

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to express our strong support for the application submitted by Amtrak and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) under the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program for the Norwalk Bridge (Walk Bridge) replacement project along the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and Metro North Railroad's New Haven Line. The joint application seeks funding to fill the Project's final funding gap for Amtrak's share of the project in accordance with the Northeast Corridor Commuter and Intercity Rail Cost Allocation Policy.

The Walk Bridge is a four-track railroad bridge that crosses the Norwalk River, connecting South and East Norwalk, Connecticut. Built in 1896, it is one of the oldest movable bridges in the region. Replacing the 564-foot long swing bridge is a top transportation and economic priority of the State of Connecticut and the entire Northeast region as it provides a critical connection for 175 trains and 125,000 riders each day along the busiest rail corridor in the nation, the NEC, connecting Boston, New York, and Washington D.C.

Unfortunately, the Walk Bridge has outlived its intended lifespan and has experienced repeated operational failures in recent years. It is vulnerable to damage from storm surges and high winds, and requires replacement. In 2014, the Commissioner of CTDOT signed an emergency declaration for the bridge project due to operational failures that resulted in major disruptions to the railroad. CTDOT and Amtrak are committed to replacing this vital component of the NEC and have identified the bridge as a priority major backlog project in the Northeast Corridor Capital Investment Plan 2019-2023 Version, which could begin construction quickly upon full funding.

These federal funds will complement a significant investment by CTDOT, as well as a nearly \$30 million FY 2019 FRA State of Good Repair Program award. Together these funds will allow for the replacement of the existing swing bridge with two independent movable spans that allow two tracks to remain in use at times when the other span or its tracks require servicing. The new resilient and sustainable structure will be able to withstand extreme weather events such

as storm surges and high winds. Ancillary benefits of the project include improved safety and reliability, savings in annual maintenance costs, and increased capacity along the NEC as the new bridge would lift existing speed restrictions.

We strongly encourage you to consider this meritorious project for funding through the FY 2020 FRA State of Good Repair Program. Your agency's time and consideration of this proposal is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate

/s/ Jim Himes

JIM HIMES
Member of Congress