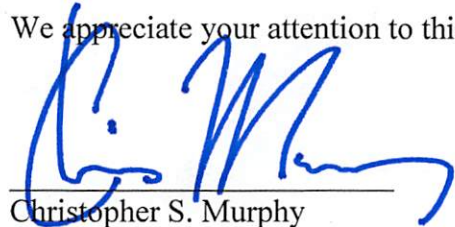
The Northeast rail corridor—the most heavily trafficked railway in the country—and other passenger rail systems in the Northeast have suffered a number of accidents in recent years. May 2015 saw the most tragic and high-profile Amtrak accident in a generation, when a Northeast Regional train derailed in Philadelphia, killing eight passengers and injuring over two hundred others. In response, NTSB launched staff to support on-scene activities and download locomotive event recorders. NTSB engineers also processed forward-facing video and recovered surveillance video, portable electronic devices, and phone records from the wreckage. Most recently, NTSB completed an investigation between a truck and a chartered Amtrak train carrying a Republican congressional delegation. Throughout these major incidents and successive safety breaches, the NTSB has been methodical, responsive, and capable in their investigations. They have shared important, life-saving recommendations with Metro-North, FRA, Amtrak, and state regulators to help avert future tragedies, all while responding to new incidents throughout the country and across all modes of transportation.

However, it is clear that NTSB's resources are being strained under the weight of so many ongoing investigations. NTSB has only twelve railroad investigators, and four are now eligible for retirement. Those twelve investigators are currently working on twenty-one open rail investigations that include three Amtrak accidents and a special investigation into rail transit passenger fatalities. Further, NTSB currently only has two hazardous materials investigators who support investigations for all modes, and they are currently working on five open investigations. There are also three pipeline investigators working on eight open investigations. While we have

continually urged NTSB to complete its investigations as quickly as possible, the ability of the Board to speedily conclude such reviews is limited by its relatively small investigatory staff and the fact that it is simultaneously examining sixteen railroad and rail transit accidents at the present time.

Our funding request would allow the agency to move towards its target of 423 FTE. Finally, our request would allow the agency to continue its initiatives to stabilize its workforce and improve investigative capabilities involving emerging transportation technologies, including in rail.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter.



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senator

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