

Dear ----

I am a constituent of yours from _____ and I am writing to you to express my strong opposition to Amtrak's recent policy change, ceasing operations of charter services and special trains. In addition to requesting your personal attention to this matter, I urge you to call upon your colleagues on the Congressional Committee on Transportation to use their influence to reverse this detrimental policy decision.

This action will have a devastating impact on important tourism resources and small businesses within your district and across the nation.

While a recent Wall Street Journal article might have left you with an impression of private rail car owners as a group of wealthy individuals who operate their private cars for their own personal enjoyment, the vast majority of private rail are operated as small, family-owned businesses or railroad history non-profits, offering chartered rail excursions as an important sector of the travel and tourism industry. These trips attract tourists and travelers from around the globe to enjoy the local resources of the communities through which they travel – staying at local hotels, patronizing local businesses, and directing resources into the local economy.

The jobs lost as a result of this policy directive will include people employed by private rail car owners as chefs, mechanics, porters, tour hosts, and other jobs. Additionally impacted will be the independent maintenance, engineering, and restoration contractors, as well as an entire division of Amtrak personnel who coordinate these private rail moves -- all of whom keep this vital link to America's proud railroad heritage alive.

If this ill-advised policy is implemented, Amtrak will be forfeiting millions of dollars in annual haulage fees from private rail car operators, which seems particularly shortsighted given their mission of reducing federal railroad subsidies.

Private rail car operators and passengers patronize local hotels, restaurants, businesses, attractions and cultural resources along their routes. As trains go to many places outside the reach of typical air and car travel, resources are directed to segments of the economy often bypassed by other streams of tourism revenue. One example of this can be seen in West Virginia, where the New River Train, operated by the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society, has been run continuously for over 50 years between Huntington and Hinton. With two weekends of trips a year, it generates an estimated \$4 Million in County and State revenue in only 2 weekends of operation a year. Small privately owned excursion companies and non-profit railroad historical societies across the nation operate hundreds of trip like this each year, all paying Amtrak to move their equipment. The impact of this policy change will be catastrophic to these small businesses and non-profits.

Amtrak's policy change regarding private rail cars will have a chilling effect on many small businesses as well as the tourism and hospitality industries within your district and across the nation. Please act today.

Thank you,

Sincerely,