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Thomas A. Till

November 14, 2001

The Honorable George W. Bush
President
United States of America
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This letter transmits, as provided for in section 204 (a) of the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997 (Reform Act), a finding by the Amtrak Reform Council that Amtrak will not be operationally self-sufficient by December 2, 2002, as the Reform Act requires. Also provided is a companion document that sets forth the grounds for the Council's decision.

Amtrak's financial performance over the past four years has provided clear and indisputable evidence for this conclusion. Amtrak has made no significant progress toward self-sufficiency. But the problem goes much beyond financial performance.

In the Council's assessment, there are major inherent flaws and weaknesses in Amtrak's institutional design. Amtrak simply cannot conceive and implement the improvements that are needed in intercity rail passenger service in the United States. America has a critically-flawed rail passenger company. America needs a sound passenger rail program.

A growing number of states, regions, and corridors are placing increased reliance on improved intercity passenger rail service in short- to medium-haul corridors. The challenges they face as they seek to expand economical and well-planned passenger rail services are complicated by the lack of a responsible program structure at either the state or federal level. A new program must encompass effective organizations and related funding mechanisms to support both train operations and the provision of adequate infrastructure.

This is why the Council believes that the reauthorization debate for passenger rail service in the second session of the 107th Congress must be like no other such debate before it. The coming debate

AMTRAK, ROOM 7105
400 Seventh Street, SW

Washington, DC 20590

Phone: (202) 366-0591

Fax: (202) 493-2061

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must address root causes and real reforms, not simply apply more funding through an approach that has failed again and again.

The Council believes that, under a program that fosters imaginative and innovative approaches, intercity passenger rail transportation can and should play a larger and growing role in selected corridors.

The plan (“an action plan for a restructured and rationalized national intercity rail passenger system”) that the Council sends to the Congress within 90 days, as called for by the Reform Act, will provide the Council’s recommendations for the needed reforms.

Very truly yours,



Gilbert E. Carmichael
Chairman

Enclosures

Identical Letters to: The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings,
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
U. S. Senate

The Honorable Don Young
Chairman
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
U. S. House of Representatives

JM-ARC, Room 7105
400 Seventh Street, SW

Phone: (202) 366-0591
Fax: (202) 493-2061

Washington, DC 20590

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