



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1196
401-222-2080

Gina M. Raimondo
Governor

January 30, 2017

Rebecca Reyes-Alicea
NEC FUTURE Program Manager
U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration
One Bowling Green, Suite 429
New York, NY 10004

Dear Ms. Reyes-Alicea:

I am writing in response to the Federal Railroad Administration's ("FRA") NEC FUTURE Tier 1 Final EIS.

I am highly supportive of the NEC FUTURE effort to improve the safety, speed, and frequency of rail service along the Northeast Corridor ("NEC"). The NEC is a critical link that enables commerce and tourism in our region. Every day, Rhode Islanders travel the Northeast Corridor to attend business meetings, visit friends and family, and explore attractions around the region. We owe it to them to invest not only in core safety and maintenance along the corridor, but also improvements that will drive our economy forward.

I agree fully with the Tier 1 Final EIS's recommendation that Providence remain a major hub. This is a recognition of the importance of Rhode Island's deep commercial connections to the broader Northeast economy. As I stated in my letter from the Draft EIS stage, improving speeds along the Corridor so Rhode Island residents and businesspeople can have better access to Boston, New York, and Washington, DC – and so those cities can better access our assets – is also a priority that will further strengthen Rhode Island's economy. Increasingly, companies are opening multiple offices along the Corridor, taking advantage of concentrations of local talent in Providence and elsewhere. Enabling these companies – such as GE, which is headquartered in Boston and has recently opened its Digital headquarters in Providence – to take rail service that moves at the speed of business will enhance Rhode Island's competitiveness.

Though I fully support the critical aspects of the NEC FUTURE Tier 1 Final EIS referenced above, I do not support the Rhode Island portion of the Old Saybrook-Kenyon Bypass as it is currently proposed.

The route the Bypass takes in Rhode Island cuts through environmentally sensitive conservation land, drinking water resources, Narragansett Indian tribal land, family farms, and historic districts. I encourage FRA to move any decisions on realignment through this segment of Rhode Island into a Tier 2 process, which will allow for a more complete evaluation of these legitimate environmental and community concerns.

Our regional economy demands access to modern, high-speed rail, and my support for this overall effort has never been stronger. I am confident that with further community engagement, the benefits of safer, faster rail can be realized without compromising our natural and community resources.

Sincerely,



Gina M. Raimondo
Governor