

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 16, 2016

The Honorable Sarah Feinberg
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast
Washington, District of Columbia 20590

Dear Administrator Feinberg:

The Federal Railroad Administration is undertaking an initiative known as NEC FUTURE to evaluate long-term planning options in Connecticut and throughout the Northeast. At the end of this process, we understand FRA will unveil a proposal for federal, state and local officials to address challenges facing our rail network. We are vigorous supporters of increased investments in our transportation system and the many jobs that these investments create, and we urge you to be forward-thinking in finalizing the NEC FUTURE framework to ensure it is a robust blueprint for enhancing economic prospects for our constituents. We also urge you to be responsive to the many communities affected by this proposal and ensure all our constituents' concerns are thoroughly considered and addressed before you adopt any proposal.

The Northeast Corridor is home to nearly 50 million people, four of the country's ten largest metropolitan areas, and nearly 30 percent of the country's jobs. It is our nation's economic engine, generating more than 20 percent of our country's GDP on just two percent of our country's land mass. Despite the region's economic might, the residents of the Northeast are saddled with railroad infrastructure more befitting a fledgling twentieth century nation than a global superpower.

FRA has unveiled four options to frame our investment choices in this network. In draft documents now generating public comment, NEC FUTURE contemplates maintaining the status quo (the "No Action" alternative), growing the network commensurate with projected population growth (the "Maintain" alternative), expanding service (the "Grow" alternative), and, finally, dramatically overhauling rail in the Northeast (the "Transform" alternative). We understand FRA will decide its preferred option – also referred to as a "preferred alternative" – later this year after reviewing public comments on the four options.

We urge you to be visionary in your proposal, bringing our rail network into the modern age and preparing for the economy of the twenty-first century. The preferred alternative should ease congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ensure the resiliency of our infrastructure in the face of climate change, improve freight rail options for commercial development and

guarantee our constituents first-in-class rail service so they can better access jobs and economic opportunities. We are encouraged by ideas that would rebuild our infrastructure, create new lines and hundreds of new stations, eliminate chokepoints, and increase opportunities for residents throughout New England to access dependable, reliable high-speed rail. Our global competitors are embracing ambitious plans; we must do so as well.

We understand FRA will formalize its preferred proposal in the form of a “Tier 1” Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS. Generally, a Tier 1 EIS focuses on large, regional issues, not local adverse and positive impacts which would be assessed during a second review of specific projects. Nonetheless, the Tier 1 EIS is still an important document that could guide decisions in the Northeast for decades to come, serving as a starting point for many critical state and local planning efforts.

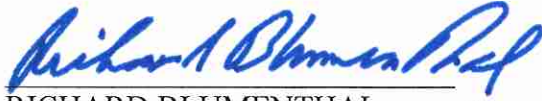
So, we urge you to closely consider the impact of your preferred plan on all communities affected and specifically ask that you:

- Ensure you have conducted thorough outreach to all communities and stakeholders affected, including ensuring anyone who should be afforded an opportunity to comment has been provided ample, sufficient, timely notice of this undertaking.
- Ensure everyone has been able to assess the costs of the proposals with enough specificity to provide constructive feedback.
- Ensure you have considered all economic impacts, as this plan could affect countless businesses and livelihoods, and ensure this plan increases economic opportunities rather than undermine them.
- Ensure you have considered all environmental impacts, minimizing any harm in the many ways the plan could threaten farmland, wetlands, parks, forests, water resources, animal habitats, as well as community quality of life issues, like noise.
- Ensure it enhances service for all who depend on our transportation network, from bus and transit users and short-distance commuters to long-distance passengers, drivers, aviation stakeholders, and freight operators and customers.
- Ensure it protects the unique, historic charm of the countless communities in Connecticut that have structures dating hundreds of years and proud, important traditions of historic preservation.
- Ensure it leverages current resources, infrastructure and local planning efforts, complementing local priorities and needs and does not undermine them.

Again, many communities and constituents could be affected by NEC FUTURE, and we appreciate your efforts to make this undertaking a worthwhile and valuable contribution to long-

term transportation planning while protecting critical natural resources and community quality of life.

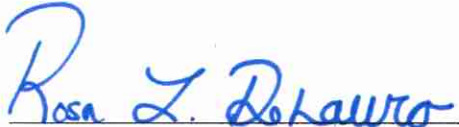
Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



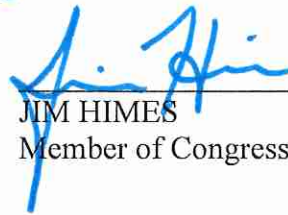
ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



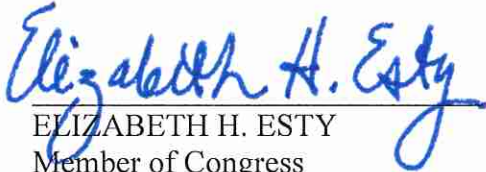
JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY
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ELIZABETH H. ESTY
Member of Congress