To the Honorable XXXXXX

XXXXXXXX

Washington, D.C., 20510

We are writing you today to express our strong support for enhancing and expanding long-distance passenger rail service as part of our nation’s transportation future and to ask that you support those efforts in Congress.

We here **(in/at)** **(insert county/city/organization name)** are especially excited at the prospect of the restoration of the former North Coast Hiawatha route, and are pleased to voice our support for our friends and neighbors with the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, who are working towards that end. As America considers the future of its transportation infrastructure, we firmly believe passenger rail should be an integral part of that future. Passenger rail service provides an affordable, efficient means of all-weather transportation, good-paying jobs and economic opportunity to the communities it services.

We strongly believe restoration of the North Coast Hiawatha route and other former passenger rail routes that once serviced the Northwest could provide multiple benefits for our community, region and state. Economically, passenger rail service is a great investment with a tremendous rate of return on that investment. The existing Empire Builder route generates over $595 million in annual economic activity in the communities and states it services, at a cost to the federal government of approximately $57 million per year. A recent Rail Passengers Association research study estimates that, at start-up, a restored North Coast Hiawatha route would generate an additional $271 million in annual economic activity. Socially, cities, rural communities and tribal communities across the region will see their quality of life improve by providing their residents an all-weather transportation option to reach goods and services that in this region can often be hundreds of miles distant.

We hope you will agree with us that enhancement and expansion of passenger rail service is critical to our state, region and nation’s transportation and economic future, and that restoration of the North Coast Hiawatha route is an important and achievable first step in that direction. We thank you for your time and consideration.