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SFY2022 MassDOT CIP Comment | Positive Train Control for the Conn River Line

1 message

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To: Ben Heckscher <benheckscher@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 9:54 AM

With this email I am requesting that MassDOT add the following project to the SFY2022 MassDOT Capital Investment Plan:

Division | Rail & Transit**Location | Conn River****Priority | 2 - Modernization****Program | Rail - Safety and resiliency****Project Description | Positive Train Control Implementation on the MassDOT-owned Conn River Line****Supporting statement —**

The 49-mile Connecticut River Main Line runs from Springfield, MA to East Northfield, MA. This rail corridor, which is today owned by MassDOT, is currently used by both Amtrak and Pan Am Railways. The Amtrak service operated on this line is the state-supported Valley Flyer service and the Vermonter service.

The Connecticut River Main Line is the only rail corridor that Amtrak operates on in Massachusetts currently that does not have the rail safety technology known as Positive Train Control (PTC) installed and in use today. Every other corridor in the Commonwealth that is used by Amtrak (the Northeast Corridor, the CSX freight corridor west of Worcester, and the Amtrak corridor south of Springfield) has PTC installed and in use today. The entire MBTA Commuter Rail network also has PTC installed and in use today.

PTC is not currently required on the Connecticut River Line north of Springfield because of the current low volume of passenger and freight trains on this line. (This exemption was granted by the Federal Railroad Administration just before the Vermonter was re-routed onto the line.)

The Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 (H.R. 133), which became law on December 27, 2020, included the following wording on page 668 (copy attached).

... at least \$50,000,000 of the amount provided under this heading shall be available for the development, installation and operation of railroad safety technology, including the implementation of a positive train control system, on State-supported routes as defined under section 24102(13) of title 49, United States Code, on which positive train control systems are not required by law or regulation."

This wording makes these funds [only] available to support the implementation of PTC on state-supported Amtrak routes, and that the only state-supported such routes without PTC are the Downeaster, the Ethan Allen Express, the Valley Flyer, and the Vermonter.

With this in mind, it seems to me that this is an ideal time for MassDOT to seek the federal funds noted above in an effort to enhance the safety along the Connecticut River Main Line, as a federally-funded investment in the future.

Regards,

Ben Heckscher
Co-founder
Trains In The Valleyweb | trainsinthevalley.org
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 BILLS-116hr133enr - page 668.pdf
25K

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR GRANTS TO THE NATIONAL RAILROAD
PASSENGER CORPORATION

To enable the Secretary of Transportation to make grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation for activities associated with the Northeast Corridor as authorized by section 11101(a) of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (division A of Public Law 114–94), \$700,000,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That the Secretary may retain up to one-half of 1 percent of the funds provided under both this heading and the “National Network Grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation” heading to fund the costs of project management and oversight of activities authorized by section 11101(c) of division A of Public Law 114–94: *Provided further*, That in addition to the project management oversight funds authorized under section 11101(c) of division A of Public Law 114–94, the Secretary may retain up to an additional \$5,000,000 of the funds provided under this heading to fund expenses associated with the Northeast Corridor Commission established under section 24905 of title 49, United States Code: *Provided further*, That of the amounts made available under this heading and the “National Network Grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation” heading, not less than \$75,000,000 shall be made available to bring Amtrak-served facilities and stations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act: *Provided further*, That of the amounts made available under this heading and the “National Network Grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation” heading, \$100,000,000 shall be made available to fund the replacement of the single-level passenger cars used on the Northeast Corridor, State-supported routes, and long-distance routes, as such terms are defined in section 24102 of title 49, United States Code.

NATIONAL NETWORK GRANTS TO THE NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER
CORPORATION

To enable the Secretary of Transportation to make grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation for activities associated with the National Network as authorized by section 11101(b) of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (division A of Public Law 114–94), \$1,300,000,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That the Secretary may retain up to an additional \$2,000,000 of the funds provided under this heading to fund expenses associated with the State-Supported Route Committee established under section 24712 of title 49, United States Code: *Provided further*, That at least \$50,000,000 of the amount provided under this heading shall be available for the development, installation and operation of railroad safety technology, including the implementation of a positive train control system, on State-supported routes as defined under section 24102(13) of title 49, United States Code, on which positive train control systems are not required by law or regulation: *Provided further*, That none of the funds provided under this heading shall be used by Amtrak to give notice under subsection (a) or (b) of section 24706 of title 49, United States Code, with respect to long-distance routes (as defined in section 24102 of title 49, United States Code) on which Amtrak is the sole operator on a host railroad's line and a positive train control system is not required by law or regulation, or, except in an emergency or during maintenance or construction outages