

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 6, 2018

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart  
Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and  
Urban Development  
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Price  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Transportation, House and  
Urban Development  
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Price:

As you work to finalize funding for the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2019, we respectfully ask that you preserve funding included in the Senate appropriations bill to maintain Amtrak train service on the long-distance Southwest Chief route.

Long-distance passenger rail provides much-needed transportation access for over four million riders in 325 communities in 40 States. We are deeply concerned that Amtrak is considering suspending operation of the Southwest Chief and is recommending a plan to replace long-distance train service along the route with bus service. The suspension of rail service along the Southwest Chief route raises serious questions as to whether long-distance passenger rail service will be eliminated in rural communities across the country.


The Southwest Chief runs daily between Chicago and Los Angeles and connects towns and cities in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. This connectivity is vital to the people and communities the Southwest Chief serves. In many cases, the line is the only affordable alternative transportation option to the highways for our citizens, and is a critical link to public and private services in larger cities along the route for rural residents. Every summer, the Southwest Chief also transports thousands of Boy Scouts from across the country to Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron, N.M., generating economic activity for businesses in these rural areas along the way.

During Senate consideration of the THUD Appropriations bill, the Senate adopted a bipartisan amendment to provide funding for maintenance and safety improvements to help maintain Amtrak train service along the Southwest Chief route. The amendment builds upon Senate adoption of a bipartisan sense of Congress emphasizing strong support for long-distance passenger rail routes like the Southwest Chief.

We believe that this amendment should be included in the final THUD Appropriations bill and look forward to working with you to make this critical investment in our rural communities. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.



MARTIN HEINRICH  
United States Senate




PAT ROBERTS  
United States Senate



JERRY MORAN  
United States Senate

Sincerely,



TOM UDALL  
United States Senate



MICHAEL F. BENNET  
United States Senate



CORY GARDNER  
United States Senate