

Castle Outlines Increased Rail Funding Initiatives -- June 5, 2006

Discusses increase in rail security funding and his fight to increase funding for Amtrak, which once again has been gutted

Wilmington, DE -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, co-chair of the Passenger Rail Caucus, today discussed an increase of \$50 million for rail security that passed through his amendment to the Homeland Security spending bill, which would bring the total to \$200 million for FY 07. At the same time, Congressman Castle stressed once again the need for more Amtrak funding, only a week after its budget was reduced by \$394 million from FY06 funding levels in the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee.

"On May 25, the Northeast Corridor came to a halt and close to 70,000 commuters were effectively stranded between Boston and Washington D.C. Although this frightening incident turned out to be the result of a power outage, it underscores the sheer panic and disruption that a terrorist attack on rail systems could cause. That is why I am happy to announce that two weeks ago, during consideration of the Homeland Security spending bill, I succeeded in including a bipartisan amendment to boost funding for rail security to \$200 million in FY07. This was in part due to strong support from the House Passenger Rail Caucus, which I founded in 2005 and although it is well under what is needed, it is a promising step in the right direction.

"However, it is unfortunate that even with this good news, there was disappointing action from the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee which approved a draft bill that provides \$900 million for Amtrak which is down \$394 million from the FY06 enacted level. This is a decrease of 30 percent. Most estimates are that Amtrak needs between \$1.4 billion and \$2 billion to provide safe and effective service. Last year, the House succeeded in overcoming the Administration's proposal of \$0 for Amtrak and it will once again take strong, unified support from Members of the Passenger Rail Caucus to raise Amtrak funding to an acceptable level

Castle's amendment to boost rail security would add more police officers, canine teams, security cameras, fences, and chemical detection systems and would apply to all transit such as buses, subways, SEPTA and Amtrak, the primary function being rail-related modes. Over the last several years, funding for rail security grants has been stagnant at \$150 million and annual rail security spending for the TSA has averaged about \$10 million. Over this same period, the U.S. government has spent close to \$20 billion on aviation security. In fact, last year the TSA spent \$16 million on new uniforms for airport screeners but only spent a total of \$8M on all rail security efforts. The American Public Transportation Association recently estimated that \$560 million is necessary to begin securing rail and transit system this year alone.