

April XX, 2021

Dear (Senators and Congresspeople)

We write today as municipal leaders of XX Wisconsin 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 presented by Amtrak in their recent Connect US proposal. 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. 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 Wisconsin’s economic centers and those of other Midwestern states.

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 urban centers throughout the state, facilitating intra- and inter-state 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. The cities in Wisconsin 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 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 cities will ensure the status of our state as a center of innovation and opportunity.

As municipal leaders, 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 you 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 your support of passenger rail in Wisconsin.