

AMTRAK

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Stephen J. Gardner
President



July 16, 2021

The Honorable Joe Courtney
Member of Congress
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Courtney:

Thank you for your letter to Mr. Flynn and me of June 23, regarding resumption of cross-honoring of Shore Line East (SLE) tickets on Amtrak trains. We both appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Amtrak and ConnDOT are working closely to find a solution to this issue as we recognize the value of this arrangement for the riding public. The SLE service operates primarily on track owned by Amtrak, and Amtrak provides both train crews and mechanical services for this state DOT-funded service. ConnDOT is currently exploring an SLE service expansion, which is expected to begin later this summer. This expansion is expected to return SLE service to nearly pre-pandemic levels, resulting in more frequent peak-hour and off-peak service, which would address the primary complaints we have heard from the SLE riders.

In the past, Amtrak has been able to offer a cross-honoring option for SLE passengers on select trains, where excess seating was available and Amtrak trains were operating at times that could supplement SLE commuter train schedules. However, some key factors have changed during the pandemic, complicating this former arrangement. For example, Amtrak is currently operating on a reduced schedule, as compared to our pre-pandemic operations, and the *Regional* trains we are operating are made up of fewer cars, and thus have fewer available seats. Although we hope to increase our service levels, we are currently assessing available capacity, and changes in intercity passenger demand, and have not yet determined when we will be able to add additional seats.

A second factor that has arisen during the COVID pandemic is the need to avoid public health risks that are caused by physical overcrowding of trains. To address this concern, we are reviewing options to ensure that train capacity limits are observed and cross-honor customers only board trains where there are open seats available. We believe that this is an important aspect of keeping rail travel safe for all customers. We will work through the processes and procedures necessary to implement this public health protection measure with ConnDOT and will ensure that it is implemented in a safe and effective manner. Assuming a favorable outcome of these discussions, our goal is to implement this revised arrangement no later than September. Tom Moritz, AVP of Infrastructure, Access, and Investment will work with our



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ConnDOT partners through the details. We are committed to continuing work with ConnDOT to provide more options to Connecticut travelers, both through additional Amtrak service as well as the introduction of more frequencies on the SLE.

I would be pleased to arrange a more detailed briefing about these issues in a few weeks, if you feel that would be of value to you or your staff. I would suggest that we also have the relevant ConnDOT staff present at such a meeting so we could further discuss this situation, Amtrak's plans, and additional opportunities for collaboration with ConnDOT. Again, we appreciate your attention to this important matter, and we appreciate your stalwart support of Amtrak in Congress. I am confident that Amtrak will be able to work closely with ConnDOT to establish the right conditions under which this arrangement can be resumed. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any further questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Gardner".

Stephen J. Gardner

President

cc: The Honorable Joe Giulietti
William J. Flynn
Tom Moritz
Bruno Maestri
Portia Boone
Jane Brophy