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*Vice Chair*

David M. Simon, P.E., Wisconsin

*Financial Officer*

Rep. Sharon Negele, Indiana

*Director*

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*Bringing Together  
State Leaders from  
Across the Region  
to Advocate  
for Passenger Rail  
Improvements*

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission is an eight-state interstate compact commission that promotes, coordinates and supports regional improvements to passenger rail service. Our member states include Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

To: U.S. Senators from the Midwest

From: Bob Guy, Chair; David M. Simon, Vice Chair; and Indiana Rep. Sharon Negele, Financial Officer, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission

Re: Emergency Funding for Amtrak due to COVID-19

Date: March 21, 2020

*Transmitted via Email*

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) is a compact among Midwestern states to promote, coordinate and support passenger rail development in our region. **We are writing today to urgently ask you to support Amtrak's request for \$1 billion in emergency funding for this fiscal year – including \$200 million to offset state losses – and include it in the stimulus bill currently being negotiated.**

Passenger rail is an increasingly important mode of transportation to our region. **Ridership on the Midwest's state-supported corridor services rose 14 percent over the ten years from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009 to FFY 2019, and ridership on the region's long-distance trains rose five percent in the same period.**

**Now, due to the COVID-19 crisis, many of our states that financially support Amtrak routes are witnessing ridership reductions of more than 50 percent.** In our region, we have had to significantly cut – and for some routes, temporarily suspend entirely – our current corridor service. Given that Amtrak relies upon ridership fares to cover much of its operating costs, it is inevitable that service will be additionally drastically reduced, including state-supported and long-distance passenger rail services. Eight long-distance routes serve the Midwest, all originating out of the nation's largest rail hub, Chicago. Altogether, these routes have 80 station stops across the Midwest, many of them in rural communities not served by other forms of intercity transportation.

While Amtrak and the states are working together to adjust services to maximize safety and offset costs, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, losses for Amtrak service systemwide are currently projected to reach \$1 billion this year.

Without Congressional help, the following outcomes are likely:

- Layoffs;
- Even more drastic service reductions and suspensions; and
- A post-pandemic Amtrak that looks very different from the Amtrak we know today.

In order to continue as a viable part of our nation's transportation system, it is imperative that the passenger rail network receive emergency federal financial support during FFY 2020.

Thank you in advance for supporting the inclusion of \$1 billion in emergency funding for Amtrak. We also ask you to support the American Public Transit Association's request of \$16 billion for public transit to offset the direct costs and revenue losses from COVID-19 in FFY 2020. This will allow public transit agencies to cover the direct costs of increased cleaning and disinfecting equipment and facilities, farebox revenue losses, decline in funding from dedicated sales tax revenue, and anticipated restart costs.

Please do not hesitate to contact Laura Kliewer, MIPRC's director ([lkiewer@miprc.org](mailto:lkiewer@miprc.org) or 630.282.3066) if we can provide any further information to advance this important request. Thank you!