

**Washington, D.C.** - Congressman David Price (D-NC) today supported a bill in the U.S. House to expand passenger rail service as an alternative to automobile travel. Household budgets are being strained by the rising price of gas, and Price says more cost effective options, such as rail travel, should be available to North Carolina families.

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 ( [H.R. 6003](#) ) would reauthorize federal support to modernize Amtrak, and authorize an expansion of intercity passenger rail service, providing \$14.4 billion over the next five years. The legislation passed with a bipartisan vote of 311 to 104.

The average price of gasoline in the U.S. is over \$4 a gallon, which is putting tremendous strain on the many commuters and businesses in the Triangle and making public transportation a more attractive option. Price has long advocated expanding transportation options available to consumers, including bus and commuter rail transit and intercity passenger rail. He says the price of gas makes it more important than ever to improve upon our transit infrastructure.

"Too many Triangle families have few or no alternatives to automobile travel," Price said. "And with the price of gas shooting through the roof, this is an increasingly painful predicament. We've got to give people alternatives through bus, transit, and rail. This bill will put us on that path."

According to the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the state is experiencing unprecedented growth in ridership for its Piedmont and Carolinian passenger trains. In the month of May, ridership on the Piedmont was up 26.9% and ridership on the Carolinian was up 40.3%. Nationwide, Amtrak ridership was up 11% for the first seven months of the 2008 fiscal year (beginning October 2007), compared with the same period a year earlier.

"Our state is in a good position to take advantage of the funding authorized in this bill," Price added. "The federal government has designated the route between Washington, DC and Charlotte, which passes through Raleigh and Durham, as the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor, and funding in this bill would help move along the development of this important resource for our region."

## **RAIL DEVELOPMENT BILL PROVIDES ALTERNATIVES TO PAIN AT THE PUMP**

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The High Speed Rail Corridor designation means trains on the route will travel at speeds up to 110 mph, utilize multi-modal connections to improve interconnectivity across the region, and improve Amtrak's reliability and on-time performance in the area.

By providing \$7.2 billion in capital and operating grants, the bill will help improve existing rail service across the entire Amtrak network. The bill would create a State Capital Grant program (\$500 million per year), which would help states like North Carolina to pay for the capital costs of facilities and equipment necessary to provide new or improved intercity passenger rail.

H.R. 6003 would also authorize \$1.75 billion (\$350 million per year) for grants to states and/or Amtrak to finance the construction and equipment for 11 authorized high-speed rail corridors. The Federal share of the grants is up to 80 percent. The Secretary of Transportation would award these grants on a competitive basis for projects based on economic performance, expected ridership, and other factors.

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