

Proposed Policy Resolution PPR-14AM-04
Title: Passenger Rail Reauthorization

WHEREAS, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives reported to the full chamber legislation relating to improving passenger rail transportation across the United States; and

WHEREAS, in FY2014 forty-eight percent of Amtrak ridership was on state-supported rail corridors, and this legislation sought to ensure that states had a greater role in decisions affecting these routes; and

WHEREAS, continuing a strong federal-state partnership is essential to delivering many passenger rail services; and

WHEREAS, greater transparency in Amtrak accounting and providing states information to assist Amtrak in reducing costs and making data-driven decisions are key elements to growing and improving passenger rail service; and

WHEREAS, the authorization and appropriation of a State-Supported Route Advisory Committee would be beneficial in managing the application of Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008; and

WHEREAS, it is also essential to maintain Federal financial support sufficient to enable the operation of the long distance passenger train network at least at current levels, which would help ensure that many states and regions are connected to the rail and transportation system and maintain a national passenger rail network; and

WHEREAS, streamlining environmental reviews and accelerating project delivery will promote consistency across U.S. Department of Transportation's modal administrations to ensure that rail projects continue to advance and investment is made in a timely manner to develop service options that will boost economic development and job formation; and

WHEREAS, providing states the eligibility for passenger rail grant funding to invest in planning and capital infrastructure improvements that will help to improve safety and on-time performance, increase frequency and reliability, and provide a program of projects that will continue to advance intercity passenger rail in the Northeast Corridor, State Supported Routes and long distance service; and

WHEREAS, the reauthorization of the Next Generation Equipment Committee (NGEC), Section 305 of PRIIA 2008, a partnership between states, Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration, and industry, has developed standard sets of equipment specifications necessary for passenger rail equipment; and

WHEREAS, the need for continued funding to the National Cooperative Rail Research Program (NCRRP), which is administered by the Transportation Research Board (TRB), is important to maintain problem solving efforts on issues impacting intermodal operations, technologies, and other areas; and

WHEREAS, the federal government should fund the state of good repair needs on all of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the initiatives for partnership funding authorization along with Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) should expand to allow all states that seek to make improvements in their passenger rail service to continue; and

WHEREAS, AASHTO supports the goals for station development at Amtrak owned stations, local and privately owned stations and to develop public private partnerships to generate revenue that can support passenger rail operations; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that AASHTO looks forward to working with the leadership and members of both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives as they advance passenger rail legislation.