



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

June 25, 2014

Ms. Therese W. McMillan
Acting Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
East Building
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Federal Transit Administration Sandy Resilience Projects

Dear Ms. McMillan:

Despite covering only 2% of the nation's total land area, the Northeastern United States is home to 17% of the country's population and accounts for 20% of its gross domestic product. With such a high concentration of people and productivity, it is perhaps no surprise that the region is served by the single busiest passenger rail corridor in the nation, the Connecticut section of the New Haven Line (NHL).

Nearly 140 Metro-North Railroad (MNR) and Amtrak trains operate daily on the New Haven Line, which connects South Central Connecticut to New York City and to all points in between. The NHL forms a critical segment of the Northeast Corridor railway and also connects to the Shore Line East railroad, providing further commuter rail service and light freight traffic. In the near future, plans call for connection of the NHL to an expanded rail service stretching north from New Haven, Connecticut to Springfield, Massachusetts.

As members of the Connecticut General Assembly, we are very concerned about the rapidly deteriorating infrastructure of the NHL. The increasing frequency of severe weather events in our state, in the Northeast and all along the Eastern Seaboard raises the specter of serious damage to the NHL and long term service disruptions in the event of a major hurricane or even a lesser event.

Ms. Therese McMillan
June 25, 2014
Page 2

In particular, the NHL is in urgent need of federal assistance for three key projects along the line, which we respectfully recommend for your consideration: replacement of the line's Walk Bridge in Norwalk, Connecticut; power upgrades at the New Haven Rail Yard (NHR Y); and replacement of low-elevation signaling equipment on the NHL.

We hope you will look favorably on the applications relating to these projects submitted by Governor Dannel P. Malloy in response to the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) notice of funding availability for resilience projects in response to Hurricane Sandy.

The NHL's Walk Bridge is a swing bridge built more than a century ago. It was designed to carry NHL traffic over the Norwalk River and to open to allow passage of water traffic. In the last two months alone, the bridge has become stuck in its open position, causing major service disruptions all along the NHL. Over the course of 2013 alone, the bridge experienced a total of 16 malfunctions. The structure is in need of total replacement, and an inundation in its current condition could cause a failure that would disrupt NHL service for weeks, if not months.

The New Haven Rail Yard lies at the eastern terminus of the NHL. Maintenance and other services performed there are essential to the proper operation of the entire NHL. Aerial cables which feed power to the yard are currently unprotected from heavy winds and floating debris. In addition, if a car were to crash into a utility pole line on adjoining Brewery Street, electric service to the yard could be disrupted.

Finally, possible flooding of key components of the NHL's signaling system poses a serious risk of catastrophic train collisions. Three control points along the line have central instrument locations placed at very low elevations which could flood under severe conditions. This would result in a failure of the control points and mechanisms which control train movement and ensure safe distances between trains.

More than 125,000 passengers ride the New Haven Line daily. As the backbone of Southwestern Connecticut's economy and a major support of the entire Northeast, the reliable operation of the New Haven Line is of the highest importance to our region, our state and each of our local communities. Federal support for these urgent repair projects is essential.

As the United States continues to encourage the use and development of mass transit alternatives to passenger cars, the proper operation of the country's largest passenger railroad can and should be a point of national pride. We hope you will look favorably on our state's applications for assistance in increasing the resiliency of this vital piece of infrastructure.

Ms. Therese McMillan
June 25, 2014
Page 3

Sincerely,

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Ms. Therese McMillan
June 25, 2014
Page 4

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Ms. Therese McMillan
June 25, 2014
Page 5

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Ms. Therese McMillan
June 25, 2014
Page 6

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Ms. Therese McMillan
June 25, 2014
Page 7

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Ms. Therese McMillan
June 25, 2014
Page 8

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