RUN
RAIL
USERS´
NETWORK

December 15, 2020

Stephen Gardiner, President, National Railroad Passenger Corporation
1 Massachusetts Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gardiner,

First, let me congratulate you on your appointment as the new President of Amtrak and wish you well in this new endeavor.

As you know, the Rail Users' Network (RUN) is a national organization that has been advocating for improved Amtrak and better rail transit service in the United States since 2001.

While we recognize that Amtrak is facing a number of serious challenges related to the Covid Crisis, we believe Amtrak needs to make the case for passenger rail not only for the northeast corridor and state supported services, but also for the national network.

Now that it is clear that there will be a change in leadership at the national level, it is time for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation to aggressively make the case for additional funding from Congress to restore daily long distance service as soon as possible and no later than early next summer, for there are millions of Americans who depend on Amtrak to travel to work, see relatives, seek medical attention, food, and other necessities of life who live in rural communities all across America.

Amtrak also needs to make a better case for passenger rail travel beyond the few ads that have recently appeared regarding travel during the Covid crisis. This would include publication of both route timetables as well as the National Timetable, which will allow for not only planning current travel, but dreaming of future travel as well.

The amenities which made passenger rail a real chose for Americans as well as foreign travelers also need to be restored. This must include restoring dining car service

available on all long distance trains, providing free professionally cooked-to-order meals for sleeping car passengers, and at reasonable prices for coach passengers wanting to utilize the service.

It is also time to utilize the new Viewliner II Equipment to restore sleeping car service on the overnight trains that operate to and from Boston and Washington, D. C., which ended in 2003. A popular option on this train was the "Executive Sleeper", which began in New York, allowing riders to board after 10 PM and then the car was coupled to the train when it arrived. Given the renewed interest in overnight train service throughout most of Europe, it is past time to re-establish the service here in the U.S., given the growing concern over the environmental impact of flying.

This same equipment should also be used at least during the coronavirus pandemic to offer private rooms on the NEC and other regional service. The availability of this equipment for daytime use would certainly generate more travel among those who can afford it and are reluctant to leave their homes. As one of our Board Members, Joshua Coran, who talked with Joe McHugh, Amtrak's vice president of state-supported business development shortly before he retired, we agree "the cost of a strikeout here is minimal and there is a chance of hitting a homerun."

Amtrak needs to very aggressively pursue funding for new equipment to begin replacing Superliner I & II equipment, which is at least 40 years old. It is imperative that funds be included in Amtrak's fiscal year 2021 budget to begin replacing this equipment now, rather than wait until 2025. New equipment is also needed to add capacity, as well as additional schedules on heavily traveled routes. The goal is to provide multiple schedules in order to build ridership. Daily service should also be restored on all currently used routes, including the now tri-Weekly Sunset (Train 1/2) and Cardinal (Train 50/51) routes. As demonstrated by private and government studies, ridership increases exponentially as additional schedules are implemented. Travelers shouldn't have to consult a calendar to see if the train they intend to take is running on that day! A study now 20 years old indicates that simply doubling the frequency to two daily trains on a given route would ***triple*** the ridership through increased city-pair connectivity.

We also agree with the campaign that Trains in the Valley is waging to insure that Amtrak Board of Directors meetings are open to the public. At the very least, every meeting should be open to public observation, announced in advance with a published agenda, and the minutes and records of the meetings should be made available to the public. Most, if not all transit agencies operate this way, including the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority Board Meetings which I attend. Better still, Amtrak's Board of Directors should select a rail advocate to serve as a nonvoting member of the

board, similar to what the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority has done over the years.

While we hope we can meet with you through a virtual conference call in the not too distant future, we hope you will act favorably on the above proposals.

Sincerely,

Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
Chairman
Rail Users' Network
211 Ocean Ave.
Portland, ME 04103
rrjudolph1022@gmail.com