

Robert Wonderling  
Robert Yaro  
Chairs



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Inc.  
Select Greater Philadelphia  
Staten Island Chamber of  
Commerce  
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Washington D.C. Convention &  
Tourism Corporation

December 23, 2010

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

Dear Secretary LaHood:

Our coalition of more than 30 business, civic, and planning groups along the Northeast Corridor (NEC) applauds your leadership in 2010 on high-speed and passenger rail in America. However, we are frustrated that virtually no progress has been made this year to advance the Corridor-wide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Northeast Corridor required to qualify for major capital improvement grants from the US Department of Transportation. We hope we can count on your direct involvement in commencing and accelerating the EIS in the Northeast Corridor in 2011.

In 2009, the Federal Rail Administration determined that projects on the Northeast Corridor were ineligible for most federal high-speed rail funds due to a lack of a Corridor-wide EIS for the rail infrastructure improvements contemplated in the Northeast Corridor Master Plan. As a result, projects on the Northeast Corridor, *the primary market for high-speed rail service in the United States*, were passed over in the January and November 2010 allocations of HSR monies, as well as the most recent reallocation of the Ohio and Wisconsin HSR monies.

The needs on the Corridor are real. In the Northeast Corridor Master Plan of June 2010, the backlog of neglected State of Good Repair improvements alone totals \$8.7 billion. Many of these improvements are needed regardless of whether the Northeast states pursue an incremental approach as detailed in the \$52 billion Master Plan or dedicated high-speed rail tracks for increasing capacity and reducing trip times on the corridor.

The recently formed Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission, which has held two meetings, does not seem to recognize the urgency of this matter, having not included discussion of the EIS on the agenda of their most recent meeting on December 2.

Our understanding is that the FRA will be the lead agency on the Corridor-wide EIS that it has determined is needed, and has designated \$10 million in planning funding for this effort in the Northeast. We respectfully request that you identify the individual at the FRA responsible for managing the EIS, the timeline for this process,

and the nature of stakeholder and public involvement. We also request that the FRA consult with the Northeast States (through the NEC Advisory Commission or another forum) on the projects identified in the NEC Master Plan that can proceed independently of an EIS and receive funding, and those capital investments which require further study. We need your leadership to move this EIS process forward in the expeditious manner that conditions demand.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert Wonderling  
President and CEO, Greater Philadelphia  
Chamber of Commerce



Robert Yaro  
Regional Plan Association, Inc.

Cc: Joseph C. Szabo, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration  
Karen Rae, Deputy Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration  
Roy Kienitz, Under Secretary of Transportation  
Carolann Wicks, Secretary, Delaware Department of Transportation, and  
Chair, Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory  
Commission  
Stephen Gardner, Vice President, Policy and Development, Amtrak  
Al Engel, Vice President, High-Speed Rail, Amtrak  
Members of the Northeast Congressional Delegation