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Joe Courtney  
Congress of the United States  
2nd District, Connecticut

June 23, 2021

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Mr. William J. Flynn  
Chief Executive Officer  
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Mr. Stephen J. Gardner  
President  
Amtrak Headquarters  
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Dear Mr. Flynn and Mr. Gardner:

Connecticut's Shore Line East rail service operates in Connecticut's Northeast Corridor along with Amtrak's Northeast Regional and Acela services. Because Shore Line East, Amtrak Northeast Regional, and Acela trains all serve passengers riding between New London and New Haven, CT, Shore Line East monthly pass and multi-ride ticket holders had been able to use their passes on certain Northeast Regional and Acela trains to fill in gaps in Shore Line East service and ensure that commuters can get to work on time. Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Amtrak stopped cross-honoring Shore Line East passes, and has made no information public to Congressional offices nor the State Department of Transportation on when Amtrak will resume cross-honoring these passes.

Previously, the State of Connecticut had reimbursed Amtrak for certain costs associated with Shore Line East passholders riding Amtrak trains. The cross-honor agreement had reimbursed Amtrak on a per-trip basis. Additionally, in 2014, former Governor Dannel Malloy and former Commissioner James Redeker announced that Amtrak had reversed a decision to stop cross-honoring Shore Line East trains on certain Amtrak trains, and that Amtrak would continue to allow Shore Line East multi-ride customers to cross honor on certain Amtrak trains as of November 10, 2014.

As you know, beginning in March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted rail service throughout our nation and resulted in dramatically reduced ridership. Although the Shore Line East service is funded by the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Amtrak owns and controls the Northeast Corridor east of New Haven and operates the service.

In June of 2020, the Shore Line East website announced that Amtrak cross-honoring of Shore Line East Multi-Ride tickets would be suspended until further notice. I understand this partly stems from the lack of Amtrak trains currently running which had previously been included in the cross-honoring program. I firmly believe that alternative cross-honoring arrangements could

meet the needs of our current passengers until the full Amtrak schedule is restored.

The continued refusal of Amtrak to cross honor any Shore Line East tickets is unacceptable, particularly given the emergency COVID funding Congress provided in 2020. I understand that Amtrak is also struggling with reduced passenger volume and decreased service. However, I strongly believe that if Amtrak trains have the capacity to take Shore Line East passengers, Amtrak should cross-honor those multi-ride tickets and allow passengers to ride to their destination. My constituents have contacted me with significant concerns about how they will go back into work without additional transit opportunities. Many employers have requested that workers come back in person, yet transit opportunities are still lacking. Refusal to cross-honor Shore Line East passes has exacerbated this problem.

As you may recall, Congress provided Amtrak with \$1.7 billion from the American Rescue Plan for Amtrak to recall and pay employees furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic through the end of the 2021 fiscal year, and to restore daily long-distance service. Of the \$1.7 billion provided from the American Rescue Plan, Amtrak was specifically provided with \$970 million for the Northeast Corridor.

Please advise as soon as possible what Amtrak will do to restore full service along the Northeast Corridor in Connecticut and how Amtrak will plan to resume cross-honoring of Shore Line East multi-ride commuter passes. Given our shared support of increasing ridership, helping our economy to recover, and keeping cars off of busy interstates, I believe that a resolution here will be a significant victory for our State, region, and country, and will demonstrate to the public that COVID-19 relief funds from the federal government are being put to good use.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

  
JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress

CC:

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