

Bipartisan Legislation Introduced to Strengthen and Restore the Nation's Long-Distance Passenger Rail Network

S. 3728 Clarifies Federal Responsibility for Long-Distance Corridors in the Corridor Identification and Development Program

BILLINGS, MT, UNITED STATES, March 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority](#) (BSPRA) welcomes the introduction of S. 3728, the Long-Distance Corridor Relief Enhancement Act, bipartisan legislation introduced by U.S. Senator Tim Sheehy (R-MT) and co-sponsored by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) to clarify federal policy for long-distance passenger rail corridors participating in the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program.

If enacted, S. 3728 ensures that long-distance corridors are exempt from a non-federal match requirement during the planning and development phases of the Corridor ID program. The legislation recognizes that long-distance routes operate at the national scale, connect multiple states and tribal nations, and serve communities across entire regions.

"Railroads are critical to connecting communities and growing economies across Montana, and our long-distance routes serve a vital national purpose in strengthening rural America. I'm proud to introduce the Long-Distance Corridor Relief Enhancement Act to provide the certainty and stability needed to spark a renaissance in passenger rail. Working alongside partners like the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, we will continue to prioritize community input and deliver commonsense results," said Sen. Tim Sheehy (R-MT).

Long-distance passenger rail routes form the backbone of the national passenger rail network. These corridors connect rural communities, tribal lands, major metropolitan areas, military installations, national parks, and economic centers across state lines. Because of their geographic scope and national impact, they require federal policies that reflect their scale and purpose.

"S. 3728 is an important step toward restoring and strengthening a truly national passenger rail network. Long-distance corridors cannot be treated as isolated state projects. This legislation aligns federal policy with the national scope of these routes and provides clarity as corridors move from planning to implementation," said David Strohmaier, Chair of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority.

BSPRA's Big Sky North Coast Corridor, a 2,300-mile route from Chicago to Seattle and Portland, is the only new long-distance route accepted into the program and the longest corridor under study.

The introduction of S. 3728 comes at a pivotal moment in federal surface transportation reauthorization discussions. Stakeholders across the country have emphasized the need to ensure that long-distance passenger rail receives policy treatment consistent with its national role.

By clarifying federal responsibility during the planning and development stages, the Sheehy-Merkley bill underscores the principle that restoring and expanding long-distance passenger rail requires national leadership and commitment.

About the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority

The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority is a multi-county regional transportation district working to restore long-distance passenger rail service across the Greater Northwest through the Big Sky North Coast Corridor. BSPRA partners with local governments, tribal nations, freight rail partners, and national stakeholders to advance a modern, connected passenger rail system. The FRA selected BSPRA as project manager for the eight-state Big Sky North Coast Corridor.

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