

**TESTIMONY**

**OF**

**RAYMOND V. LANG  
SENIOR DIRECTOR-NATIONAL STATE RELATIONS  
AMTRAK  
525 W. VAN BUREN STREET, CHICAGO, IL 60607**

**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES AND  
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

**OF THE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2009  
10:00 A.M.**

**U.S. FEDERAL DISTRICT COURTHOUSE  
700 GRANT STREET  
PITTSBURGH, PA 15219**

Good morning, and thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before your Committee today. My name is Ray Lang, and I am the Senior Director for Government Affairs at Amtrak; I have been with Amtrak for fourteen years, and I manage our outreach and liaison program for all states and local governments. As you know, recent legislation such as the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (or “PRIIA”) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (or “ARRA”) have established a number of very specific requirements for studies of potential service improvements, as well as a grant program that is meant to fund partnerships between states and Amtrak for the same purpose.

Amtrak and Pennsylvania have a significant and enduring partnership that spans the entire 38 year history of Amtrak. We operate approximately 120 daily trains through Pennsylvania. We employ 2,539 Pennsylvania residents, and the company spent \$110 million for goods and services in Pennsylvania last year. As Pennsylvania was the Keystone State of the colonies, it has now become the keystone of Amtrak’s busy Northeast Corridor service. This partnership has provided other states a model for the translation of rail service from concept to reality. We have long enjoyed a strong relationship, and I want to thank Secretary Biehler and Toby Fauver for the work the state has done in holding up its end of the partnership.

That’s a good foundation for future opportunities in Pennsylvania, because PRIIA envisions a strategy built on partnerships. Amtrak and the states will work together to develop short distance corridor services ranging from about 100 to 600 miles in length. One very successful partnership of the kind the act envisions took place here in Pennsylvania, and that was the restoration of electrified service to our Keystone Corridor between Philadelphia and Harrisburg. Under the

leadership of Governor Ed Rendell and Amtrak President David L. Gunn, the state partnered with Amtrak to invest \$145 million; each put up half of the total. We restored the electrification west of Paoli and improved the track for 110 mph service. As a result, we were able to offer faster and more frequent service. The results have been exciting. Ridership grew by 20.1% in FY 2007 and by 19.8% in FY 2008 – a striking demonstration of the relevance of rail. Higher speeds and the elimination of the engine change at Philadelphia cut schedule times and made our trains competitive with airline service. The Keystone Corridor is a major triumph, and it's a model we would like to emulate, and potentially, to extend.

I believe this success has influenced the legislation, and Section 224 of PRIIA mandates studies on the costs and benefits of service on six routes specified in the Act. Two of those studies touch on existing routes in Western Pennsylvania, and will be of interest in the context of today's hearing. One study will examine the Harrisburg to Pittsburgh route, currently served by the daily *Pennsylvanian*. The statute requires a report "to determine whether to increase frequency of passenger rail service along the route or along segments of the route." The other requires a study of the *Capitol Limited* route between Cumberland, Maryland and Pittsburgh to determine whether we should reinstate a station stop at Rockwood, Pennsylvania. These reports are due to the Committee on October 16, 2009. We have solicited proposals for the study, and we expect to make the award around July 1<sup>st</sup>. We are moving forward and expect to meet the deadline.

These are only two of many activities Amtrak will be undertaking this summer. We are currently going all out on some major development projects, directed by both PRIIA and ARRA, so it might be useful if I summarize these developments. We are, for example, undertaking 6

PRIIA-mandated studies of routes and services (2 of which I mentioned previously), and we have received requests for involvement with 283 projects in 34 states for projects to be funded by ARRA – though states will now be studying the FRA guidance that came out last week, and taking a hard look at what they really want.

Last year, when George Bush signed PRIIA into law, it established a Federal capital grant program for states that wished to develop intercity passenger rail service. When Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009, that act included \$8 billion in funding for the capital grant program authorized in PRIIA. This legislation is critical to shaping the continued development of intercity passenger rail. For example, ARRA funds will be available for individual projects, generally small projects that are expected to provide discrete levels of benefit to an existing route; they will also be available for ‘corridor programs,’ which will be larger bundles of projects that are expected to provide for improved passenger service over whole corridors. While PRIIA does provide access to capital funding, operating funds are a state responsibility – so if, for example, the state wishes to pursue an expansion of the Harrisburg to Pittsburgh service, state operating funding will be a precondition for Federal capital funding. The freight railroads will also be central to any discussion – Norfolk Southern, for example, owns much of the trackage that’s used for our current Harrisburg-Pittsburgh service.

Amtrak is eager to support ARRA applications, and I think as a service provider we’re capable of supporting a range of visions. Projects could range from startup corridors to expansion of mature services, with top speeds ranging from 79 to 110 up to 150 miles per hour. We have the expertise and we can discuss our experience and the developmental needs of any of these types

of projects with any interested state – and we are willing and eager to partner for service development. For this service to work, and for the investments to be attractive, we must be able to show demonstrable results. These could include such public benefits as decreased congestion, greater modal share, and significant increases in ridership. Projects that can demonstrate these benefits will be eligible for funding. There are a lot of people looking to fund projects, but we will be looking for the ones that confer the serious benefits PRIIA demands.

This is a huge challenge, but for Amtrak, it's the opportunity of our lifetime. We have a real chance to pursue some great opportunities for development of useful and economically viable routes in partnership with the states, and to do so within the context of a public policy that has done a great deal to “level the playing field” and remove some of the disadvantages under which rail has traditionally labored. I believe we are going to help our country address some very real needs, and I am pleased and excited to be at Amtrak right now. I look forward to working with you in the coming months as we move forward, and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.