State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Legislative Office Building, Room 2300
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February 3, 2014

Anthony Foxx, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dannel P. Malloy, Governor
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Peter Rogoff, Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
East Building
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

James P. Redeker, Commissioner
CT Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike,
Newington, CT 06111

Thomas F. Prendergast, Chairman/CEO
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Senator Richard Blumenthal
90 State House Square 10th Floor
Hartford, CT, 06103

Representative Jim Himes
888 Washington Boulevard, 10th Floor
Stamford, CT 06901

Senator Chris Murphy
One Constitution Plaza, 7th Fl.
Hartford, Connecticut 06103

Representative Rosa DeLauro
59 Elm Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Representative Elizabeth Esty
114 West Main Street
Old Post Office Plaza, LLC
New Britain, CT 06051

Dear Sirs and Mesdames,

Metro North railroad represents one of the largest, busiest and most important transit systems in the country. It is the life blood of the Tri- State area's economy. A failing rail system seriously harms the regional economy, since nearly 40 million riders rely on the New Haven Line every year. Any disruption has an immediate ripple effect on business and jobs. Unfortunately, Metro North has lost credibility in its ability to operate a safe and dependable railroad.

The mounting problems that have plagued the Metro-North Railroad over the course of the last two years have reached a crisis point. A series of failures arising from mismanagement, negligence, and aged railroad infrastructure have resulted in fatal accidents and numerous injuries. Equipment breakdowns have considerably slowed train traffic or brought it to a halt. Rail commuters have reacted to this steadily worsening situation with an outcry for help. The level of frustration and safety concerns on the part of commuters is unprecedented. This has also been accompanied by expressions of concern and alarm from the general public.

A partial list of the serious accidents, fatalities, poor management, lack of oversight, alleged fraud and criminal activity are attached and speaks to a complete breakdown in the management structure of Metro North. Commuter safety has been compromised to the point where parents are concerned about their children who take the train to school daily, and commuters worry about derailments and power failures that will leave them stranded on the tracks without heat in the coldest winter in years. Since commuting on this rail line has become so unreliable, some commuters have stated that they are now at risk of losing their jobs. The public does not believe that Metro North has the management capacity to resolve these problems on its own.

The problems cannot wait to be resolved. This situation must be addressed now to restore trust in Metro North's ability to run its operations. Connecticut's hands are tied, however, as it has no leverage due to a 60 year contract that is not meeting the needs of its customers or a modern rail system. We believe that that federal intervention may be required to address this dire situation.

Intervention at a higher level of government may be necessary to correct this dangerous situation and to bring the railroad to working order. The Chairman and CEO of the MTA should establish measurable goals through which the railroad can advance to a safer and more dependable standard of service. Some of the issues commuters would like Metro North to address include: adherence to national safety standards and protocols that are currently not being met, commitment to immediately resolve passenger problems that are now occurring on a weekly basis, and evidence of management oversight of all employee activities. We are also suggesting that the federal government may wish to provide Metro-North with managerial and technical expertise that they may need to resolve the serious problems that they are experiencing. This assistance could be a valuable transitional tool for the new leadership of the railroad as it works to fill the existing void in its management.

The Transportation Committee and other concerned legislators of the Connecticut General Assembly also call your attention to Metro North's aging infrastructure. We ask our Congressional delegation and the U.S. Department of Transportation to prioritize funding for repairs and maintenance on Metro North, with particular attention to the New Haven Line. As it stands, the infrastructure is not strong enough to withstand the continuous problems affecting it. Some of the railroad's catenary lines and track are over 100 years old and are particularly vulnerable to severe weather conditions, which nonetheless occur regularly, and should not serve as an excuse for poor service. Adequate funding is also needed for a reliable, redundant power supply that is vital to any well-functioning and secure rail system.

We hope that federal and state authorities will see the value in giving such a vital service as Metro-North the resources and expertise it needs to change its management; its practices, procedure and safety protocol as well as strengthen its equipment and infrastructure. The result would be a railroad that is safer, more dependable, resilient and responsive to the needs of its commuters.

Thank you for your consideration of our request for your assistance, and for your attention to the serious concerns regarding such a vital national transportation corridor.

Sincerely,

Andrew Maynard
State Senator - 18th District
Co-Chair, Transportation Committee

Tony Guerrera
State Representative - 29th District
Co-Chair, Transportation Committee

Toni Boucher,
State Senator - 26th District
Ranking Member, Transportation Committee

David Scribner,
State Representative - 107th District
Ranking Member, Transportation Committee

Gail Lavielle, State Representative, 143rd District
Jonathan Steinberg, State Representative, 136th District
Brendan Sharkey, State Representative, 88th District
James Albis, State Representative, 99th District
Lonnie Reed, State Representative, 102nd District
Diana Urban, State Representative, 43rd District
Kim Fawcett, State Representative, 133rd District
Gerald Fox, III, State Representative, 146th District
Patricia Widlitz, State Representative, 98th District
Kim Rose, State Representative, 118th District
Elissa Wright, State Representative, 41st District
William Tong, State Representative, 147th District
Marilyn Giuliano, State Representative, 23rd District
Laura Hoydick, State Representative, 120th District
Edwin Vargas, State Representative, 6th District
Roberta Willis, State Representative, 64th District
Elizabeth Ritter, State Representative, 38th District
Paul Davis, State Representative, 117th District
Jack Hennessy, State Representative, 127th District
Bob Godfrey, State Representative, 110th District
Hilda Santiago, State Representative, 84th District
David Arconti, State Representative, 109th District
Daniel Fox, State Representative, 148th District
Timothy Bowles, State Representative, 42nd District
Theresa Conroy, State Representative, 105th District

Leonard Fasano, State Senator, 34th District
Bob Duff, State Senator, 25th District
Kevin Witkos, State Senator, 8th District
Andrea Stillman, State Senator, 20th District
L. Scott Frantz, State Senator, 36th District
Joseph Crisco, State Senator, 17th District
Edward Meyer, State Senator, 12th District
Joe Markley, State Senator, 16th District
Kevin Kelly, State Senator, 21st District
Jason Welch, State Senator, 31st District
Dante Bartolomeo, State Senator, 13th District

Addendum: A Partial List of the Serious Incidents on Metro North

- Winter 2011 (February) – heavy snow and ice throw 40% of rail cars off line

- Summer of 2011(July) – A train was stranded and passengers trapped for nearly an hour in Westport, CT in triple digit heat, with no water, and confusion on the part of the authorities over where stranded train was located. Those stranded finally called 911 to get rescued. A lack of effective communications prevented the authorities from quickly locating the train and evacuating the passengers

- 2012 – Metro-North decides to disband a special unit of inspectors who rode trains undercover to monitor crews when an audit discovered they were falsifying work records for train checks they didn't do.

- Spring of 2013 (May) – A derailment in Bridgeport sent seventy-six people to the hospital and caused $18.5 million in damage. Metro-North's chief engineer conceded there were red flags that should have triggered more thorough inspections and repairs where the derailment took place.

- Spring of 2013 (May 28) – A Metro north engineer was killed in West Haven by trainee error. Track 1 was supposed to be closed off to train traffic for a related construction project. But a student rail traffic controller reopened Track 1 remotely by removing an electronic block, authorities said. The deadly mistake was made without the knowledge of a supervisor

- Fall of 2013 (September) - Human error and the failure of a major feeder line caused an electric outage leaving commuters without service for a week. This created massive traffic jams on I-95 highway and severely affected the region's economy.

- Winter of 2013 (December 1st) – Four passengers died and scores seriously injured on the Sunday after Thanksgiving when a speeding train going 80 miles an hour in a 30 mile an hour zone went off the tracks in the Spuyten Duyvil section of the Bronx.

- Winter of 2013 (December 20) – It was revealed that Metro North employees were falsifying their time sheets and using MTA vehicles for personal use, driving to PA to buy cigarettes when clocked in as "on the job".

- Winter of 2013 (January 3) – A woman was killed in Westport on the tracks and the MTA never reported the incident to local police.

- Winter 2014 (January 22) - A Metro-North car was on stranded tracks for 2.5 hours on a Wednesday Evening at 9 pm in freezing conditions with no heat in the rail cars. A switch issue delayed a rescue train.

- Winter 2014 (January 23) – Metro North trains were stuck on tracks on a Thursday evening for two hours after a system wide failure due to human error. The MTA announced that the computers that operate the railroad's signals lost power when technicians never realized that a

wire had been disconnected on the power supply during a signal project that was undertaken during rush hour.

- Winter 2014 - The rescue trains sent to stranded passengers on January 22, and 23 did not include heat or emergency portable lights to help guide the way for passenger being led across the tracks to get to functioning rail cars, a transfer that took nearly 45 minutes during zero degree temperatures.

- Winter 2014 (January 28, 2014) – A Metro North employee was arrested for alleged sexual assault of a sleeping passenger on a train.