

**BACKGROUND:** While rail travel has existed in the United States since the early to mid 1800s, the modern era of rail travel dates to 1970 and Congress' creation of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, or Amtrak, in the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970. Amtrak operates intercity rail service in 46 states and the District of Columbia, and while the system has its share of supporters and critics, it undoubtedly serves as a vital transportation link between cities all across the United States. This fall, the President signed legislation (H.R. 2095) that provided nearly \$13 billion for Amtrak over the next five years, and also provided for several new safety measures for both rail workers and passengers.

In addition to Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration has designated 11 high-speed rail corridors across the U.S. The corridors can be found in more densely populated regions of the U.S., and there are active organizations in each of these regions seeking both public and private financing to establish high-speed rail service between key major cities. Regarding public financing of high-speed rail, the most positive development occurred in California where on November 4<sup>th</sup> voters approved a \$10 billion bond to jump-start what is expected to be a \$45 billion, 800-mile rail project funded by local, state, federal and private funds that will eventually link the cities of Anaheim, Los Angeles, Fresno, San Francisco, Sacramento, San Diego and Oakland.

#### **ISSUES FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION**

1. **Support Expansion of Rail Travel Options:** Our nation's intermodal transportation system consists of various options by which travelers can reach their destinations. To ensure mobility for travelers and maintain U.S. economic competitiveness, it is important that business and leisure travelers have many options available to them that are safe, efficient and affordable.

Rail travel provides an alternative to flying or driving in cases where congestion, hassles and delays may make a trip less efficient and more costly – particularly for shorter trips of 500 miles or less. While longer distance (coast-to-coast) travel still requires flying, it may often make sense from both an efficiency and affordability standpoint for travelers to consider driving, or taking a scheduled bus or train service to reach a destination only a few hundred miles away. The development of high-speed electric rail may also be a “greener” option for travel in terms of reducing energy demand and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

#### ***Action Items:***

- The new Administration should support efforts in Congress to continue reform and expansion of Amtrak service throughout the country to provide travelers with viable alternatives for business and leisure trips.
- The Administration should provide leadership in working to spur greater public and private financing of high-speed rail networks in the 11 designated high-speed rail corridors to protect the environment, relieve the pressure on regional highway systems and provide travelers with an efficient option and means of reaching their destinations.