



The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Amit Bose  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

April 9, 2021

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Acting Administrator Bose,

We write today as mayors of five U.S. cities to express our support for the establishment of a federal modernized and expanded passenger rail program, which ought to feature a Midwestern segment in alignment with the vision originally envisioned in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA). We recognize the vast potential for passenger rail to bring opportunity to our greater region and to connect our cities with communities nationwide in a more sustainable manner. We encourage President Joseph R. Biden and his Administration to deliver an American passenger rail network as a top priority for infrastructure investment in the “Build Back Better” Recovery Plan, in-line with Amtrak’s Connect US proposal. We specifically advocate for the extension of Amtrak’s Hiawatha line. The Hiawatha line is one of Amtrak’s most successful routes and would enhance connectivity between the economic centers of our three Midwestern states.

Due to the past actions of state governments who didn’t understand the benefits of passenger rail, our cities have suffered. Due to the past actions of the federal government, our national rail infrastructure continues to lag behind the rest of the world. To counter this trend, we strongly support modernizing and expanding Midwest passenger rail through investments in the FAST Act reauthorization and the American Jobs Plan.

The envisioned passenger rail service would improve regional connections between our major urban centers, facilitating interstate travel and commerce while reducing emissions and congestion. Travel time would be competitive with travel by air or automobile for these markets within 500 miles, but less subject to delays associated with weather or traffic. Our community members would benefit from improved connections with vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Smaller cities in our region that are not served or are underserved by commercial air service could be connected. Enhanced passenger rail would increase the capacity, safety, and efficiency of freight rail operations in the region, reducing travel times for those operators.

As the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) prepares for the launch of the President’s “Build Back Better” Recovery Plan, we are heartened to see your acknowledgement of the benefits of passenger rail and its potential to transform the nature of travel between our cities, create good-paying jobs, address climate change, and promote equity. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) itself argued in a 2010 report that the development of a network would create thousands of high-wage green manufacturing

jobs, over one million construction jobs, and thousands of other permanent jobs in operations and maintenance. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) estimates a quadruple multiplier effect in economic benefits from every dollar invested in passenger rail. Connecting our Midwestern cities will ensure the status of our mega-region as a center of innovation and opportunity.

As mayors, we believe that now is the time for transformative investments in our nation's infrastructure that will benefit our residents for generations to come. Modernizing and enhancing passenger rail must play a key role in our national transportation system in the twenty-first century and beyond. We urge the Administration to help our region finally realize this overdue vision for a connected future. Thank you for your efforts to help our cities build back stronger as we emerge from historic challenges of the past year. We appreciate your consideration of our shared hopes of reenergizing the passenger rail network and delivering catalytic investments in the Midwest in the years ahead. We look forward to a robust partnership with the White House and our federal partners, including DOT and FRA.

Sincerely,



Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway  
City of Madison, Wisconsin



Mayor Lori Lightfoot  
City of Chicago, Illinois



Mayor Melvin Carter  
City of St. Paul, Minnesota



Mayor Jacob Frey  
City of Minneapolis, Minnesota



Mayor Tom Barrett  
City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin