



Dennis J. Newman
Executive Vice President, Strategy, Planning & Accessibility

September 21, 2022

Mr. Eric Buehlmann
Deputy Executive Director of Public Policy
National Disability Rights Network
820 First Street, N.E., Suite 740
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Buehlmann:

We are in receipt of your letter dated August 8, 2022, to Stephen Gardner, Amtrak's Chief Executive Officer, following up on Amtrak's letter to the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) dated April 15, 2022, regarding the aisle width of the new intercity trains. As stated in previous conversations and letters, Amtrak continues to prioritize opportunities for engagement, transparency, and collaborative dialogue with the disability community, including through quarterly meetings with disability organizations (most recently, *September 1, 2022*), mock-up review tours (*May 5 and July 14, 2022*), and ad hoc meetings on topics to obtain consensus on design options (*August 24, 2022*). We strive to incorporate as many recommendations as possible toward designing and implementing safe, efficient, sustainable, and accessible new trains that include expanded features and services with enhanced accessibility as a core element in the design.

Amtrak works closely with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to ensure we are responsible stewards of federal funds and compliant with regulations. Recently, after Amtrak and FRA closely reviewed the issue of the aisle width of the new intercity trains, the Office of Civil Rights of the FRA declined to direct Amtrak to provide wider aisles. The FRA acknowledged that providing wider aisles would require Amtrak either to narrow its current seat width, which Amtrak maintains would impact



ridership by taking away a competitive advantage Amtrak has over airline travel, or to remove a seat from each row, reducing capacity and ridership. However, the FRA, Office of Secretary of Transportation, and Amtrak aligned on several actions for Amtrak to take to ensure that, in comparison with accessibility on the Amfleets, passengers with disabilities will have enhanced access to amenities on the new intercity trains as ridership by passengers with disabilities grows.

As presented at the July 2022 Amtrak Board of Directors' session with representatives from disability organizations, Amtrak is developing plans to execute the following actions to further support and engage with the disability community:

- Add one wheelchair/mobility aid space to create a sixth all-amenity access space in the coach car adjacent to the food service car;
- Establish and promote operational improvements to ticketing and pricing systems to ensure passengers traveling in wheelchairs and their travel companions are seated in spaces accessible to amenities without charges for premium seating;
- Conduct an annual ridership trends analysis including all passengers needing a wider aisle to access amenities;
- Make public the policy for requesting removal of seats to accommodate passengers traveling together in wheeled mobility devices;
- Survey passengers, including those who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids and those who may benefit from larger seats, regarding how changes to seating configuration would impact future ridership; and
- Continue collaboration with representatives from the disability community and DOT/FRA stakeholders to commercialize service on the intercity trains. This entails developing a broader disability outreach plan and studying the entire passenger experience.

As you are aware, in reference to the first item, Amtrak presented the proposed location of the sixth wheelchair space to representatives of the



disability community for preferences and feedback on August 24, 2022, and consensus was reached on the location of that space. Additional feedback was received to reverse the transfer seats closest to the designated wheelchair space, so the seats can face the space for easier transfer. This suggestion is being reviewed for crashworthiness. Amtrak will continue to collaborate with the disability community as a key stakeholder for these critical decisions.

Amtrak is committed to serving passengers with disabilities by working with disability organizations and members of the disability community to continue improving Amtrak's accessibility. We must accomplish this while delivering on our core product objectives, one of which is to comfortably and safely accommodate as many passengers as possible. As we enter a new era of modernized and sustainable transportation, Amtrak remains dedicated to serving all our passengers, including our passengers with disabilities, and fulfilling the significant responsibility that comes with being *America's Railroad*.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D.J. Newman".

Dennis J. Newman
*Executive Vice President,
Strategy, Planning and Accessibility*