

The Honorable John Kerry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2008

Dear Senator Kerry,

The undersigned organizations write to express support for the *High Speed Rail for America Act*, an important first step toward creating a modern and reliable high-speed rail network in the United States. In an era of soaring fuel prices, overburdened airports and highways, and a sluggish economy, we join you in your call for decisive change and a new vision for the way people get around in our country.

Americans are searching for alternatives to high prices at the pump and the headaches of air travel. They are turning to rail and transit in record numbers. Rail travel ridership increased each of the last five years, while last year the total vehicle miles traveled for cars and trucks fell for the first time since the oil crisis of the 1970s. Now more than ever, we need federal investment to meet these trends and prepare us for the future. That means much more and faster rail travel nationwide.

High-speed rail would provide clean, safe, reliable and efficient travel between America's population centers. Long-term federal investment in rail would also create tens of thousands of quality jobs in states that have experienced losses in the technology, construction, and engineering sectors over the last decade.

This legislation provides two necessary components for the establishment of a world class high speed rail system in America: dedicated funding and federal coordination. Over six years, the bill provides \$200 million a year in grants, \$8 billion in tax exempt bonds, \$10 billion in tax credit bonds for high-speed intercity rail facilities, and \$5.4 billion in tax credit bonds for rail infrastructure. The bill also establishes a national office of high-speed rail to serve as a central communication and planning hub to ensure that the mission stays on track.

We applaud your leadership on this issue. Decades ago, America completed the interstate highway system. Now, we face congestion on our highways and in our skies, an addiction to oil, and an overheating planet. We need legislation like the *High Speed Rail for America Act* to provide Americans a better way to go.

Sincerely,

The American Planning Association
Environmental Defense Fund
Friends of the Earth
National Association of Rail Passengers
Reconnecting America
Smart Growth America
Construction Management Association
of America

Environment America
Environment and Energy Study Institute
Midwest High Speed Rail Association
National Resources Defense Council
Sierra Club
US Public Interest Research Group

