

Federal Railroad Administration
Corridor Identification and Development Program:
Restoration of the North Coast Hiawatha Service

Attachment 2 – Letters of Support



Sanders County Board of County Commissioners

1111 Main Street • PO Box 519 • Thompson Falls, Montana 59873

Anthony B. Cox, Presiding Officer
John J. Holland, Commissioner
Dan B. Rowan, Commissioner



Telephone (406) 827-6942
Fax (406) 827-4388
co.sanders.mt.us

March 16, 2023

email: contactus@fralongdistancerailstudy.org

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA)

To Whom it may concern,

We are writing in support of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) and their application for the for the Corridor Identification and Development Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's between Chicago to Seattle route.

The proposed route would go through 17 Montana counties and serve an estimated 400,000 passengers annually. This rail corridor would contribute to the economic growth of the counties it travels through by creating new jobs and keeping Montanans connected. This includes Sanders County, MT.

It is our anticipation that this will help improve safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases and support the economic vitality of rural communities like our County.

In developing this Corridor, the BSPRA proposes to work with the Federal Railroad Administration, States along the corridors, tribal and local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, host railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local governments and diverse communities from across Montana have united behind the potential benefits of this proposal. Just this week a twentieth county in the state joined the BSPRA coalition.

Thank you for your attention to this application. If we can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

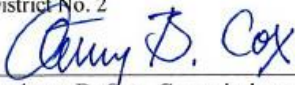
PO Box 519•1111 Main St., Thompson Falls, MT 59873•Tel :(406)827-6966•Fax :(406) 827-4388

Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA)

Sincerely,



John J. Holland, Commissioner
District No. 2



Anthony B. Cox, Commissioner
District No. 3, Presiding Officer



Dan B. Rowan, Commissioner
District No. 1

PO Box 519 • 1111 Main St., Thompson Falls, MT 59873 • Tel : (406) 827-6966 • Fax : (406) 827-4388

Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA)



395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

March 17, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is pleased to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's application for re-instating service on the Amtrak North Coast Hiawatha Chicago to Seattle route (Project) for the Corridor Identification and Development Program under Federal Railroad Administration Document Number 2022-27559, as established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (Public Law 117-58). MnDOT also supports BSPRA's goal of enhancing Empire Builder service.

The BSPRA has been working closely with the FRA and Amtrak since its Board Retreat in Lewistown, Montana in September 2021, and the 2022 Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, Montana in August 2022. In developing this corridor, the BSPRA proposes to work with the FRA states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, host railroads and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns. The project will meet US DOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

Improving long distance passenger rail within the NCH corridor is consistent with the Minnesota State Rail Plan. Developing passenger rail within the NCH corridor helps MnDOT develop passenger rail in the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago and Twin Cities-Fargo/Moorhead corridors that are included in the State Rail Plan. Re-instating NCH service will provide additional long-distance passenger rail service in Minnesota at stops in Winona, Red Wing, the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Staples, Detroit Lakes and Fargo/Moorhead. These stations are currently served by the Empire Builder and would benefit from the enhancement of Empire Builder service. MnDOT looks forward to working with BSPRA to develop the NCH corridor.

Thank you for your interest and support to improve Minnesota's transportation system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Nancy Daubenger'.

Nancy Daubenger, P.E.
Commissioner

cc: Peter Schwartz, Acting Director, Office of Railroad Planning and Engineering, Federal Railroad Administration
David Strohmaier, Chair, Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority

Equal Opportunity Employer



Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary
4822 Madison Yards Way, S903
Madison, WI 53705

Governor Tony Evers
Secretary Craig Thompson
wisconsindot.gov
Telephone: (608) 266-1114
FAX: (608) 266-9912
Email: sec.exec@dot.wi.gov

March 17, 2023

Amit Bose
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating
North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) I write to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for reinstating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

The BSPRA has been working closely with FRA and Amtrak since its Board Retreat in Lewistown, Montana in September of 2021 and the 2022 Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, Montana last August. This has created momentum with Amtrak and FRA related to this Project.

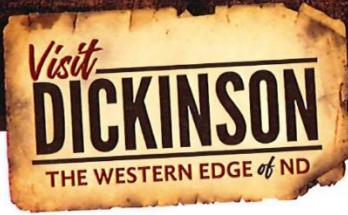
The Authority proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, including Wisconsin, tribal and local governments, Metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, hosts railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options to develop this corridor. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns. The Project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

WisDOT looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as next steps (service development planning, NEPA, etc.) take place. Thank you for your consideration of this important project and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Thompson".

Craig Thompson, Secretary



March 27, 2023

Amit Bose,
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Mr. Bose:

The Dickinson Convention & Visitors Bureau supports the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

This project has an enormous grassroots commitment by the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority and others in neighboring states to work together in developing all the criteria, such as service options, service plans, and routing for a Corridor ID Program application. People are dedicated to do the work, do the planning, and create the partnerships that are needed to reinstate the North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service.

The southern line, or former Amtrak North Coast Route Hiawatha route would be an additional choice for visitor transportation to be able to travel across the US Heartland in the norther tier. Many steps would need to be accomplished that would take time and funding to be able to attain such a rail service, but should it become a reality, the addition of a North Dakota route in the future would be another option for travelers to experience our attractions and landscape.

Please support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terri Thiel", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Terri Thiel
Executive Director

Dickinson Convention & Visitors Bureau

701-483-4988 | 800.279.7391 | 72 E. Museum Dr. | Dickinson, ND 58601

VISITDICKINSON.COM



February 9, 2023

Amit Bose,
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

The Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPOs) strongly supports the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

The BSPRA has been working closely with FRA and Amtrak since its Board Retreat in Lewistown, Montana in September of 2021 and the 2022 Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, Montana last August. This has created momentum with Amtrak and FRA related to this Project. The Corridor ID Program is not just another USDOT grant program. It is the gateway to the creation of a pipeline of passenger rail projects across the United States.

In developing this Corridor, the Authority proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, MPOs, Amtrak, hosts railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns.

The project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

The Missoula MPO looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as next steps (service development planning, NEPA, etc.) take place.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan Hess", is written over a horizontal blue line.

[Jordan Hess \(Feb 24, 2023 16:39 MST\)](#)

Jordan Hess
Chair, Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

435 RYMAN ■ MISSOULA MT 59802 4297 ■ 406.552.6670 ■ FAX: 406.552.6053

JON TESTER
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
COMMERCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SENATE HART BUILDING
SUITE 311
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
202-224-2644

INTERNET:
tester.senate.gov/contact

United States Senate

March 15, 2023

Mr. Amit Bose
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Bose:


I write in support of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) and their application for the for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

The proposed route would go through 17 Montana counties and serve an estimated 400,000 passengers annually. This rail corridor would contribute to the economic growth of the counties it travels through by creating new jobs and keeping Montanans connected. This project will meet U.S. Department of Transportation's goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities along the North Coast Hiawatha.

In developing this Corridor, the BSPRA proposes to work with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, hosts railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local governments and diverse communities from across Montana have united behind the potential benefits of this proposal. Just this week a twentieth county in the state joined the BSPRA coalition.

Thank you for your attention to this application. If I can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would also appreciate you informing my office of the eventual decision on this application.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator

BOZEMAN
(406) 586-4450

BUTTE
(406) 723-3277

GLENDIVE
(406) 365-2391

GREAT FALLS
(406) 452-9585

HELENA
(406) 449-5401

KALISPELL
(406) 257-3360

BILLINGS
(406) 252-0550

MISSOULA
(406) 728-3003

March 8, 2023

Amit Bose
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor Identification and Development Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

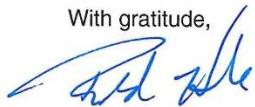
On behalf of the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT), I write to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development Program for reinstating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route.

The BSPRA has been working closely with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Amtrak since its Board Retreat in Lewistown, Montana, in September of 2021 and the 2022 Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, Montana, last August. This has created momentum with Amtrak and FRA related to the Project. In developing the Corridor, the Authority proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Amtrak, host railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans, and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns. The Project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the NCH.

NDDOT looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the NCH Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as we are able. NDDOT is in favor of working with Amtrak to restore the NCH service discontinued in 1979. However, we are unable to provide development, operating, or maintenance costs for this route.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

With gratitude,



Ronald J. Henke, PE
Director

17/rg



Malcolm D. Long, Director

2701 Prospect • PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

March 9, 2023

Amit Bose
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program; Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's grant application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

This letter is to inform you of the Montana Department of Transportation's (MDT) support of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's (BSPRA) application to the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program. This program provides an opportunity to advance restoration of Amtrak's discontinued North Coast Hiawatha's route.

The BSPRA was established in 2020 with the passage of a joint resolution by twelve Montana counties and now has a membership of 20 counties. BSPRA's mission seeks to reestablish a safe, reliable, and sustainable passenger rail service across southern Montana.

Throughout the North Coast Hiawatha corridor development, BSPRA has worked with all relevant stakeholders, including state transportation departments, counties, tribal and local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, host railroads, and other interested parties.

As a Project stakeholder, MDT believes that reinstating the North Coast Hiawatha route supports USDOT's goals by providing safe public transportation alternatives, reducing transportation born greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural and local communities. MDT understands the benefits of increased accessibility to safe transportation alternatives, especially for rural and underserved communities.

One of MDT's goals identified in its long-range transportation plan, TranPlanMT, concerns the preservation of existing Amtrack service. MDT supports BSPRA in their grant submittal to the Corridor ID Program to create support for a southern Montana passenger rail service provided this does not compromise existing Amtrak service within the state. Thank you for your consideration of this important venture.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Malcolm D. Long".

Malcolm D Long
Director

copies: Rob Stapley, Rail, Transit and Planning Administrator

Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission

*A joint Transportation
Commission formed under
Wisconsin Statutes 66.0301
to advance the public
interest by pursuing
passenger rail service for the
St. Croix and Chippewa
Valley regions of Wisconsin*

Members

- Dunn County
- Eau Claire County
- St. Croix County
- City of Altoona
- Village of Baldwin
- City of Eau Claire
- City of Hudson
- City of Menomonie
- City of New Richmond
- West Central Wisconsin
Rail Coalition

Ex Officio Members

- West Central Wis Regional
Planning Commission
- Wisconsin DOT
- Minnesota DOT
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Ramsey County (MN)
Regional Railroad Authority
- Washington County (MN)
Regional Railroad Authority
- Chippewa Valley Technical
College
- Northwood Technical College
- University of Wisconsin
- Eau Claire
- University of Wisconsin
- River Falls
- University of Wisconsin
- Stout

Chair

Jim Dunning, Eau Claire County

Vice Chair

Gary Stene, Dunn County

Secretary

Jeremy Gragert, City of Eau
Claire

Administrative/Fiscal Agent

Eau Claire County, WI
c/o County Administrator
721 Oxford Ave.
Eau Claire, WI 54703
715-839-5106
admin@eauclairecounty.gov

March 15, 2023

Amit Bose

Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service

The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission supports the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

In developing this Corridor, the Authority proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, Metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, hosts railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns.

Implementation of this service through Wisconsin will enhance our overall travel options with service to desirable destinations in Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington. Among the local needs we suggest be considered would be to study a Twin Cities-Chicago routing for the service via Eau Claire and Milwaukee to complement the existing Empire Builder long distance service that uses the routing via La Crosse. This could utilize the Milwaukee to Madison to Eau Claire to Twin Cities Hiawatha Service Extension Corridor being submitted by WisDOT.

The project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as next steps (service development planning, NEPA, etc.) take place.

Sincerely,



James Dunning, Chair
Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission



March 27, 2023

Amit Bose,
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC, I write to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

The BSPRA has been working closely with FRA and Amtrak since its Board Retreat in Lewistown, Montana in September of 2021 and the 2022 Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, Montana last August. This has created momentum with Amtrak and FRA related to this Project. The Corridor ID Program is not just another USDOT grant program. It is the gateway to the creation of a pipeline of passenger rail projects across the United States.

In developing this Corridor, the Authority proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, Metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, hosts railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns.

The project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

The Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as next steps (service development planning, NEPA, etc.) take place.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Ritter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Ritter" clearly distinguishable.

Brian Ritter, President & CEO
Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC



March 7, 2023

Amit Bose,
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the North Dakota Department of Commerce, I write to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's application for the Corridor Identification and Development Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's Chicago to Seattle route.

The BSPRA has worked closely with FRA and Amtrak since 2021, which has spurred action with Amtrak and FRA related to this project. The Corridor ID Program is the access to creating a pipeline of passenger rail projects across the United States.

In developing this corridor, the Authority proposes to work with the FRA, additional corridor regions, tribal and local governments, community planning organizations, Amtrak, and other stakeholders in detailing local routing, service plans, and service options. In addition, consideration of local needs across the corridor and historical rail passenger service patterns will be reviewed.

The project meets USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, providing an all-weather transportation option, and supporting the enhanced transportation opportunities for rural and underserved communities that the North Coast Hiawatha will serve.

Commerce looks forward to assisting as planning occurs by working with the BSPRA, states, and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor.

Thank you for considering this vital project. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Teigen", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Josh Teigen
Commerce Commissioner

1600 E Century Avenue, Suite 6 | P.O. Box 2057 | Bismarck, ND 58502

PHONE: 701-328-5300 | TOLL FREE: 1-866-4DAKOTA | ND RELAY TTY: 1-800-366-6888 | VOICE: 1-800-366-6889 |
NDCommerce.com



March 27, 2023

**2022 - 2023
PNWER Executive
Committee***

Sen. Chuck Winder
Idaho
President

Rick Glumac, MLA
British Columbia
Vice President

Sen. Mia Costello
Alaska
Vice President

Ken Francis, MLA
Saskatchewan
Vice President

Rep. Cindy Ryu
Washington
Vice President

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek
Northwest Territories

Hon. Ranj Pillai
Yukon

Sen. Lew Frederick
Oregon

Sen. Mike Cuffe
Montana

David Bennett
FortisBC
Private Sector Co-Chair

Dan Kirschner
Northwest Gas Assoc.
Private Sector Co-Chair

Richard Gotfried, MLA
Alberta
Imm. Past President

Amit Bose
Administrator – Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Administrator Bose,

On behalf of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER), I am writing to express our support for the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

The BSPRA has been working closely with FRA and Amtrak since its Board Retreat in Lewistown, Montana in September of 2021 and the 2022 Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, Montana last August. This has created momentum with Amtrak and FRA related to this Project. The Corridor ID Program is not just another USDOT grant program. It is the gateway to the creation of a pipeline of passenger rail projects across the United States.

In developing this Corridor, the Authority proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, Metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, hosts railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns.

The project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

PNWER looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as next steps (service development planning, NEPA, etc.) take place.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Matt Morrison
Chief Executive Officer
PNWER

*Partial listing

Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) 2200 Alaskan Way, Suite 460, Seattle, WA 98121
Phone: (206) 443-7723 Fax: (206) 443-7703 Online: info@pnwer.org www.pnwer.org



Dennis J. Newman
Executive Vice President, Strategy and Planning

March 15, 2023

Amit Bose
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Application for Corridor Identification and Development Program Funding

Dear Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), I am writing to express our support for the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority application submitted under the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development Program (Corridor ID Program) for the Restored and Enhanced North Coast Limited/Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service Corridor.

Since Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha (NCH) was discontinued in 1979, the region from Fargo, ND, to Sandpoint, ID through southern North Dakota and southern Montana has been without passenger rail service, and areas west of Sandpoint and southeast of Fargo have experienced diminished passenger rail options. The renewed NCH will be a strong instrument for equity—spreading economic growth and community vitality more equitably among tribal, rural and urban communities and bringing civic resources within reach of the most isolated and disadvantaged populations. The NCH line will transform economies in the Greater Northwest region. By renewing the NCH, expanding the Empire Builder to twice daily service, and adding the Pioneer route, the nation can create the horizontal supports for a strong lattice of passenger rail connectivity in the West.

The Restored and Enhanced North Coast Limited/Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service Corridor will help strengthen economic growth and mobility throughout the region and the country. Additionally, it will provide public benefits, will make regional travel more available, accessible, and sustainable, will reduce congestion, and will boost the local economy of the cities and towns along the route.

We are excited to potentially work with all of the projects selected through the Corridor ID Program, to help those sponsors move their projects forward towards future implementation. Thank you for your time and consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Newman", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Dennis Newman
Executive Vice President, Strategy and Planning

JOHN HOEVEN
NORTH DAKOTA
338 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
TELEPHONE: (202) 224-2551
FAX: (202) 224-7999

hoeven.senate.gov

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2023

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
INDIAN AFFAIRS

Amit Bose
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service

Dear Administrator Bose:

I am writing to express my interest in the application submitted by the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) to the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for the reinstatement of service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route. Thank you for your consideration.

Under this proposal, BSPRA is seeking to restore passenger rail service to lines across the Upper Midwest, including lines in North Dakota that have not been served since 1979. Notably, this route would cover some of my home state's most populous communities, including the capital city of Bismarck as well as Mandan and Dickinson, which are not currently served by Amtrak.

This project would give North Dakota travelers more options, not only within the state, but in connecting local communities to large metropolitan areas in the midwestern and northwestern United States. At the same time, this passenger rail service could bring economic benefits to the south-central portion of the state, resulting from potential benefits to the local tourism industry.

Accordingly, I hope this application receives your full and fair consideration. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please feel free to contact my office with any updates or inquiries you may have.

Sincerely,



John Hoeven
U.S. Senator



**WEST CENTRAL
WISCONSIN
RAIL COALITION**

March 17, 2023

Amit Bose, Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition supports the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition is a non-profit educational organization providing leadership and coordination to develop passenger rail service through west central Wisconsin as part of a regional strategy to ensure a balanced transportation system for long term sustainable economic growth.

Implementation of this service through Wisconsin will enhance our overall travel options with service to desirable destinations in Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington. Among the local needs we suggest be considered would be to study a Twin Cities-Chicago routing for the service via Eau Claire and Milwaukee to complement the existing Empire Builder long distance service that uses the routing via La Crosse. This could utilize the Milwaukee to Madison to Eau Claire to Twin Cities Hiawatha Service Extension Corridor being submitted by WisDOT.

The project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

Sincerely,

Scott Rogers, Chair
West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition
rogers@eauclairchamber.org
715-858-0616



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

129 North Second Street
City Hall, Yakima, Washington 98901
Phone (509) 575-6040

March 15, 2023

Amit Bose,
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the City of Yakima, I write to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for re-instating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

The BSPRA has been working closely with FRA and Amtrak since its Board Retreat in Lewistown, Montana in September of 2021 and the 2022 Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, Montana last August. This has created momentum with Amtrak and FRA related to this Project. The Corridor ID Program is not just another USDOT grant program. It is the gateway to the creation of a pipeline of passenger rail projects across the United States.

In developing this Corridor, the Authority proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, Metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, hosts railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns.

The project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

The City of Yakima looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as next steps (service development planning, NEPA, etc.) take place.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert Harrison
City Manager

cc: Yakima City Council





OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

435 RYMAN MISSOULA, MONTANA 59802-4297 (406) 552-6001

March 27, 2023

Amit Bose
Administrator - Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's Corridor ID Program application for reinstating North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Rail Service (Project)

Dear Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the City of Missoula, Montana, I write to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in its application for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program for reinstating service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's (NCH) Chicago to Seattle route (Project).

Southern Montana's last passenger train rolled through Missoula and other cities in 1978. In the four decades since, Southern Montana has lacked a vital intercity public transportation connection. The BSPRA has been working closely with FRA, Amtrak, and partner communities along the NCH corridor, which has created significant momentum related to this Project. The Corridor ID Program creates a foundation for passenger rail projects across the United States.

In developing this Corridor, the BSPRA proposes to work with the FRA, states along the corridor, tribal and local governments, Metropolitan planning organizations, Amtrak, host railroads, and other interested parties in detailing local routing, service plans and service options. Local needs and conditions across the corridor will be considered along with historical rail passenger service patterns.

The project is also an example of meeting USDOT goals by improving safety for rail passengers, reducing greenhouse gases, and supporting the economic vitality of rural communities that will be served by the North Coast Hiawatha. The service will provide an all-weather mobility choice to thousands of Americans who lack access to the nation's commercial air travel network.

The City of Missoula looks forward to working with the BSPRA and other states and communities along the North Coast Hiawatha Corridor as a member of any intergovernmental Advisory Committee or by providing technical assistance as next steps (service development planning, NEPA, etc.) take place.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan Hess".

Jordan Hess, Mayor
City of Missoula, MT



James Tylick
AVP Passenger Operations

BNSF Railway
2600 Lou Menk Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76131
James.tylick@bnsf.com

March 22, 2023

Administrator Amit Bose
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Bose:

BNSF takes tremendous pride in delivering transportation services to our freight customers and hosted passenger operations across the country. As the Federal Railroad Administration works to identify potential new and expanded passenger opportunities across the country through the Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP), I write in regard to the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's (BSPRA) application to re-instate service on Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha's Chicago to Seattle route.

BSPRA has been working closely and constructively with key stakeholders to explore the restoration of the North Coast Hiawatha, including BNSF Railway which would ultimately host such restored service. BNSF has an ex-officio non-voting seat on the BSPRA Board and has appreciated the organization's early communication and collaboration as the Authority explores passenger rail options. BNSF considers new and expanded intercity passenger rail proposals through the lens of our "passenger principles" which require important considerations around operating adjustments and infrastructure investments that may be necessary to accommodate such service. We anticipate continuing our constructive dialogue with the BSPRA and other interested stakeholders should the project be included in the CIDP.

In closing, BNSF remains committed to the important role we play in the nation's movement of goods along with serving as host to Amtrak and other passenger agencies on our network. The CDIP can support our continued success in these areas by ensuring that new and expanded passenger projects ultimately do no harm to rail freight mobility. BNSF will continue to engage in a constructive and collaborative fashion in pursuit of solutions that work for all stakeholders, allowing rail to provide the environmental benefits in the movement of goods and people as we face the challenges of tomorrow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Tylick".

James Tylick

CC: Chairmen David Strohmaier, Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority



701 E. 22nd Street
Suite 110
Lombard, Illinois 60148
tel: 630.925.1922
fax: 630.925.1930
www.miprc.org
miprc@miprc.org

Chair
Sen. Carolyn McGinn, Kansas

Vice Chair
Peter Anastor, Michigan

Financial Officer
Scott Rogers, Wisconsin

Director
Laura Kliewer

*Bringing Together
State Leaders from
Across the Region
to Advocate
for Passenger Rail
Improvements*

The Midwest Interstate
Passenger Rail Commission is
an eight-state interstate
compact commission that
promotes, coordinates and
supports regional
improvements to passenger
rail service. Our member
states include
Illinois, Indiana, Kansas,
Michigan, Minnesota,
Missouri, North Dakota and
Wisconsin.

Secretariat services provided by
The Council of State Governments'
Midwestern Office



MIDWEST

March 22, 2023

Amit Bose
Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C., 20590

Dear Administrator Bose,

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Commission (MIPRC) supports the restoration of the Amtrak *North Coast Hiawatha* long-distance route, and joins our member states of North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin in supporting the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority's application for studying re-instating service on that line under the Federal Railroad Administration's Notice of Solicitation of Corridor Proposals and Funding Opportunity for the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program.

The restoration of Amtrak's *North Coast Hiawatha* route would:

- Create new service through the middle of North Dakota (via Valley City, Jamestown, Bismarck [capital]/Mandan and Dickinson)
- Provide another frequency between Fargo, ND, and Chicago via the Twin Cities and Milwaukee, WI
- Establish new connections between the Midwest and many western cities not currently served by the *Empire Builder*

MIPRC understands that answers to how the Corridor ID Program will interact with FRA's Long-Distance Service Study are still evolving. As this letter is submitted, MIPRC's position is to support our states and their desires to provide overall support and technical assistance to this project without committing to funding.

We ask that if this application is chosen, FRA clarify Amtrak's central role in funding the restoration and operation of service for long-distance routes prioritized under the Long-Distance Service Study. If you have any questions, please contact me at 630.282.3066.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Laura Kliewer
MIPRC Director