April 3, 2024

Honorable Kathy Hochul

Governor

The State of New York

NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: **Advancing Syracuse Area Passenger Rail Improvements**

Dear Governor Hochul:

I am writing to call your attention to the need and opportunity to advance the Syracuse area intercity passenger rail improvements. With the passage of the bi-partisan infrastructure bill in 2021 and the State’s 2023 receipt of a Record of Decision from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for its 90B Service Development Plan (SDP) for the Empire Corridor, we have a unique opportunity to begin advancing intercity passenger rail improvements for residents of upstate New York.

With Micron set to build one of the largest chip manufacturing plants in North America just outside of Syracuse, it is time to begin the design and construction of projects identified in the SDP for the Syracuse area. The Syracuse station area has long been a three-track bottleneck for both passenger and freight trains on the Empire Corridor. Additionally, the nearby two-track Park Street rail bridge has inadequate roadway clearance and is regularly the site of truck “hits” which disrupt vehicular and rail traffic.

These projects are noted in the HSR-11 project descriptions in the SDP. Replacement of the Park Street bridge with a new, five-track bridge width, in accordance with the SDP, along with adequate roadway clearance below and sidewalks for safe pedestrian and bicycle passage is a long overdue need. This project, along with the planned fourth track through Syracuse station and rebuilt high-level platforms would allow CSXT and Amtrak to separate freight and passenger movements through the station area and allow Amtrak to stop trains in both directions simultaneously in Syracuse if necessary.

This work would also ease freight shipments to and from the Micron plant via the existing freight spur which diverts to the north from Syracuse and allow for easier stopping at the NY State Fairgrounds station for major events there.

The FRA’s recent inclusion of the Empire Corridor in the Corridor Identification and Development program and upcoming FY25 passenger rail discretionary grant opportunities provide New York with the opportunity to advance a portion of the Syracuse area projects. I urge you to make the Syracuse projects a higher priority in the State’s rail improvement plan.

Sincerely,



Brandon Williams

Member of Congress