

Date of Hearing: August 23, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

SJR 30 (McGuire) – As Introduced August 9, 2018

SENATE VOTE: 33-0

SUBJECT: Amtrak National Network.

SUMMARY: Urges the Congress and the President of the United States to support the retention of, and investment in, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) National Network of passenger trains and for Congress to reject the President's proposed budget cuts to Amtrak. Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 1) Makes findings and declarations including the history of Amtrak in the United States and its importance to the State of California that WHEREAS:
 - a) Amtrak was created in 1970 to assume the common carriers' obligations of the private railroads and provide intercity passenger rail service throughout the United States; and,
 - b) Amtrak's mission is to deliver intercity transportation that helps move people, the economy, and the nation forward; and,
 - c) Amtrak operates a nationwide rail network, serving more than 500 destinations in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and three Canadian provinces, in addition to serving as a contractor in various capacities for several commuter rail agencies; and,
 - d) Amtrak National Network trains are often the only form of public transportation available to thousands of small communities nationwide, and are a vital link between urban and rural America; and,
 - e) The State of California has a vested interest in the continued success of the local and national Amtrak network as it is home to three of the top six busiest Amtrak corridors in the nation, with approximately 70 Amtrak trains operating in California every day serving nearly 12 million riders; and,
 - f) Amtrak trains operating in California include both state-supported intercity routes, such as the Capitol Corridor, the Pacific Surfliner, and the San Joaquins, and Amtrak National Network trains, including the California Zephyr, running daily from the San Francisco Bay Area to Salt Lake City and Chicago; the Coast Starlight, running daily from Los Angeles to Oakland and Seattle; the Southwest Chief, running daily from Los Angeles to Albuquerque and Chicago; and the Sunset Limited, running triweekly from Los Angeles to New Orleans; and,
 - g) The state invests roughly \$130 million every year to support the three intercity service routes that provide safe commute alternatives to millions of Californians; and,

- h) President Donald J. Trump has proposed to cut federal funding to Amtrak in his Fiscal Year (FY 2019) federal budget proposal; and,
- i) Any federal funding cuts to the Amtrak National Network could directly impact California and jeopardize passenger rail connectivity within the state and the nation; and,
- j) Elimination of the Amtrak National Network trains could cause an increase in costs to operate California's state-supported intercity passenger rail services; and,
- k) The Legislature views the Amtrak National Network as a federally supported program and does not support proposals to break up the Amtrak National Network into corridors and require states to pay for the service.

2) RESOLVES, in light of the above:

- a) That the Legislature urges Congress and the President of the United States to support the retention of, and investment in, the Amtrak National Network of passenger trains, specifically the California Zephyr, the Coast Starlight, the Southwest Chief, and the Sunset Limited, as vital components of the state's rail program; and ,
- b) That the Legislature urges Congress to reject President Trump's proposed Fiscal Year 2019 federal budget cuts to Amtrak and restore full funding for the Amtrak National Network through the appropriations process; and,
- c) That the Secretary of the Senate shall transmit copies, as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT: This resolution is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS: According to the author, "The current Federal Administration has proposed to cut funding for Amtrak, leaving thousands of passengers stranded, cutting hundreds of good jobs, and it will put thousands of vehicles onto our already congested highways. If Amtrak were to be eliminated or broken up into corridors, the State of California would have to bear costs to operate what should be a federal program. SJR 30 urges Congress to reject President Trump's proposed Fiscal Year 2019 federal budget cuts to Amtrak and restore full funding for the Amtrak National Network."

President Trump's FY 2019 federal budget proposal includes cuts to funding for the Amtrak rail system and a "reform of long distance routes" noting that, "The President's Budget proposes reforms to rationalize the Amtrak system, improve efficiency, and reduce costs, including implementing State contributions equal to the Federal Government's for operating long distance routes through their communities. Amtrak's long-distance routes have poor on-time performance, account for only 4.7 million of Amtrak's nearly 32 million annual passengers, and incur annual operating losses of more than \$500 million."

Specifically, the President's budget includes \$738 million for Amtrak, a cut of \$1.2 billion from the FY 2018 level approved by Congress. The Administration proposes to focus the funds for Amtrak on the investments in the Northeast Corridor which runs from Washington D.C to Boston, and would shift the costs of running the National Network to the states.

Prior to its summer recess, Congress moved forward on the annual appropriations process with the U.S. Senate approving H.R. 6147, a so-called “mini-bus,” which contains funding for multiple federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). The bill restores the cuts proposed by the Administration budget and funds Amtrak at the same level as last year, \$1.94 billion. Additionally, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations approved H.R. 6072, its version of funding for USDOT, which also restored funding for Amtrak matching the Senate’s level. The overall USDOT appropriations must now be reconciled before a bill is sent to the President.

California is home to numerous Amtrak routes that traverse the state and connect California to the rest of the country via rail. Specifically, the Amtrak National Network trains that operate throughout California are the California Zephyr, running daily from the San Francisco Bay Area to Salt Lake City and Chicago; the Coast Starlight, running daily from Los Angeles to Oakland and Seattle; the Southwest Chief, running daily from Los Angeles to Albuquerque and Chicago; and the Sunset Limited, running triweekly from Los Angeles to New Orleans.

Additionally, three high-frequency intercity Amtrak services are operated by regional Joint Powers Authorities and are funded by the state at roughly \$130 million per year. These include the Capitol Corridor running from Sacramento through the Bay Area to San Jose; the San Joaquins running from Sacramento through Fresno to Bakersfield; and the Pacific Surfliner running from San Diego to Los Angeles. These highly successful lines are three of the six busiest Amtrak routes in the nation. Amtrak also serves as operator to some commuter rail systems, including Metrolink in Southern California.

As the Administration continues to propose cutting federal funding for various types of transportation infrastructure including rail and mass transit, the state of California stands to lose billions of dollars of federal funding which would have to be replaced with state and local sources to continue current service levels. The Amtrak National Network is critical to rail connectivity of our state and is many times the only transportation lifeline to small and rural communities.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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