

# **House Committee on Appropriations**

## **Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies**

### **The Future of High Speed Rail, Intercity Passenger Rail, and Amtrak**

#### **Witness List:**

Susan Fleming, Director, Physical Infrastructure Issues, U.S. Government Accountability Office

Jolene M. Molitoris, Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation

Matt Rose, Chairman, President, and CEO of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway

Joe Boardman, President and CEO of Amtrak

**Date:** April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009

**Time:** 2:00 PM

**Location:** 2358-A RHOB

**NEWS from Congressman John W. Olver (MA-1)  
Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development**

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**Opening Statement as Prepared of Chairman John W. Olver  
The Future of High Speed Rail and Intercity Passenger Rail**

Today's hearing is about the future of high speed rail, intercity passenger rail, and Amtrak.

On March 10, our nation lost Robert A. Nelson, who headed the Northeast Corridor Project for President Kennedy and the Office of High Speed Ground Transportation for President Johnson.

Dr. Nelson was the father of the Metroliner in the Northeast Corridor, the pre-cursor to Amtrak's Acela service, and accomplished much for higher speed rail. Yet, over forty years later, we are still struggling to accomplish the greater rail speeds Dr. Nelson and his researchers envisioned for the United States.

Travelers on intercity passenger trains in industrialized parts of Europe or Asia, experience high speed trains on dedicated track with top speeds near 200 hundred miles per hour.

As the GAO found in their most recent report on high speed rail, the national governments in these countries funded the majority of the capital costs for these high speed lines.

Within the current budgetary climate, the US government is unlikely to pursue this type of funding arrangement and cover the capital costs for the types of dedicated intercity high speed rail systems found in the rest of the world.

Yet, with a modest capital investment, we could implement higher speed rail in a number of intercity corridors.

The Passenger Rail Working Group, which was part of the National Surface Transportation and Revenue Study Commission, issued a report that showed a \$7 billion investment per year over eight years would maintain and upgrade the existing Amtrak system, continue the development of planned new rail corridors, and create new routes to link major urban areas.

And now, for the first time since Dr. Nelson helped create the Metroliner service in the Johnson Administration, the United States, under the leadership of the Obama Administration, is again recognizing the economic and environmental benefits of a robust intercity rail program. The recent Recovery law contained \$8 billion for the development of the high speed and intercity rail in the United States. The President will also include an additional \$1 billion for this

initiative in the fiscal year 2010 budget request with a total five year commitment of \$5 billion for high speed rail.

These are modest investments that will help reduce train travel time between major metropolitan areas.

But, even with these commitments, challenges will remain: Building true high speed rail with dedicated lines would require billions more and increasing speed on existing lines must be rectified with freight rail usage and ownership in many cases.

In the case of the Northeast Corridor, where Amtrak owns the majority of the line, funding may not be available directly to Amtrak because the Northeast Corridor is not technically a designated high speed rail corridor. This is particularly troublesome as a number of needed capital improvements would reduce travel time in what is our most heavily travelled corridor.

We have a distinguished panel today to help us better understand these challenges.

Susan Fleming is the Director of Physical Infrastructure Issues at the Government Accountability Office and was in charge of the GAO's new report on High Speed Passenger Rail.

Jolene M. Molitoris is the Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation and former Federal Railroad Administrator under President Clinton.

Matt Rose is the Chairman, President and CEO of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway and former member of the National Surface Transportation and Revenue Study Commission.

And finally, Joe Boardman is the President and CEO of Amtrak and before joining Amtrak was the Federal Rail Administrator under President Bush.

With that, I would like to recognize our Ranking Member, Tom Latham for any comments he would like to make.

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