



January 25, 2024

To: Senate Standing Committee on Transportation

Re: To examine the state of inter-city passenger rail in New York State

The Business Council of New York State supports the implementation of high-speed rail as it is the future of efficient and expedient travel within New York State. Currently, the only passenger train considered high speed is Amtrak's Accela train which operates in the Northeast Corridor. With a population of 19 million residents, and New York City serving as the financial center of the world as well as being among the largest populated metropolitan areas on the planet, it is a no brainer that New York must find faster and more efficient ways to travel. The Northeast, specifically New York State, is primed and ready for this initiative giving substantial ridership, the economic viability, and the state's thirst for clean and environmentally friendly ways of traveling. High speed rail would function as an alternative to the constant congestion that plagues the state offering other options other than airports and the use of crumbling highway systems to travel across the state.

The entire proposed Empire Corridor improvement program build-out is projected to take 25 years to complete after the program is fully funded and a multi-year plan is determined. As of now, there is no projected start date. A study done by Utica College's Center for Small City and Rural studies highlighted the introduction of the Acela train which netted a profit of \$220.2 million which is a profit of \$64.8 per passenger vs the slower regional train which made \$146 million, with just a profit of \$19.6 per passenger. We believe the state is missing out on an opportunity that will enhance the economic outlook of the state as well as increase profits for business across the region both big and small. With shorter trips, there will be greater reliability which would add additional trains to travel, which could only increase ridership and possibly stop the out-migration trend that's been a negative blight on New York.

Currently, the identified program improvements would focus on projects along the corridor from NYC to the Capital Region in the first five years. Improvement projects proposed for west of Schenectady would be phased in and completed over the following twenty years. It is also expected to double trips west of Albany, servicing 8 daily roundtrips (from current 4 daily round trips), with an initial new round trip starting in year ten of the program. Though we support the initiative and believe greater access west of New York is needed via high-speed rail, 25 years until completion is way too long; that time should be cut down to 15 years. We must act now and set a start date for improvements to the Empire Corridor, beginning with the construction of new rail tracks, phasing out the old system which will improve our states infrastructure. Because once the program is fully completed, it would provide an overall on-time performance and reliability of 95%, while cutting travel times significantly across the state. This would be a win-win for everyone.

Sincerely,

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