

April 4, 2005

The Honorable Frank Lautenberg
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3002

Dear Senator Lautenberg:

This office represents the Locomotive Engineers who operate Amtrak trains in New Jersey and across the United States. On their behalf, I write you today to offer our thanks for your long standing support of Amtrak and; in particular, your March 16th vote in favor of Amtrak funding.

The thoroughly irresponsible plan of the Bush Administration to “zero out” any federal support for Amtrak will set the nation’s passenger railroad on the fast track to certain financial ruin. In a time when the U.S. should be seeking viable alternatives to foreign oil dependency with gasoline prices projected to spiral upwards of \$2.50 per gallon by summers end and already densely congested highways and airways confronting us, this ill-conceived plan is a naked attempt to impose a disastrous privatization scheme destined to fail. Beyond the litany of problems it will bring to New Jersey residents, it will strand 25 million passengers who routinely depend upon train service, damage economies of cities and states across the nation and send 22,000 railroad workers to unemployment lines.

As you well know, here in the U.S. as well as throughout the world, all forms of transportation rely on government support to some extent. However, when it comes to our national rail system, Congress has held Amtrak to an unreasonable standard since its inception in 1970. Amtrak does not need another short-sighted and equally short-lived funding cycle to keep it hobbling along on a cash-starved basis. It requires a long-term funding solution capable of bringing measurable improvement to service and operating efficiencies. If the Bush plan succeeds and becomes law, cash-strapped states across the country; and specifically here in the NEC, will be forced to pick up the cost or lose train service. Inasmuch, we respectfully ask for your continuing support and thank you for recognizing the economic and transportation needs of our state and nation.

Respectfully,

Mark B. Kenny
General Chairman

cc: D. M. Hahs
E. W. Rodzwicz
K. Michele