

Testimony before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Committee on Transportation

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November 6, 2009

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Chairman Markosek and distinguished Members of the Committee -- Thank you for the opportunity to share my views on high speed rail and its potential for Pennsylvania. I regret that my official duties preclude me from attending today's hearing. Let me also take this opportunity to specifically thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership on this issue.

Development of an efficient and reliable passenger rail system across the Commonwealth is one of my top transportation priorities. That is one of the reasons that I was proud to support the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This legislation represents the first real commitment to the development of a nationwide high speed rail system. The \$8 billion provided in this legislation is a good first start, but we all know that we are going to need to sustain the federal commitment and foster a strong partnership with the states if the vision of a high speed passenger rail network is to come to fruition. I am confident that the Obama Administration's commitment to this vision is firm, and I look forward to working with the President to further develop this policy.

As the Committee may know, Congress will soon finalize the bill that will fund our nation's transportation programs for fiscal 2010, and I remain hopeful that this bill will include additional funding for high speed rail. When the Senate begins consideration of the bill that will reauthorize federal surface transportation programs for the next several years, I am confident that we will strengthen this commitment even further.

Part of the reason I strongly support the development of a high speed rail network is because Pennsylvania is well-positioned to reap the benefits of such a system. Communities across the Commonwealth have strenuously advocated for rail projects that will encourage economic growth and improve the quality of life for area residents. In addition to the economic development opportunities that these

projects will open, the environmental benefits of high speed passenger rail are beyond dispute.

As community leaders and local officials move forward with passenger rail initiatives, I stand ready to support their efforts. Since coming to the Senate, I have been strongly supportive of several passenger rail projects. Specifically I have been strongly involved with

- establishing a magnetic levitation line between the Pittsburgh International Airport, which was just awarded \$28 million in federal funding.
- improving rail infrastructure on the existing Amtrak line connecting Pittsburgh to Harrisburg; For the record, I strongly believe that we need to find an effective way to connect this line to State College.
- ensuring that passenger rail service connecting Cleveland to Buffalo via Erie is included in our nation's high speed rail network,
- improving Keystone Corridor rail service connecting Harrisburg to Lancaster and onto Philadelphia and beyond,
- In my home county of Lackawanna, I have been strongly engaged in the effort to restore passenger rail service between Scranton and the New York metropolitan area
- And I continue to work with advocates of other projects in the Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia suburbs.

While I have the opportunity, I'd like to make clear to the committee that I'm committed to working with you on these and other projects.

In my view, we need to take a "multi-modal" approach to our nation's transportation policy. That means that we need to better understand how our highway programs integrate with our nation's transit, rail, and aviation policies. We need to focus on the most effective way to reduce congestion and improve the ability of our citizens to move from point A to point B. Congestion is not only frustrating for commuters; it also brings with it significant economic costs in the form of lost time and wasted fuel. We also need to be conscious of the *environmental* consequences of congestion that result from increased carbon

emissions. Improving our transportation system is a national imperative that is vital to our economic health, and the federal government needs to forge a strong partnership with the states in order to address our transportation needs. Simply stated, we need to increase the transportation options available to commuters and strengthen the connectivity of the various modes of transportation. High speed rail is an important part of our transportation puzzle.

Creating a high speed rail system is not without its challenges. I think that we all have to be honest about the costs involved, particularly in an era of national deficits and strained budgets on the state level. These realities require us to identify creative ways to finance these projects and to entice the private sector to team with the public sector on key projects. The fact that we are having this conversation on a national level is a testament to the President's leadership on this issue, and I will work as your United States Senator to encourage a robust federal commitment to this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views.