



Committee Update

September 18, 2014

House Committee Passes Amtrak Reauthorization Bill

Dear Transportation Committee Member:

On Wednesday, the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee passed the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act of 2014 ([H.R. 5449](#)) by voice vote. Prior to the adoption of the measure, Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA), the Committee's Ranking Member Nick Rahall (D-WV) as well as Railroads Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Denham (R-CA) and the Subcommittee's Ranking Member, Corrine Brown (D-FL) provided statements of support for the bipartisan measure that they had crafted..

Chairman Shuster thanked his colleagues for their efforts to put forth a bipartisan bill. He further pointed out that "one of the most important rail links to our nation is the Northeast Corridor" noting the population density of the region and the high usage of the rail corridor. He also stated that improvements to the overall system were overdue, and prompted the introduction of this bill. Representative Denham gave a brief explanation of the bill, pointing out reforms included in the measure that T&I Republican members feel will help "bring our nation's rail system into the 21st century." Representative Rahall stated that the bill was a careful balance of reforms that Committee Republicans wanted, while maintaining the national service network and employee protections that Committee Democrats sought. Representative Brown echoed some of the concerns that Committee Democrats wanted addressed in the bill, and noted that for many in rural America, Amtrak also is a crucial transportation need. She concluded that while there is no "perfect bill, this [bill] is a perfect start." Other members of the Committee also offered their views, including Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY) who lamented about the level of funding that Amtrak has historically received compared to other transportation modes. Though he similarly called the bill "a good first step" he added that it was only a first step.

With the passage by the Committee, H.R. 5449 may now be considered and voted upon by the full House of Representatives however it is unclear what the timeframe for such consideration would be.

The following are highlights of the [legislative proposal](#) as put forth by the T&I Committee:

Reforms Amtrak to Increase Transparency, Reduce Costs, and Operate More Like a Business

- Authorizes Amtrak at fiscally responsible, recently appropriated funding levels
- Eliminates Amtrak's losses in food and beverage service
- Mandates Amtrak carry out a business case analysis for all major procurements
- Eliminates Amtrak's black-box accounting and requires transparent bookkeeping aligned with core service functions

Leverages Resources and Encourages Non-Federal Participation

- Creates station development opportunities for the private sector
- Opens new revenue streams through right-of-way development
- Unlocks an underutilized federal railroad loan program
- Assists with advancing large infrastructure projects through partnerships with states

Targets Investments Where There is the Greatest Potential for Success

- Keeps Northeast Corridor profits on the Northeast Corridor
- Improves management of the Northeast Corridor
- Incentivizes increased Northeast Corridor investments

Empowers States to Have a Greater Role in Managing Routes

- Ensures states are equal partners, giving them a greater say in decision making to ensure passengers get the best service
- Strengthens transparency to give states and Congress greater insight into Amtrak's accounting to identify areas for improvement
- Requires Amtrak to evaluate long-distance routes, improve services, and lower costs

Streamlines Environmental Reviews and Accelerates Project Delivery

- Sets hard deadlines to reasonably limit review times
- Requires reviews to occur concurrently rather than consecutively
- Improves coordination among federal, state, and local agencies involved in the reviews

To access the video of Wednesday's Committee mark-up of the Amtrak reauthorization bill (and other measures), please [CLICK HERE](#).

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