

April 15, 2015

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation  
400 North St., 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

ATTN: Mr. Barry Schoch, PE; PennDOT Secretary  
Ref: Amtrak Pennsylvanian service expansion between Pittsburgh and points east

Secretary Schoch:

On behalf of Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC), I am writing in support of the requested expansion of Amtrak's Pennsylvanian service to three trains per day.

Oakland is the third largest employment center in the state of Pennsylvania. It is also home to medical facilities, universities, and cultural institutions. These educational and medical institutions are some of the main drivers of Pittsburgh's new economy and make Oakland a regional and national destination. Improving passenger rail service between Pittsburgh and points east will provide Oakland with the necessary connections to continue to thrive as an economic hub going forward.

Although our city is within 500 miles of over half of the US population, our regional connections are in need of improvement. Our city's air service to major economic centers is on the decline and increasingly unaffordable, as well as being nonexistent between here and Harrisburg. Intercity bus service faces similar issues, and driving is an expensive, tiring option that overburdens Pennsylvania's highways. Passenger rail provides a viable alternative that is also less subject to the price volatilities of other modes, but having only one train a day seriously hampers the Pennsylvanian's usability.

The report titled *On Track to Accessibility* makes clear that adding two more trains to the Pennsylvanian route has little downside. The report's conservative estimates show a clear return on investment. Ridership would nearly double. This solution is also a fraction of the cost of other alternatives, more easily implemented, could spur station-area development, and relieve the burden on Pennsylvania's highways and bridges.

Pittsburgh and Oakland need and deserve more reliable transportation connections. We urge you to take this first step and request additional Pennsylvanian service.

Sincerely,



Wanda E. Wilson  
Executive Director