

and it stands as an enormous disadvantage for this rail system. Members of Congress can stress the need for accountability and reform until we turn blue in the face—but in the end, what Amtrak really needs is leaders with vision, who attend and participate in board meetings and who are genuinely committed to improving passenger rail.

Everything starts with the leadership provided by this board, and as we work to ensure adequate funding for passenger rail, it is crucial that Congress continue to advocate for a fully functioning Amtrak Board of Directors.

The facts are clear; Amtrak needs Federal support to survive, just like highways, ports, and airlines. America is a world leader in all other modes of transportation. When it comes to rail, we are quickly falling behind.

Mr. Chairman, many Americans, including thousands in my state, depend on Amtrak for both business and pleasure. Instead of short-changing the organization, we should work together to improve passenger rail.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to support the amendment offered by Representative LATOURETTE to fully fund Amtrak.

In fiscal year 2006, the Bush administration attempted to only provide \$360 million to maintain commuter and freight service operated by Amtrak. With a great deal of support from many parts of America, Amtrak funding was restored to \$1.3 billion.

Once again we are considering a bill that underfunds Amtrak needs to maintain its current operations. Amtrak is funded at a mere 900 million to continue its operations and make capital improvements. This is 33 percent less than current funding levels for Amtrak. This is \$698 million less than Amtrak requested to continue operations and invest in capital. The Oberstar/LaTourette amendment increases funding for Amtrak to \$1.114 billion.

The Northeast Corridor relies heavily on Amtrak's infrastructure and skilled workers. New Jersey Transit estimates that over 77 percent of its daily passengers would be affected if—New Jersey Transit could no longer operate its trains over tracks owned by Amtrak.

Many of my colleagues contend that the Northeast Corridor is the only area that depends on Amtrak. This is simply not true. According to a report recently published by the Government Accountability Office, across the country 18 different commuter agencies depend on the infrastructure and services that Amtrak provides, including commuter rail agencies in Dallas and Seattle. There are currently seven new agencies being planned across the country as well. If we do not continue to fund Amtrak at the levels they need to function, a shutdown is imminent. This would be detrimental to commuter rail agencies that depend on Amtrak-owned tracks and infrastructure and skilled Amtrak employees.

The GAO confirms the effect a shutdown of Amtrak would cause: "Given the dependence of more commuter rail agencies on Amtrak for services and infrastructure, an abrupt Amtrak cessation would likely result in major disruption or shutdowns of commuter rail service throughout the country."

We have a responsibility to promote mass transit and provide adequate funding for States and local transit authorities to move passengers effectively. Rail transportation is essential for easing traffic congestion in our most densely populated areas, reducing wear

and tear on roads, protecting our environment, and preserving open space across the country.

On May 1, Amtrak celebrated 35 years of service to our Nation. We celebrated Amtrak for its ability to integrate small communities with large cities by providing economic expansion, increased mobility, and environmentally sound transit.

That is why I support the amendment offered by Representative LATOURETTE that would increase Amtrak funding. Now is not the time for us to cut funding for mass transportation. I urge my colleagues to support Amtrak and vote for the Oberstar/LaTourette amendment.

Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, as cochair of the Passenger Rail Caucus, I urge you to support the LaTourette-Oberstar amendment to the FY07 Transportation, Treasury and HUD Appropriations bill. The amendment will increase funding for Amtrak to a total of \$1.114 billion, an increase of \$214 million.

The FY 2007 TTHUD appropriations bill provides only \$900 million for Amtrak, \$412 million less than the FY 2006 enacted level and \$698 million less than Amtrak requested in order to continue operation and invest in capital. I am concerned that the current funding level in the bill would leave the rail system incapable of providing sufficient service to Amtrak's 25 million customers—many of whom are my constituents of the 8th Congressional District of Pennsylvania on the Northeast Corridor.

The Department of Transportation's Inspector General has stated that the status quo funding option for Amtrak is unsustainable. The Inspector General also stated that postponement of maintenance—especially on heavily traveled Northeast Corridor increases the risk of accident.

Today, as Americans are facing skyrocketing energy prices and increasingly overcrowded roads, it is crucial that we invest in our national passenger rail system.

I urge you to join us in preserving transportation options for our constituents and support the LaTourette-Oberstar amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE).

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio will be postponed.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. KUCINICH

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. KUCINICH:

Page 2, line 11, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$70,000)".

Page 37, line 4, after the dollar amount insert "(increased by \$70,000)".

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chairman, I rise today out of deep concern for the safety of children who ride school buses over railroad tracks in Ohio and across the country. My amendment will ensure that there is a person working full time in the Federal Railroad Adminis-

tration who can help us resolve the inadequate reporting.

That reporting is necessary to ensure that railroad crossings frequently used by school buses are in compliance with Federal safety requirements. Title 23, section 646.214 of the Code of Federal Regulations requires that crossings be equipped with "automatic gates with flashing light signals" when a "substantial number of school buses cross."

Setting aside the issue that any school bus with children in it is substantial, when it comes to children's safety, it is impossible for school districts, public utility commissions, and the Department of Transportation to know whether any school buses are crossing gated or ungated tracks if this information is not reported.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. KUCINICH. I certainly would.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. I would be happy to accept the amendment. Your amendment, I think, is a good one.

Mr. KUCINICH. I want to thank the chairman for his assistance, and I know that the parents of school children all over this country will be grateful to you for your concern. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

The amendment was agreed to.

□ 1730

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. BEAN

Ms. BEAN. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Ms. BEAN:

Page 2, line 11, after the first dollar amount, insert the following "(reduced by \$2,700,000)".

Page 2, line 22, after the dollar amount, insert the following: "(reduced by \$2,700,000)".

Page 4, line 6, after the dollar amount, insert the following: "(reduced by \$4,000,000)".

Page 32, line 22, after the dollar amount, insert the following: "(increased by \$6,700,000)".

Page 32, line 23, after the dollar amount insert "(increased by \$6,700,000)".

Ms. BEAN (during the reading). Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Ms. BEAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment that would increase funding for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Operations and Research account by \$6.7 million. The amendment offsets this increase by decreasing \$2.7 million in funding from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and \$4 million from transportation planning and research account.

The intent of my amendment is to direct the Office of Fuel Economy to use these funds to assess how to best incentivize the auto industry to increase corporate average fuel economy,