

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 1, 2010

Joseph Szabo  
Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Szabo:

We write in support of the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application for \$5 million in FY 2010 High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail program planning funding. This money is critical to help Oregon plan future improvements to the state's passenger rail system.

The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor, which runs from Eugene through Portland and Seattle and eventually to Vancouver, Canada, is a critical part of the region's transportation system. The corridor offers an important transportation option for people traveling between the urban areas in the Pacific Northwest mega-region, one of the fastest growing areas of the nation. The corridor has the 7th highest ridership among high-speed rail corridors in the country, and recent service improvements have helped achieve record ridership. With support from the state of Oregon and the state of Washington, Amtrak operates two roundtrips each day between Eugene and Portland and four trains between Portland and Seattle. The two states would like to offer additional trains, improve reliability and reduce travel times. Current levels of congestion, due to the fact that these lines are shared with significant numbers of freight trains, hamper these efforts.

Before significant state and federal resources can be invested to improve service on the Eugene to Portland portion of the corridor, the Oregon Department of Transportation needs to conduct a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine the preferred passenger rail route between Eugene and Portland. While the Union Pacific (UP) main line currently serves the Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight passenger trains on this section of the corridor, a planning study initiated by ODOT last year found that a parallel short line with lower volumes of freight trains known as the Oregon Electric may provide an opportunity to improve travel times, frequency, and reliability. The Tier 1 EIS will compare the impacts and benefits of passenger rail run on the UP, Oregon Electric, and other potential alignments to determine which route would provide the best opportunity to improve passenger rail service and determine where future investments should be made. This EIS will also look for opportunities to mitigate the community impacts of having rail lines running through communities, including improving safety through crossing improvements and reducing noise through quiet zones and other means. As the EIS is a significant priority for the state, ODOT has committed \$5.8 million in state funds, a significant state investment, and is seeking \$4.2 million in federal funds.

Oregon is also requesting \$800,000 for funding to update the state's rail plan. The Oregon Rail Plan was last revised in 2001 and needs to be updated if it is to help guide investments to improving the rail system and serve as the state's overarching policy framework.

We appreciate your consideration of this grant application.

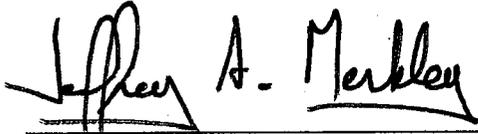
Sincerely,



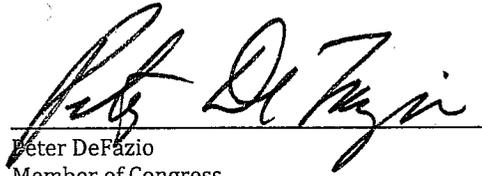
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



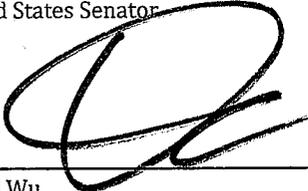
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator



Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress



David Wu  
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress