

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2017

Mr. Patrick Warren, Executive Director
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Warren:

We write regarding the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA's) Northeast Corridor (NEC) FUTURE Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

NEC FUTURE is an important planning tool for assessing and planning the infrastructure priorities for the Northeast Corridor over the next generation. This planning process complements ongoing efforts, large and small, to improve rail service in the northeast -- from the Gateway program in New York and New Jersey to the Kingston Station project in Rhode Island.

As the FRA has made clear from the outset, all of the items identified in NEC FUTURE process require further consultation with the states and railroad operators, environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act, and the identification of additional funding outside of existing federal funding streams.

While we were pleased that NEC FUTURE features Rhode Island prominently in the Preferred Alternative, significant concerns have been raised about the impact that the representative route could have on conservation land, tribal land, family farms and neighborhoods in Washington (South) County in Rhode Island. We appreciate the FRA's efforts to allow a greater airing of these concerns by extending the comment period and directly engaging with local community leaders. Citizens and elected officials from Westerly, Charlestown, Richmond, and South Kingstown, as well as the Governor, have raised important issues that must be addressed before a Record of Decision (ROD) is finalized. Therefore, we seek your explanation as to whether you can legally alter the selected alternative in the ROD and remove the Westerly-Hopkinton-Charlestown-South Kingstown bypass as the state and communities have requested. If the FRA has the authority to remove the bypass as part of the alternative selected in the Tier I EIS ROD, we would ask that you exercise that authority.

We also write to reiterate that Rhode Island, specifically Providence, must remain a central part of the NEC. Any alternative that results in service bypassing the state is completely

unacceptable. We appreciate the FRA's attention to that concern, but to remove any doubt, we believe it is important for the FRA to clarify that the inclusion of the Hartford/Springfield Line in the Preferred Alternative will not eventually lead to the creation of a new, alternative, or competing NEC spine between Boston and New York.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and we look forward to your prompt reply.

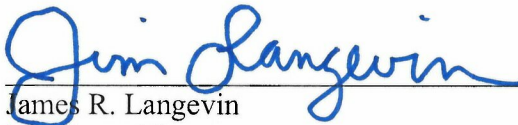
Sincerely,



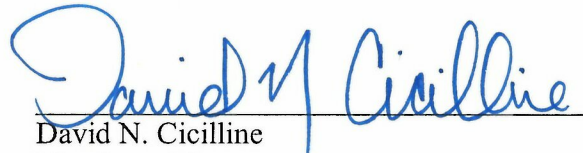
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress