

July 11, 2019

Hon. Christopher Murphy, United States Senator
Colt Gateway
120 Huyslope Avenue, Suite 401
Hartford, CT 06106

Subject: Northeast Corridor Rail Governance and Financing

Dear Senator Murphy:

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) very much appreciated the opportunity to participate in your teleconference on June 12, 2019 regarding your visionary rail financing and governance plan for the Northeast Corridor (NEC). We applaud your commitment to improving this vital travel corridor. We wanted to take this opportunity to encourage the inclusion in these plans of New England's inland rail route between New Haven, Hartford, Springfield, Worcester, and Boston. Here are a few points to consider on the importance of including the inland route for Connecticut.

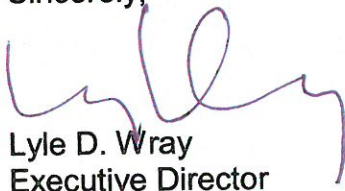
- **Hartford/Springfield Region of 1.7 Million Residents:** Better connecting metro Hartford with Springfield and Boston is a major economic priority for the region. The Hartford/Springfield Metropolitan Area has a population of 1.7 million people and shares an airport, the Connecticut river, and major freeway access. Improvements to the inland route would allow a more seamless connection to Boston and its five million residents. Recent improvements to the Hartford Line between New Haven and Springfield were completed in 2018, with additional phases anticipated over the next several years. These improvements will increase annual ridership from 350,000 to 700,000. Omitting this inland route from consideration – as the NEC FUTURE project's Environmental Impact Statement did – would fail to leverage the economic benefits of these impressive investments for Connecticut and for the second largest urban area in New England.
- **Coordination of Passenger Rail with Other Travel Modes and Leverage On-Going Planning Efforts:** It is critical that rail service interface and connect with other modes of travel. The State of Connecticut and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have invested significant funding into CT**fastrak**, the state's first bus rapid transit (BRT) system, which opened in March 2015. With over 20 million cumulative rides in the corridor, and 12.7 million rides on CT**fastrak** buses, ridership remains strong and continues to grow. In addition to CT**fastrak**, other on-going transit efforts in the Capitol Region include:

- There are significant Transit-Oriented (TOD) planning efforts and investments on-going along the Hartford Line rail corridor.
 - Planning is underway for a once in a generation reconstruction of the rail line through Hartford as part of the I-84 Hartford project. CRCOG has encouraged the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) to consider the positive impacts that these improvements would have on inland route rail service.
 - Service at Bradley International Airport (BDL, Gateway to New England) is expanding. The airport serves as an important relief airport for both the Boston and New York City areas, and connections to rail are critical for its continued growth.
- **Rail Service Redundancy and Resiliency:** The existing rail infrastructure on the Northeast Corridor's coastal route can very easily be interrupted due to weather events or other service disruptions. This demonstrates the need to emphasize a long-term strategy that not only allows for improved services but also focuses on network and service redundancy and resiliency. An upgraded inland route through Hartford and Springfield would allow for alternative routing during catastrophic weather events and facilitate construction-related re-routing of trains when needed for coastal rail infrastructure projects.

The inland route between New Haven, Hartford, Springfield, Worcester, and Boston is a critical rail corridor that must be considered as improvements to the Northeast Corridor are developed. We hope that as you move forward with your discussions related to governance and financing of the NEC that you are willing to support a focus on the inland route in addition to the coastal route.

If you have any questions, or if we can assist in any way to further explain our position or support you in your on-going discussions regarding this important effort, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Lyle D. Wray
Executive Director

cc: Hon. Richard Blumenthal, United States Senator
 Hon. Steve Cassano, Connecticut State Senator
 Hon. John Larson, United States Congressman – Connecticut 1st District
 Hon. Joe Courtney, United States Congressman – Connecticut 2nd District
 Hon. Jahana Hayes, United States Congresswoman – Connecticut 5th District
 Mayor Marcia Leclerc, Chair – CRCOG Policy Board
 Mr. Jon Colman, Chair – CRCOG Transportation Committee