



## Congress Should Fund Amtrak at FAST Act Levels



**Background:** TCU/IAM worked diligently with Congress and stakeholders throughout the railroad industry and rail labor community to hammer out funding levels in the FAST Act. It was the first long-term surface transportation bill in nearly a decade, and was negotiated on a bipartisan basis.

Included in the bill was long-term funding for Amtrak (\$8.1 billion over 5 years) that will allow the railroad to more adequately plan out its future operations. This kind of certainty is good for Amtrak, good for workers – in fact, it’s good for any business. To be clear: this was not as much as Amtrak or TCU/IAM asked for, but its solid funding levels and longevity provide both management and labor a path forward for years to come.

Recently there have been some calls for lowering Amtrak funding, or eliminating its long-distance service which serves 40% of America’s rural population in 46 states. TCU/IAM is strongly opposed to any funding changes to Amtrak and its long-distance service. TTD’s Ed Wytkind said it best in his recent letter-to-the-editor of the Wall Street Journal, responding to their editorial bashing Amtrak:

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

#### **Give Amtrak the Resources It Needs to Be Great**

We need funding for a national passenger rail system that serves the country, not just the East Coast.

April 23, 2017

Regarding your editorial “Amtrak’s Rolling Train Wreck” (April 13): Despite Amtrak’s continued growth and widespread popularity, the Journal’s editorial board continues to advance the same old, discredited vision—first starve Amtrak, then push for its privatization. This approach reflects a poor understanding of what the rest of the world knows. Fast, reliable and frequent trains require public investment. This is true of any functioning transportation system, and we know there isn’t a subsidy-free rail transportation system anywhere in the world.

We need funding for a national passenger rail system that serves the country, not just the East Coast. And Americans across the political spectrum agree with that vision. They want more Amtrak service and are willing to pay for it.

With a record of reliability, efficiency and now with new leadership, Amtrak and its employees are getting the job done in the face of punishing austerity budgets. Passengers are flocking to trains, and 2016 marked the sixth straight year that Amtrak served more than 30 million passengers.

It is an awful idea to carve up Amtrak and sell off its most prized assets so that private investors can send profits away as dividends rather than reinvest in better rail infrastructure. Ending long-haul routes as the Journal advocates would isolate already underserved communities that are starving for more, not fewer, transportation options. That doesn’t make sense.

We won’t have more “fast trains,” as the president has advocated, unless we’re willing to pay for them.

- Ed Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Dept., AFL-CIO