

CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS



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OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN

240459

March 31, 2016

Mr. Daniel R. Elliott, III, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
Attn: Docket EP-728
395 E St. SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
April 08, 2016
Part of
Public Record

Dear Mr. Elliott:

As the Mayor and City Manager of a city served by Amtrak, we are writing to oppose the Surface Transportation Board's proposal EP 728 to allow freight railroads to decide whether freight trains would be prioritized over passenger trains. Federal law created the situation that Amtrak passenger trains have preference over freight while operating on a Railroad's track and this should not be changed through an administrative procedure. We are also very concerned about the proposed rule change that would allow service delays to be measured only from originating city to terminating city. We feel strongly that either of these changes, if adopted, would significantly disrupt passenger rail service to Newport News.

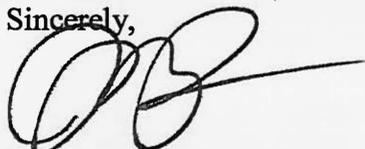
In 2015, the Newport News Amtrak station served over 330,000 riders with twice-daily service to Washington D.C. and the Northeast Corridor. Clearly, passenger rail is an important travel option for people in our community and should remain a transportation priority. The Surface Transportation Board should adhere to existing federal law and ensure that railroads continue to grant preference to Amtrak passenger trains operating on their tracks. The STB has, and should continue to exercise, the authority to intervene when delays exist or when railroads petition the agency for relief due to legitimate concerns on specific routes.

It is also important that on-time performance be measured at all stations. Limiting review of on-time performance solely to originating and terminating times on routes provides an incomplete picture of efficiency. Such an action would mean that on-time preference would never be measured in more than 20 states serving scores of cities along the routes. Analyzing delays on passenger rail routes between individual cities across the length of the route and finding ways to mitigate those delays is essential to improve the quality of passenger rail service.

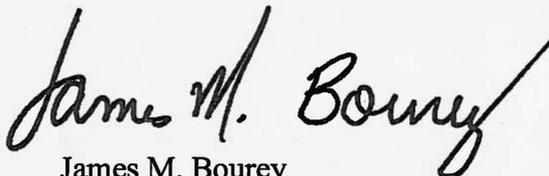
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The City of Newport News is a thriving community that depends on a viable, multi-modal transportation system to support its businesses, residents, and visitors. Passenger rail is vital component of this system. Therefore, we urge you to adhere to Public Law and withdraw the proposed Preference Policy as well as measure on-time performance at all stations not just the originating and terminating stations.

Sincerely,



McKinley L. Price, DDS
Mayor



James M. Bourey
City Manager

CC: Senator Mark Warner
Senator Tim Kaine
Congressman Randy Forbes
Congressman Scott Rigell
Congressman Robert C. Scott
Congressman Robert J. Wittman