

April 28, 2015

The Honorable Leslie Richards
Acting Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Secretary Richards:

The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership recently shared the *On Track to Accessibility, Increasing Service of the Pennsylvanian: Benefits and Cost* study with VisitPITTSBURGH. In its efforts to advocate for increased passenger rail service between Pittsburgh and New York City, the report does provide compelling reasons for expansion.

As the official tourism promotion agency for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, VisitPITTSBURGH certainly has strong interest in any progress that can be made to provide more and better in-bound transportation services for visitors to select. Adding more frequent rail service would certainly accommodate thousands of new passengers coming to our region.

While we encourage a request for additional service, if there is the possibility of one of the two additions having fewer stops, perhaps a more high-speed version of the current Pennsylvanian with stops only in Harrisburg and Philadelphia, this would be the best possible solution to the one of the main reasons people don't select rail. It just takes too long to get from here to there. A streamlined approach for one of the three trains would be most welcomed by our organization.

Whether or not that can be a reality, know that VisitPITTSBURGH is in favor of efforts to supply better passenger rail service for Pittsburgh. The reasons, as documented in the *Pennsylvanian* report, are many. The following benefits to tourism were culled from this study as well as other transportation reports recently received:

- Traveling by train has become increasingly more popular to younger generations including Millennials. The report states travel by train is most popular among students and especially with international students. This a group we seek to attract in larger numbers to Pittsburgh.
- Traveling by train is popular among mature travelers. Pittsburgh has boasted being a great draw for travelers in the 65+ age demographic.
- Traveling by train is a popular mode of transport for international travelers. As Brand USA moves into its fourth year of marketing the United States to the world, second-tier destinations like ours could potentially see increased interest from international visitors who have already visited a first-tier destination in a previous trip. International travelers are also known to visit more than one destination during their trip to the states – having increased access to Pittsburgh from a port of entry such as Philadelphia could result in more visitation.

- Increasing service on the Pennsylvanian has the potential to increase ridership by nearly 200,000 people in the first year after the increase. That increase could potentially bring more people to our destination. The anticipated success of the route is based on observed ridership from the past ten years. During this time period ridership nearly doubled.
- The Pennsylvanian provides service to people who live within 500 miles of Pittsburgh. This service area has been identified by VisitPITTSBURGH as being a key source market for visitors.
- The decline in flight service increases the need to have more transportation options for visitors.
- More travel by train as opposed to automobile benefits the environment by decreasing emissions. This coincides well with our “green” agenda.
- Service between Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C., through Philadelphia increases the opportunities for visitors cycling one-way on the Great Allegheny Passage, connecting our city to the nation's capitol for those electing to ride the train on their return.
- Increased service will grow business investment which in turn can create a rise in business transient stays at local hotels.
- The initiative has been endorsed by the board of the Greater Pittsburgh Hotel Association, a trusted partner in the local travel industry.
- Overall increased transportation options increases our destination’s competitiveness.

VisitPITTSBURGH recommends any service that is likely to bring more visitors to our region. We urge you to consider the need for increased passenger rail service for Pittsburgh.

Sincerely,



Craig Davis
President & CEO