Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Ronald Batory
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: FY20 Fed-State Partnership Grant Application: Amtrak's Connecticut River Bridge Replacement

Dear Administrator Batory:

We write to express our strong support for the application submitted by Amtrak (Lead Applicant) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation's (CTDOT as a Joint Applicant) under the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) FY20 Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair ("Partnership") program. The Partnership grants fund capital projects to repair, replace, or rehabilitate Qualified Railroad Assets to reduce the State of Good Repair (SOGR) backlog and improve Intercity Passenger Rail performance.

The proposed project would replace the Connecticut River Bridge between Old Saybrook and Old Lyme, CT, that carries Amtrak and Shore Line East trains. Completed in 1907, it is the oldest movable bridge between New Haven, CT, and Boston, MA. The bridge has a movable span that is raised up to allow boats to pass. By law, the bridge must remain open from May through September for recreational boats to pass, closing only when trains approach. The project would replace the Connecticut River Bridge with a new design along a new alignment parallel to the south of the existing bridge that improves reliability and offers higher speeds for Amtrak and CTDOT's Shore Line East trains.

A century of operation in a marine environment, coupled with the age of the structure, has taken its toll, restricting speeds to 45 mph. Many key elements of the bridge have reached the end of their design life and require extensive maintenance to remain in operable condition. The frequent opening and closing of the bridge – over 3,000 times per year – puts high demands on its aging components, increasing maintenance costs for Amtrak and reducing reliability for both railway and marine traffic.

The Connecticut River Bridge Replacement Project will address reliability and long-term serviceability of this aging piece of rail infrastructure, ensuring continued passenger and freight rail operations along the Northeast Corridor.

We support Amtrak and the Connecticut Department of Transportation's application under the Federal Railroad Administration's FY20 Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair program.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress