

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 18, 2008

The Honorable James S. Simpson
Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
400 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20590

Ms. Brigid Hynes-Cherin
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration, Region II
One Bowling Green, Room 429
New York, NY 10004-1415

Dear Administrator Simpson and Regional Administrator Hynes-Cherin:

We write for clarification and confirmation of information regarding the proposed "Lackawanna Cutoff" rail project provided by Regional Administrator Hynes-Cherin and other Federal Transit Administration (FTA) officials to Congressional staff on a conference call the morning of August 11, 2008.

At a stakeholders meeting that we convened in Washington D.C. on June 18, 2008, Administrator Simpson stated the intention of the FTA to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the entire Lackawanna Cutoff rail project. However, it is our understanding that the FTA is not prepared to issue a FONSI for the entire project at this time due to comments submitted to the FTA during the public comment period, which ended July 30, 2008. We are advised that the FTA intends to address two comments submitted, which is estimated to take between three and six months.

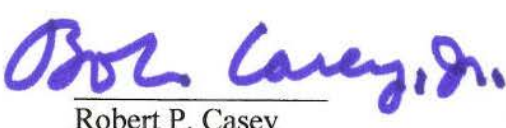
We are informed that the FTA intends to issue within one to two weeks a FONSI for a minimal operable segment between Port Morris, NJ and Andover, NJ. We are further informed that included within the FONSI, the FTA will state its intention to issue a FONSI for the entire project in approximately three months once the aforementioned comments are addressed.


This project to reestablish passenger rail service between Scranton, Pennsylvania and New York City, New York is indispensable to the future of northeast Pennsylvania. While we recognize the important need to adequately address all relevant public comments, we are nevertheless disappointed that this critical undertaking faces yet another procedural hurdle as our constituents are burdened with increased congestion and a lack of viable transportation options. Consistent with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, we stand ready to work in a cooperative manner with FTA to expedite this process through to completion.

Please confirm our interpretation of FTA's intentions on this matter. We thank you for your ongoing support and urge you to proceed through this process in a timely fashion.


Sincerely,


Arlen Specter
United States Senator


Robert P. Casey
United States Senator


Paul E. Kanjorski
Member of Congress


Christopher Carney
Member of Congress


Rodney Frelinghuysen
Member of Congress