

April 5, 2017

Congressperson  
Title  
United States Congress  
Address 1  
Address 2  
City State Zip

Dear Congressperson:

Amtrak's long-distance trains serve vital transportation needs for the communities of northwest Ohio, southeast Michigan, and across the United States. The Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) strongly opposes the cuts to Amtrak service described in President Trump's budget proposal and urges you to maintain funding for Amtrak.

Under the president's proposal, at least 220 communities across 23 states will lose access to Amtrak altogether, leaving them with less mobility options. This loss of service will disproportionately impact rural areas, where airports and intercity bus services are not available and where demographics are increasingly low-income and aging, making access to a private vehicle more difficult and unlikely. In addition to disproportionately impacting low-income, aging, and rural populations, eliminating rail travel will also remove the most viable long-distance travel option for those with disabilities. Access to rail is vital to the economies and health of our communities.

Eliminating Amtrak's long-distance routes will impact more than just riders. Not only will President Trump's budget proposal strip Amtrak service from those communities that rely upon it, but it is also projected to eliminate tens of thousands of jobs across the nation. These are primarily working-class jobs that help to support the local economies where Amtrak routes run. Pushing more traffic to the roads will increase congestion and road deterioration as well.

In addition to severing Amtrak's direct funding, two other vital programs have been removed in President Trump's budget proposal. The TIGER grant program—a program that invests in passenger rail and transit projects—and Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" Capital Investment Program—which is crucial to launching new transit, commuter rail, and light-rail projects—are all proposed to be eliminated. These programs give communities tools to improve the quality of life, economy, and health of their residents. Elimination of these programs will tie the hands of local officials by reducing the number of programs able to fund these improvements.

In Ohio, elimination of Amtrak would generate a large gap in service for the rest of the surrounding region. Our neighboring states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, as well as the adjoining Illinois and entire northeast corridor are not expected to lose service. Cutting service to Ohio creates a significant gap in the network that would otherwise carry passengers from the northeast all the way through to Chicago. Eliminating Ohio's rail service would further economically disadvantage our state by hampering ability to

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compete with surrounding states that still have access to valued rail travel. The Toledo station carries approximately 55,000 passengers each year and is the busiest in Ohio.

In Ohio alone, Amtrak supports more than \$22 million worth of earnings to our residents, for a total of 450 jobs. Amtrak also reports purchasing more than \$23 million in goods and services from the Ohio economy in 2015. Nearly half of Amtrak riders through Ohio (49%) are tourists, adding value to the local economy and sales tax base that would not exist otherwise. These statistics are reflected across the country's states that are poised to lose Amtrak service.

Elimination of Amtrak service specifically through Toledo will severely limit our region's ability to revitalize itself, especially the downtown. Access to our downtown via rail travel is essential for travelers and visitors to Toledo. Toledo's airport offers limited commercial routes and is located more than 15 miles away from the downtown. In addition, air travel can be cost-prohibitive for many travelers. While Greyhound bus is present, this service primarily serves much shorter routes. This leaves Amtrak as the only long-distance mode of transportation bringing visitors directly into Toledo, as well as many other similar communities. Closing this station would be devastating for the region and those who depend upon rail travel or long-distance transportation.

As the Toledo region's voice on transportation issues, TMACOG urges you to oppose the proposed budget cuts to Amtrak, the TIGER grant program, and the "New Starts" transit program and asks you to maintain funding for the health, wealth, and competitiveness of our communities.

Sincerely,

Keith G. Earley  
County Engineer, Lucas County  
Chair, Transportation Council

Craig A. Stough  
Mayor, City of Sylvania  
Chair, TMACOG

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