

**WASHINGTON, DC** –Today Congressman Joe Courtney, along with Sens. Joe Lieberman and Richard Blumenthal, sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood in support of New England Gateway’s TIGER III grant application to improve and modernize freight lines. If secured, the grant would fund critical freight rail infrastructure improvements along the New England Central Railroad Corridor (NECR), which extends from New London, CT, to Montreal.

Congressman Courtney has been a strong supporter of this project. Last month, in a phone call with Governor Dannel Malloy, Courtney stressed the positive economic impact of the project on eastern Connecticut. Immediately after, Connecticut co-sponsored the multi-state application.

“Currently, the NECR serves 77 rail freight customers and annually handles 38,000 carloads of freight; a total that already keeps 133,000 trucks off of New England highways every year,” the letter says. “Upon this project’s completion, NECR’s yearly freight total is anticipated to increase by almost 40 percent to 52,633 carloads.”

The letter also stresses that the project would “encourage and sustain long-term economic activity in economically distressed regions along the corridor by connecting major ports, expanding opportunities for businesses, and creating local jobs.”

The full text of the letter is below:

November 9, 2011

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

It is our pleasure to write in support of the application submitted by New England Gateway for funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation's TIGER III grant program. This project, which is sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Transportation and supported by both the Connecticut and Massachusetts Departments of Transportation, will fund critical freight rail infrastructure improvements along the 325-mile New England Central Railroad corridor.

The New England Central Railroad (NECR), which extends from New London, Connecticut to Montreal, Canada, connects all four of the major Class I railroads operating in eastern North America (CN, CPRS, CSXT, and NS). However, the NECR does not meet the current freight rail standard of 286,000 lb. as established in 1995 by the Association for American Railroads. Due to the weight restrictions, the NECR is unable to accommodate many contemporary freight cars loaded to their full capacity. Without modernizations, the NECR will be forced to confront the prospect of declining and diverted shipping traffic; an outcome that would limit the economic growth of NECR's customers and neighboring communities. TIGER III funding will upgrade the Central Corridor rail system to accommodate 286,000 lb freight railcars, and in the process, will ensure local businesses are not hindered by avoidable shipping restrictions.

In addition to restoring and upgrading NECR's existing infrastructure to a state of good repair, this project will provide significant long-term local and regional benefits by reducing vehicular congestion along key interstate routes such as I-95, I-91, and I-89. Currently, the NECR serves 77 rail freight customers and annually handles 38,000 carloads of freight; a total that already keeps 133,000 trucks off of New England highways every year. Improved load carrying capacity, speed, safety, and reliability will further encourage companies to view the NECR as a viable and elite shipping option. Upon this project's completion, NECR's yearly freight total is anticipated to increase by almost 40% to 52,633 carloads.

TIGER III funding will also encourage and sustain long-term economic activity in economically distressed regions along the corridor by connecting major ports, expanding opportunities for businesses, and creating local jobs. In addition to 565 short term construction jobs, the project could generate hundreds of jobs in manufacturing and warehousing services, a process that will foster the redevelopment of local brownfields and vacant manufacturing facilities. The project enjoys strong support from a broad array of stakeholders, including local communities along the corridor, state DOTs, as well as current and potential customers along the line.

New England Gateway's TIGER III proposal, which will receive a 20% private match from NECR, is a key step in preserving the functionality of Connecticut's railroads. We support the

proposal set forth by New England Gateway and respectfully request that their application for funding receive full and fair consideration. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Lieberman  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

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