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February 16, 2017

Honorable Jack Reed, US Senator
1000 Chapel View Blvd, Suite 290
Cranston, RI 02920-5602

Dear Senator Reed:

We the undersigned wish to thank you and your colleagues for the delegation letter regarding the NEC Future project FEIS. You squarely put the need for a constructive response to the Rhode Island situation before the FRA. To date, we have found FRA dismissive of the concerns we have raised. The agency attitude has generally been: "Don't worry, quiet down, don't bother us, we know."

Two months ago, the content of the FEIS appears not to have been on Rhode Island's radar screen. At the draft EIS, the State had supported a high-speed rail routing that would have connected Boston, Providence, and Hartford, three state capitols—a good outcome. The implications of the Old Saybrook to Kenyon bypass had not been given serious study. With the release of the FEIS, that changed. A lot has been accomplished. The four Rhode Island towns most impacted have come together and worked together. The towns together with local citizens have examined what the impacts would be and have found them devastating in key respects, especially on preserved lands, including those of the Narragansett tribe, and on farms. We have engaged the public through rallies and other means and kept it informed. And we have shared our findings with senior public officials, including our Governor and our Congressional delegation, and the response has been truly heartening. Our grave concern is the treatment of bypass in the ROD.

We believe that it would be an error to embed the bypass in the NEC Future project in Tier 1. The impacts in Rhode Island and its extraordinary costs balanced against its actual benefits in our state do not appear to warrant it. The State's own rail plans point to a third track option to address capacity issues south of Quonset, and the speed constraints on Rhode Island trackage are not great. The requisite level of detailed environmental review in Tier 1 is not present; therefore it is critical not to have the bypass embedded in the project through a Tier 1 ROD. We recognize that the bypass is described in the FEIS, but the time has come to close the book on that chapter and to get on with improving rail service in our region without any presupposition at the Federal level that a bypass in southwestern Rhode Island is the preferred means of accomplishing this objective. We believe our position in this matter is consistent with NEPA.

Your openness to taking our position into account is appreciated. The delegation letter poses the right question to the FRA. We believe that it is vital that Rhode Island concerns register with the FRA at the

highest levels and that the ROD not embed the bypass into the project as Tier 1 is concluded. We ask for your continuing and vigorous support in achieving this outcome.

Very truly yours,

Virginia Lee,
Town Council President
Charlestown, RI

James V. Silvestri,
Town Council President
Westerly, RI

Frank Landolfi,
Town Council President
Hopkinton, RI

Paul H. Michaud,
Town Council President
Richmond, RI

cc: Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse, U.S. Senator
Honorable James Langevin, U.S. Representative
Honorable David Cicilline, U.S. Representative
Her Excellency Gina Raimondo, Governor