

Amtrak project presents a key test for Bresnahan

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There's no downplaying the importance of passenger rail service returning to Northeast Pennsylvania.

When Amtrak released a study two years ago estimating the service could produce about \$84 million in economic development each year, not to mention the amount of jobs that would be made available along the line, it created an impetus for the project.

No longer was it simply a nice feature for the area to have, but an absolute necessity.

Imagine the boon to tourism and recreation here, and the increased access students from outside the area would have to our exceptional regional colleges. Think of the job opportunities for area residents that open up as travel between our area, the Poconos and the nation's biggest city can be reasonably scheduled.

There's just too much potential upside, for too many people in a region that sure could use a boost, not to push this proverbial locomotive into the station.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's recent quashing of a proposed amendment that would have instituted key safeguards for projects accepted into the Corridor Identification and Development Program before President Donald Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration doesn't end the potential for federal funding. But, it does provide a reminder that the project is not at the finish line, and that it now needs its fair share of advocates in Washington, D.C. to get it there.

Congressman Rob Bresnahan, R-8, Dallas Twp., promises to be a key voice advocating for the project, and he showed political courage being the only GOP member of the committee to vote in favor of the protections. The measure still failed without any other Republican support. But Bresnahan's willingness to cross party lines should register as an indication to federal lawmakers and President Donald Trump — who gave Bresnahan's 2026 reelection campaign a "complete and total endorsement" last week — of the project's vital importance in Northeast Pennsylvania.

"Jobs and our growing economy shouldn't be partisan — which is why I voted with the other side of the aisle on amendments to protect critical Amtrak projects," Bresnahan said in a statement. "Like my predecessor, Congressman Matt Cartwright, I am a proud supporter of

Amtrak, especially the proposed Scranton to New York City Amtrak line. I will continue to advocate for the return of Amtrak to NEPA, allowing our region to continue its momentum as a growing economic, logistics and tourism powerhouse.”

Voting against the protections gives Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy the flexibility to cut funds from important development projects in order to fund the rest of Trump’s agenda. But as far as infrastructure and job creation and promoting fertile ground for new business in areas like this, it’s obvious that the federal investment is worthwhile and necessary.

For a freshman congressman like Bresnahan, who is still new to Washington and working to create a firmer foothold with voters after a close race to unseat Cartwright last year, the future of the rail presents a unique challenge. It will be a test of his abilities not just to work across the aisle, but to be convincing within his own party that a project not perfectly aligned with the president’s agenda or plans for massive tax cuts is still critical to the public good in his always hotly contested district.

Bringing back passenger rail to the area for the first time in more than a half century represents a long-overdue government investment in a region that not only needs it to maintain that momentum Bresnahan spoke of, but deserves it after years of planning and pushing. It will be hard work for Bresnahan, but important indeed for those he represents.