



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 1, 2008**

**CONTACT:**  
Sue Walitsky 202-224-4524 or  
202-320-0819 (cell)

## **CARDIN PRAISES RAIL SAFETY AND AMTRAK PROVISIONS PASSED BY THE SENATE**

*“Amtrak is part of the infrastructure backbone of Maryland”*

Washington, DC – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)** today praised Senate passage of H.R. 2095 which authorizes over \$13 billion over five years for federal passenger rail programs – including expansion of Amtrak – mandates new safety measures, and authorizes dedicated federal funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. This bill passed the Senate by a vote of 74-24 and the House of Representatives by a voice vote. It now heads to the President to be signed into law.

“Amtrak is part of the infrastructure backbone of Maryland. It carries millions of passengers, employs thousands of workers, and benefits our economy and our environment,” said Senator Cardin. “As gas prices have skyrocketed and our economy has faltered, Amtrak and other mass transit systems around our country have seen record ridership. Sustained federal investment is essential at this time to increase and maintain Amtrak’s quality, safety, and continuity of service.”

“The safety equipment mandated in this bill might have prevented the tragedy in California last month when a passenger train ran a red signal and collided with a freight train, killing 25,” said **Senator Cardin**. “While we cannot turn back the clock, we can prevent future accidents and protect the communities through which these freight and passenger trains travel.”

**Rail Safety Provisions:** H.R. 2095 will mandate by 2015 the use of positive train control (PTC) systems on rail main lines over which both passenger and freight trains travel and would require that high-risk lines are equipped first. Other rail safety provisions include reforms in the number of hours a rail employee can work, mandating at least 10 hours off between shifts, and instituting minimum training standards. The bill also mandates improvements at locations where rail tracks cross highways.

**Amtrak Passenger Rail:** Amtrak’s fiscal 2007 ridership topped 25.8 million. That’s the fifth year in a row that Amtrak has seen growth in its passenger service. With this legislation, Amtrak’s authorization is raised to \$9.67 billion over five years. The bill includes a number of reforms relating to operations, financial accounting, and financial plan development, to assure that the new federal investment is protected.

**Other Rail Provisions:** A new State Rail Grants program is authorized at \$1.9 billion; and a new High Speed Rail Grants Program is also authorized, at \$1.5 billion.

Amtrak operates 90 trains daily in Maryland, mostly on the Amtrak-owned Northeast Corridor through Baltimore Penn Station and New Carrollton. Baltimore, which had nearly 1 million passengers board or disembark in 2007, is the 7<sup>th</sup> busiest station in the national Amtrak System. Total Maryland station usage exceeded 1.8 million last year. Amtrak also operates weekday MARC commuter rail service on the Northeast Corridor under a contract with the Maryland Transit Administration. More than 2,000 Marylanders are employed by Amtrak, bringing good jobs with good wages to our state.

###