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Public Safety
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3012

April 10, 2015

Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Wheeler,

I respectfully request that you improve the Amtrak Police Department's capacity to keep riders throughout the Amtrak system safe by granting them access to public safety frequencies. This would enable Amtrak police to effectively communicate and share data with other law enforcement agencies when needed, especially in times of crisis.

The Amtrak Police Department currently operates on an antiquated radio frequency spectrum that prevents Amtrak police officers nationwide from communicating with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Over a decade ago, incompatibility of radio systems were blamed for some of the confusion among first responders to the World Trade Center tragedy. Since that time, interoperability, or the ability of agencies to talk and exchange information in real time, has been identified as a high priority in public safety.

The Amtrak Police Department is on the frontlines of the fight to ensure the safety of the nearly 2 million riders who board Amtrak Trains annually and the millions of residents who live in cities along the Amtrak corridor. Amtrak Police personnel have been an invaluable resource to local, state, and federal law enforcement, as evidenced by the "Operation RAILS SAFE," a coordinated effort between the Amtrak Police Department, the New York City Police Department, and the Transportation Security Administration that provides heightened station and right of way patrols, increased security presence onboard trains, explosive detection canine sweeps, random passenger bag inspections, and counter-surveillance. The success of this program demonstrates the necessity of interoperability between Amtrak and various law enforcement agencies. Amtrak patrol officers are often first responders in times of crisis. They are expected to be visible, deter crime, enforce laws, and conduct follow-up investigations. Yet, if an emergency occurs, Amtrak officers are unable to utilize their radio technology to seek support from local law enforcement agencies.

Optimizing transportation security is important for cities like Philadelphia, where transportation needs are increasing. In September 2015, Pope Francis and the World Meeting of Families will meet in the city of Philadelphia. The events around this convening are expected to attract two

million visitors to the city. Additionally, Philadelphia will host the 2016 Democratic National Convention during the week of July 25, 2016 which will significantly increase congestion, movement, and the need for safe transportation. It is imperative that Philadelphia and cities across the country are able to communicate and respond adequately in the event of an emergency. By granting the Amtrak Police Department access to public safety frequencies, we ensure public safety.

First responders of all kinds need access to effective, reliable wireless communications with other public safety agencies when responding to dangerous situations on our railways. To this end, public safety radio communications and interoperability are critical to the safety and well-being of our officers and the public.

I urge the Commission to amend Title 47 of the Code of Federal Regulations in sections 90.20, 90.617, and 90.523 to allow Amtrak Police the necessary authority to license and operate on 700, 800, or 900 MHz interoperability frequencies.

Sincerely,



BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN

U.S. House of Representatives

New Jersey Twelfth District