

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
PENNSYLVANIA

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 1, 2015

Mr. Alan Baranski
Vice President, Transportation Planning Services Division
Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance
1151 Oak Street
Pittston, PA 18640-3726

Dear Vice President Baranski,

I write today to express support for the inclusion and prioritization of the Lackawanna Cut-Off Restoration Project in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Long Term Plan and the addition of the project in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) as a line item for funding. I urge you to give full and fair consideration to this proposal.

Over the past several years, discussions and considerations have occurred surrounding the Project, which includes the development of a commuter rail line running from Scranton, Pennsylvania to Hoboken, New Jersey and Penn Station in Manhattan. There are 60 miles of freight rail running through northeast Pennsylvania that can rapidly be made compatible with passenger trains, and which are already exclusively under public ownership and control. 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. Despite this, significant coordination, funding and support are still necessary to advancing the project past its current state.

This important economic initiative would utilize existing transportation rights of way to limit environmental impacts and would benefit the region's economy by offering a new modal option for commuters and travelers. Improving commuter transit options would also provide access to employment opportunities, and allow the region to positively address its existing travel concerns. Prioritizing the project within the MPO's Long Term Plan is critical to maintaining the momentum built by stakeholders in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and to demonstrating to the federal government our strong local commitment to bringing rail to our region. I hope that the MPO will assist in capitalizing on this momentum as it finalizes its Long Term Plan and that the Commonwealth will incorporate the project into the STIP.

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

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