

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2018

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to recognize All Aboard Florida's *Brightline* rail system as a project of national and regional significance that deserves the support of your Department.

We are Members of Congress who share your vision of identifying innovative approaches to meet our nation's transportation infrastructure challenges and we support incentives that encourage significant private sector investment in transportation. *Brightline's* public statements of having invested more than \$1.5 billion of private capital is a perfect example of where a program like Private Activity Bonds can encourage private investments that create new federal, state and local tax revenues while providing a public benefit.

This transformative development project by All Aboard Florida is meeting a long-sought goal to connect Florida's major population centers with a viable intrastate passenger rail system that will help relieve congestion on our highways and offers a new mobility option for Florida's 20 million residents and 115 million annual visitors. Florida is expecting an additional 6 million residents between now and 2030 making this transportation alternative between Miami and Orlando needed more than ever.

Throughout the United States there have been many examples of publicly sponsored high speed rail projects which have been unsuccessful. The fact that a private company in Florida has committed to serve this public need by investing in construction of a higher-speed intercity system at their own risk is remarkable and worthy of recognition. It provides a tremendous opportunity for your Department to showcase a successful passenger rail project.

We are concerned that financing programs created by Congress with the express goal of encouraging private investment in projects that serve a public purpose are under attack by certain interests attempting to undermine this project. As a surface transportation system, *Brightline* clearly serves a public need and its value is already being demonstrated by its successful limited service in South Florida.

Brightline has successfully issued \$600 million in Private Activity Bonds which demonstrates the viability of this innovative financing program. We appreciate your Department's transparency with regard to the execution of programs authorized by Congress to encourage this type of investment. We disagree with those who suggest that a rail system, whether freight or passenger, is not a "surface transportation project."

President Trump's "Initiative for Rebuilding Infrastructure in America" supports Private Activity Bonds as a means to reduce the cost to the public for infrastructure and it supports broadening project eligibility. These proposals would build on privatization initiatives and financing programs such as Private Activity Bonds and Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing already authorized under previous surface transportation bills TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21, and the FAST Act.

As the *Brightline* system prepares to begin phase two construction to Orlando and looks to subsequent expansions to Tampa and Jacksonville, we appreciate your Department's oversight role as it relates to safety and in facilitating their progress through fair and objective consideration of eligible programs consistent with applicable law and regulations.

We recognize that in any large-scale infrastructure project there are always those who resist change and raise objections. While it is appropriate and necessary to address these concerns, as policy makers, we believe it equally important to recognize the greater benefits projects like *Brightline* can bring both in terms of the public good and as demonstrations of private innovation that addresses these challenges. An almost five year environmental review process that your Department undertook is a perfect example of how thorough the evaluation has been to date and why any argument that certain factors were not analyzed seems focused on stopping the project.

Brightline launched Miami service last week and we hope you will visit Miami and experience this amazing service. Thank you for your leadership and support for private projects that are supported by innovative financing programs.

Sincerely,



Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



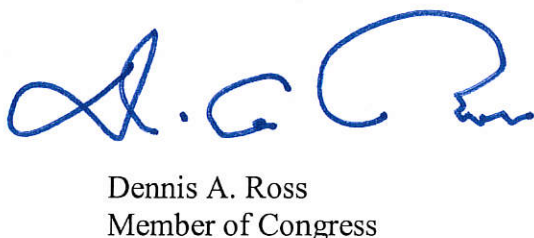
Bill Shuster
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress



Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

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Paul A. Gosar D.D.S.
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Darren Soto in blue ink.

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of John Rutherford in blue ink.

John Rutherford
Member of Congress

CC: Deputy Secretary Jeffrey A. Rosen