

April 17, 2023

Mr. Amit Bose
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Massachusetts Department of Transportation Inland Route Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program

Dear Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), I write to support the Department of Transportation (MassDOT) in its application for FY22-23 Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP-National) Program funding for the Connecting the Commonwealth: Early Actions for the Inland Route (Project).

The Project will result in much needed improved rail connections along a corridor that connects five of the 100 most populated metropolitan areas in the U.S. The new Amtrak Inland Route service will provide two daily round trips between Boston, MA and New Haven, CT with connections to New York City and the Northeast Corridor. In addition, travel times will be improved for the existing Amtrak Lakeshore Limited, enhancing connections between Boston, Worcester and Springfield, MA with Albany and other upstate New York communities.

Additionally, the Project will make infrastructure improvements to both increase train speeds and to provide additional corridor capacity along the 53-mile section of the CSX Boston & Albany (B&A) Line between Worcester and Springfield. The extension of existing passing siding capacity and other track improvements will increase the Maximum Authorized Speed (MAS) to 80 mph and minimize train delays along the 44-mile segment that is predominantly single-track.

This Project, when completed, will facilitate two Inland Route daily round trips as a first phase of corridor improvement. This Project will also increase operational efficiency and flexibility by reducing passenger and freight train conflicts and

reducing travel times along remaining single track segments. These improvements are a necessary first step for increasing train frequency and speed along the Inland Route between New Haven and Boston and between Boston and Albany.

To implement this Project, MassDOT intends to partner with Amtrak and CSX. The scope of the proposed FSP-National application is for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Preliminary Engineering, Final Design, and Construction. This Project demonstrates maturity of Planning Readiness, as multiple studies related to this corridor have been conducted over the past decade. Furthermore, environmental studies have been conducted along the corridor, ultimately resulting in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

In summary, my organization believes that this Project will not only improve our nation's transportation infrastructure but will also contribute to the economic competitiveness of the municipalities along the corridor. I greatly appreciate your consideration of this application, and am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

CC: P. Sucato, Director of Office of Policy & Intergovernmental Affairs, CTDOT
CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning, CRCOG
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning, CRCOG
K. Robinson, Executive Director, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission