
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 918 Session of
2020

INTRODUCED BY HENNESSEY, LAWRENCE, SCHMITT, STEPHENS, JONES,
MENTZER, PYLE, CIRESI, KORTZ AND DELLOSO, JUNE 23, 2020

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, JUNE 23, 2020

A RESOLUTION

1 Requesting the United States Department of Transportation
2 relinquish to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania the ownership
3 of the Philadelphia to Harrisburg railroad line, the former
4 Pennsylvania Railroad Main Line now known as the "Harrisburg
5 Line," currently utilized by the National Railroad Passenger
6 Corporation (Amtrak) and the Southeastern Pennsylvania
7 Transportation Authority (SEPTA) for passenger rail
8 operations.

9 WHEREAS, The United States Department of Transportation
10 (USDOT) essentially obtained ownership of the Philadelphia to
11 Harrisburg former Pennsylvania Railroad Main Line (the
12 Harrisburg Line) as the result of the passage of Railroad
13 Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-
14 210, 90 Stat. 31), enacted February 5, 1976, often called the
15 "4R Act"; and

16 WHEREAS, The 4R Act established the basic outlines of
17 regulatory reform in the railroad industry and provided
18 transitional operating funds following the 1970 bankruptcy of
19 Penn Central Transportation Company; and

20 WHEREAS, The 4R Act approved the "Final System Plan" for the
21 newly created Consolidated Rail Corporation and authorized

1 acquisition of NEC and the Harrisburg Line tracks and facilities
2 by Amtrak; and

3 WHEREAS, The USDOT provided more than \$85 million (1976
4 dollars) in financing to Amtrak to allow it to acquire those
5 portions of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and the Harrisburg
6 Line; and

7 WHEREAS, The USDOT was granted a mortgage in consideration of
8 the money it advanced to Amtrak; and

9 WHEREAS, The USDOT exercises oversight and control of Amtrak;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, Even though Amtrak currently controls the Harrisburg
12 Line and uses its own equipment and staff for the passenger rail
13 services that they offer on that piece of railroad, the
14 Commonwealth subsidizes that line and every single passenger
15 train operating over that line; and

16 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth annually pays Amtrak for the
17 Harrisburg Line under the Passenger Rail Investment and
18 Improvement Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-432, Div. B, October 16,
19 2008, 122 Stat. 4907); and

20 WHEREAS, Amtrak's "Keystone Service," which runs from
21 Harrisburg - Philadelphia - New York, operates 26 weekday
22 trains, 13 in each direction; and

23 WHEREAS, Amtrak also operates a separate service called the
24 "Pennsylvanian," which runs from New York - Philadelphia -
25 Pittsburgh twice daily, one train in each direction; and

26 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth pays Amtrak \$16.3 million annually
27 for the Keystone Service and Pennsylvanian passenger rail
28 service; and

29 WHEREAS, In addition to these direct payments by the
30 Commonwealth, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation

1 Authority (SEPTA) also pays Amtrak \$41 million per year for its
2 use of the Harrisburg Line to operate SEPTA's Paoli-Thorndale
3 Line; and

4 WHEREAS, Since the Commonwealth subsidizes SEPTA to ensure
5 that mass transit is provided to its residents, the Commonwealth
6 is actually appropriating more money for an asset it does not
7 own or control; and

8 WHEREAS, In addition to the annual service payments for the
9 Keystone Service and the Pennsylvanian, the Commonwealth has
10 invested approximately \$216 million in capital for
11 infrastructure on the Harrisburg Line since 1999; and

12 WHEREAS, Like the Commonwealth, SEPTA has invested
13 approximately \$20 million in infrastructure on the Harrisburg
14 Line; and

15 WHEREAS, These payments to Amtrak from the Commonwealth and
16 SEPTA total more than \$263 million; and

17 WHEREAS, Since the Commonwealth contributes hundreds of
18 millions of dollars to the maintenance and improvements of the
19 Harrisburg Line, the Commonwealth has demonstrated its long-term
20 interest in offering its residents quality passenger rail
21 services; and

22 WHEREAS, The House of Representatives believes that it can
23 offer increased frequencies of a rail service at an equal or
24 lower cost to its residents than currently is available; and

25 WHEREAS, The House of Representatives believes that it can
26 also offer residents other passenger rail service options that
27 are not currently possible with Amtrak controlling the
28 Harrisburg Line; therefore be it

29 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives request that the
30 United States Department of Transportation relinquish to the

1 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania the ownership of the Philadelphia
2 to Harrisburg railroad line, the former Pennsylvania Railroad
3 Main Line now known as the "Harrisburg Line," currently utilized
4 by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and the
5 Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) for
6 passenger rail operations; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the United States Department of Transportation
8 permit the Department of Transportation to facilitate the
9 ownership and operation of passenger rail service on the
10 Harrisburg Line.