

# Bresnahan offers 'strong support' for Scranton to New York City passenger train

**WVIA | By Borys Krawczeniuk | WVIA News**

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In a letter Thursday sure to hearten its backers, U.S. Rep. Rob Bresnahan offers “strong support” for a proposed passenger train between Scranton and New York City.

With supporters worried about the train’s future because of President Donald Trump’s desire to slash federal spending, Bresnahan said the train would boost Northeast Pennsylvania’s economy.

“This project, which will connect Scranton and New York City by rail for the first time in 55 years, will help Northeastern Pennsylvania continue its momentum as a growing economic, logistics, and tourism powerhouse,” Bresnahan said in the letter addressed to Federal Railroad Administration Acting Administrator Michael Lestingi.

In January, the FRA authorized the state Department of Transportation to begin developing a service development plan that would lay out specifics of how the trains — to be run by Amtrak — would operate. The Scranton-to-New York City route was one of five nationwide authorized to develop a plan just before President Joe Biden left office.

The federal government is supposed to cover 90% of the estimated \$5.46 million planning cost with PennDOT covering the other 10%.

“This proposed project will carry an estimated 470,000 passengers per year and contribute \$84 million in local economic development and opportunity,” Bresnahan wrote, quoting an Amtrak study’s estimate.

The FRA has made no commitments to the local project or any other on construction money.

Bresnahan said the train would especially aid Monroe County’s “growing outdoor recreation economy” and allow “visitors from New York to come and experience all the wonders of Northeastern Pennsylvania.”

He asked the agency to “continue to give the project due and fair consideration” as the service development plan is completed.

“This project represents a significant investment not only in Northeastern Pennsylvania but also in Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor and the broader national passenger rail system,” Bresnahan wrote. “I appreciate your commitment to reviewing this project’s application with fairness and transparency, and I look forward to your positive consideration.”

Before Thursday, Bresnahan had expressed initial support in an interview the day after his election. He said he would support the train if the project could produce economic benefits and maintain safe communities “without burdening our taxpayers.”

Attorney Larry Malski, president of the Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority, one of the train’s chief sponsors, said Bresnahan and his staff expressed support in meetings since his election in November, but hearing the support publicly helps.

“It’s definitely a very big plus,” Malski said. “It helps with everyone. It helps with

state match to the federal funds. All the pieces are falling together, and having Congressman Bresnahan's support at this level, with his staff, etc., is very important."

In an interview late last month, PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll said the department will keep the planning moving along because the FRA obligated itself to paying for the plan.

"So, if the federal funds are obligated, we consider them contractually married to the commonwealth (state)," he said. "They haven't told us to stop. They know ... the five — Scranton being one — that are developing those service development plans, and we continue with their full knowledge."

FRA spokesman William Wong confirmed the agency is still paying for the planning.

The service plan will include determining numbers of trips, preliminary construction costs and scheduling, environmental effects and identifying potential funding future funding sources.

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Borys joins WVIA News from The Scranton Times-Tribune, where he served as an investigative reporter and covered a wide range of political stories. His work has been recognized with numerous national and state journalism awards from the Inland Press Association, Pennsylvania Associated Press Managing Editors, Society of Professional Journalists and Pennsylvania Newsmedia Association.

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