



June 21, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

Last week the United States Conference of Mayors met in Madison, Wisconsin for our Annual Meeting in which the nation's mayors overwhelmingly approved a resolution in support of Amtrak as the nation's passenger rail operator and urged you to approve Amtrak's \$200 million loan guarantee request that ensures uninterrupted passenger rail service through our nation's summer vacation season.

Furthermore, the United States Conference of Mayors asks that you reconsider the national passenger rail policy positions released by Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta on Thursday, June 20, that:

- Rejects increased federal spending beyond the \$521 million proposed in your FY 2003 Budget even though Department of Transportation Inspector General Kenneth M. Mead has said that \$521 million would allow Amtrak to do little more than shut down,
- Eliminates federal operating subsidies for passenger trains,
- Calls on states to pay a large share of passenger train costs,
- States that Amtrak's Northeast Corridor operation should be spun off to a "partnership" of states and corridor users; and
- Proposes that some Amtrak routes and services should be contracted out or eliminated.

We strongly oppose privatizing passenger rail as your proposal outlines and the Amtrak Reform Council has suggested. This proposal is exactly the reason Amtrak was created in the first place. Amtrak was created when bankrupt private companies could not make a profit on passenger trains and, by the late 1960s, were petitioning the government to discontinue passenger services because of losses. Mayors in Great Britain, where the passenger rail system was privatized, have told us bluntly that the move was a disaster.

The tragic events of September 11 have forced our constituents to evaluate viable alternatives to driving and flying, and Amtrak was there when many of our citizens needed it. It is clear that a national system of short and long distance passenger trains is a real alternative, but is dependent on meaningful and

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sustained federal investment. No comparable national passenger rail system in the world has succeeded without operating subsidies; certainly no system has ever succeeded without substantial public capital investment.

Mayors are on the front lines of America's growing transportation crisis and we recognize the immediate importance of a national passenger rail system. As the nation has seen in the last eight months, a national passenger rail system is more urgent now than ever before.

The mayors of this nation strongly believe that the time has come to focus on the development of a balanced, multi-modal and secure national transportation network that includes sustained and significant federal investment in the national passenger rail system with Amtrak as the operator.

With strong backing from mayors across the nation, we stand ready to work with you and Congress on this urgent national policy issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas M. Menino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "M".

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston
President
U.S. Conference of Mayors