



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Reading to Philadelphia Passenger Rail Project Advances SRPRA and Amtrak Sign MOU

Reading, Pennsylvania – The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize their relationship as both parties work to bring passenger rail back to Reading, Pottstown, and Phoenixville, re-connecting these communities with Philadelphia, New York, Amtrak's entire Northeast Corridor (NEC), and cities and towns beyond the NEC.

"Amtrak is proud to partner with the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority to advance the potential restoration of passenger rail between Reading and Philadelphia," said Amtrak Vice President of Planning and State Partnerships Nicole Bucich. "We look forward to the opportunity to reconnect communities like Reading to the Northeast Corridor and beyond, to support their economic and community development."

SRPRA previously designated Amtrak as the proposed operator of the Reading – Philadelphia – New York Corridor and has coordinated with Amtrak while SRPRA completed Step 1 of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). The MOU accomplishes three objectives:

1. It affirms SRPRA's intention to have Amtrak be the operator of the new passenger rail service. The decision to propose Amtrak as the operator was made for multiple reasons including potential economies of scale related to Amtrak operating resources based in Philadelphia and the potential availability of federal funding to support intercity passenger rail development.
2. It formalizes Amtrak's commitment to complete the ridership forecasting, revenue estimating, and operating and maintenance cost estimating tasks in CIDP Step 2, at no cost to SRPRA. Amtrak has begun working on these tasks. At the same time, SRPRA has been working on multiple preliminary Step 2 tasks utilizing the in-house capabilities of its Executive Director and staff personnel from the Planning Commissions of Berks, Montgomery, and Chester Counties. Tasks being performed by SRPRA include development of the Project Management Plan, Draft Statement of Purpose & Need, Preliminary Route Options Analysis, and outreach plans for railroad stakeholders, government agencies, and the general public. These efforts getting underway before SRPRA formally enters Step 2 will significantly shorten the time required to complete that Step.
3. It expresses Amtrak's willingness to work with SRPRA, under terms to be negotiated, on CIDP Step 3 tasks such as developing environmental documentation, and post-CIDP tasks such as final design. Amtrak's continued involvement will help maintain continuity and reduce potential coordination challenges as the Project advances into construction and startup, and, ultimately, into revenue service.

Once SRPRA formally advances into Step 2, the pace of work will increase as multiple additional tasks get underway, including working with Norfolk Southern on computer-based operations simulation, planning of necessary infrastructure improvements, capital cost estimating, and expanded public outreach.

SRPRA's Chair, Chester County Commissioner Marian Moskowitz commented, "This MOU is a major milestone in the Authority's progress toward reintroduction of intercity passenger rail service in our region. We are grateful to Amtrak for their support, to all our stakeholders including the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, and to our elected officials at all levels on both sides of the aisle who continue to help us advance this effort."

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