

Amtrak's Northeast Corridor needs \$20 billion to upgrade the southern portion of the Northeast Corridor alone. Meanwhile, on September 12, U.S. Rail News reported that Virginia and North Carolina estimate that it will take more than \$2.5 billion just to build high-speed rail infrastructure from Washington, D.C., to Charlotte, North Carolina. Proposals such as these and similar projects in Florida and in the Midwest would far surpass the funding level provided in competing bills.

TOO LITTLE FLEXIBILITY FOR STATES

Under competing proposals, Amtrak has too much control over the approval and funding of high speed systems. Amtrak's financial condition is in serious jeopardy, and I am concerned about its ability to perform the tasks assigned to it under these bills, such as issuing bonds, managing a fund to repay the bonds, managing the proceeds from the bonds, and repaying the bonds. I also have doubts that Amtrak could even raise the intended \$12 billion. As the Congressional Budget Office noted in a report on H.R. 2329 issued yesterday, bond buyers would be very reluctant to pay the face value of the bonds in later years because of the high risk that Amtrak could not repay the bonds. Moreover, Amtrak should concentrate on its core business of operating passenger trains and carrying mail and express and premium traffic.

RIDE-21 puts the federal and state governments in control of the development of high-speed passenger rail and balances their roles. On the one hand, it places the federal government, through the Department of Transportation, in control over approving the basic design of the high-speed rail network in the United States. Among its roles, the DOT must determine whether a corridor is a comprehensive and viable high-speed corridor. The DOT must determine whether the proposal makes a significant step toward achieving speeds of at least 125 miles per hour on the corridor. The DOT must determine whether all at-grade rail crossings are eliminated.

On the other hand, RIDE-21 puts states and compacts of states in the conductor's seat by giving them flexibility to address their transportation needs. States are free to develop the high-speed rail proposals that the DOT will review. States can choose which technology to employ and which routes make the most sense. States can take their project proposals directly to the DOT, without having to go through Amtrak as an intermediary. States, not Amtrak, control the bond proceeds, how they are managed, and how they are spent.

RIDE-21 does not leave states holding the bag, though. In fact, the cost of RIDE-21 to the states is about the same as the cost to the states of H.R. 2329. H.R. 2329 requires states to provide Amtrak with a minimum of 20 percent of the project cost. The states' contributions are then intended to grow over time so that Amtrak can use that money to pay off the bonds. If the states use a similar "sinking-fund structure," they will need to put up about the same amount of money so that it will grow into enough to pay off the bonds. Of course, under RIDE-21 states need not use a "sinking fund," because they are given flexibility to determine how to pay off the bonds.

Finally, Amtrak benefits from RIDE-21. As the only operator of high-speed passenger trains in the United States, Amtrak will be a partner with the states in many projects. And, it will have a clear competitive advantage when it comes time to bid on contracts to operate trains on this new rail network. As owner of the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak can also benefit from infrastructure improvements there, financed by the states under this bill. Amtrak can focus on operating trains more efficiently while the DOT and states worry about the improvement of passenger rail infrastructure. Therefore, if it demonstrates its ability to seriously compete for operation of new high speed corridors, Amtrak will actually benefit under RIDE-21.

MORE BANG FOR THE BUCK

RIDE-21 is fiscally responsible. The \$71 billion investment in infrastructure through RIDE-21 will cost the federal government about \$6 billion. The other bills, which provide for only a \$12 billion investment, will cost the treasury about \$7.4 billion, according to CBO. Any taxpayer can tell that RIDE-21 is a better value.

Finally, RIDE-21 creates jobs. \$71 billion to construct high-speed passenger rail infrastructure means good jobs for hard-working Americans.

I encourage Members to study RIDE-21 carefully and to become cosponsors of this bill.

TRIBUTE TO CALIFORNIA TASK FORCE 7

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 25, 2001

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to the California Task Force 7, Sacramento Urban Search and Rescue Unit. On September 11, 2001, just hours after the murderous attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, sixty-four members of the Sacramento Urban Search and Rescue Team departed for New York City to assist with the recovery efforts. As their family and friends gather to welcome them home, I ask all my colleagues to join with me in saluting one of America's finest search and rescue teams.

The California Task Force 7, Sacramento Urban Search and Rescue Team, is comprised of members from Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, Sacramento Fire Department, West Sacramento Fire, and El Dorado County Fire Protection District.

The Sacramento Urban Search and Rescue Unit is considered a multi-hazard discipline, as it may be needed for a variety of emergencies or disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, storms, tornadoes, floods, dam failures, technological accidents, terrorist activities, and hazardous material releases.

The California Task Force 7 has always been a leader in supporting rescue efforts throughout the United States. The Unit was one of the first Urban Search and Rescue teams mobilized after the Oklahoma City

bombing, arriving thirteen hours after the blast. The Unit also played an instrumental role in the rescue and relief efforts in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombing, the 1996 Yosemite Rock Slide, and the 1996/1997 California Floods.

The Sacramento Search and Rescue Unit is comprised of sixty-four highly qualified and dedicated specialists divided into four groups: Search, Rescue, Technical, and Medical. Team members include specialists in structural engineering, hazardous materials, heavy rigging, search and rescue, canine response, logistics, and medical response, which includes four medical specialists and two physicians. By design, there are two personnel assigned to each position for the rotation and relief. This allows for round-the-clock task force operations. A comprehensive equipment cache totaling 60,000 pounds supports the task force.

For ten days, the members of the California Task Force 7 worked tirelessly and selflessly in search of survivors in the rubble of the World Trade Center towers in New York City. These outstanding search and rescue specialists courageously answered our nation's call for their assistance and compassion during this hour of need. Their bravery, valor, and patriotism in the face of such tragic events is inspiring to all Sacramentans and to all Americans, and deserves our most heartfelt gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, as the exceptional people of the Sacramento Urban Search and Rescue Unit return home, we are honored to pay tribute to some of our area's most heroic and dedicated citizens. The California Task Force 7 serves as an invaluable resource to the Sacramento Region, the State of California, and the United States of America. We ask all of our colleagues to join us in thanking the men and women of the Sacramento Urban Search and Rescue Unit for their fearless dedication and service to our country during this national tragedy.

EDITORIAL IN THE JEFFERSON CITY NEWS TRIBUNE

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 25, 2001

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share with the Members of the House the excellent editorial in the Jefferson City News Tribune following Tuesday's horrific events. The fine statement is set forth as follows:

AMERICANS UNDER ATTACK

Abject honor does not begin to describe the reaction to this morning's attack on New York City and Washington, D.C.

Much remains unknown.

What is certain, however, is that the attack was an act of war on American people on American soil.

At this juncture, we know that shortly before 9 a.m. EDT today an American Airlines jet hijacked after take-off from Boston,