

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEES:
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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
JOINT ECONOMIC

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 1, 2015

Mr. Steve Pitoniak, Chairman
Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission
135 Jefferson Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503

Ms. Nancy Snee, Vice-Chair
Luzerne County Planning Commission
Penn Place Building 20 North Pennsylvania Avenue
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711

Dear Chairman Pitoniak and Vice-Chair Snee:

The Lackawanna Cut-Off Restoration Project has submitted a request to be included in the Lackawanna-Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Long Term Plan and to be added as a line item for funding in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). I write today to express my support for this request and to urge you to give full and fair consideration to this important commuter rail line project.

The Lackawanna Cut-Off route was originally built to be a more direct route between the existing rail lines in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The route was abandoned in the 1970s and the 28 miles of track were removed. The Lackawanna Cut-Off Project intends to build a commuter rail line running from Scranton, Pennsylvania to Hoboken, New Jersey and Penn Station in Manhattan that would improve travel in northeast Pennsylvania to northwest New Jersey to New York City corridor. The New Jersey Transit has already committed \$62 million and has begun the reconstruction of the first 7.3 miles of track within the right-of way. The Project would use this funding to repurpose the existing freight rails and continue the development of the track. In addition, including the project as a line item in the STIP would ensure support and funding for important next steps, such as executing an update to the Project's capital construction cost.

Prioritizing this project within the MPO's Long Term Plan and the STIP is critical to maintaining the momentum built by stakeholders in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This initiative has the potential to provide a new modal option for commuters and travelers. Restoring commuter service represents a viable long-term solution to population growth related challenges the region faces. Ultimately, the project would improve access to employment opportunities, address existing travel concerns, and help alleviate congested roads and highways in the region.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my views. Please include this letter in the official record of the application. Consistent with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, I also respectfully request that you keep me informed of the status of this application. Finally if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me or Jack Groarke on my staff at (202) 224-6324.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator