

F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.

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July 30, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am concerned about the remarks you delivered alongside Governor Doyle in Watertown, Wisconsin on July 29, 2010 regarding the Milwaukee-Madison high-speed rail (HSR) line. You stated, "high-speed rail is coming to Wisconsin. There's no stopping it." The behavior you displayed is arrogant and amounts to the federal government bullying states into implementing programs dreamed up in Washington.

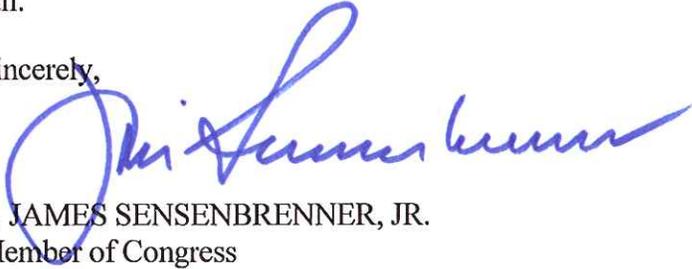
Given Wisconsin's \$2.7 billion budget deficit last year, it is irresponsible for the federal government to mandate the Milwaukee-Madison HSR construction. According to the October 2009 Wisconsin Department of Transportation Financial Plan presented to USDOT, this project is estimated to lose more than \$8 million per year by 2013. The fares are estimated to cost passengers between \$40 and \$60 and recover only 66% of the operating cost. These high fares will do nothing but discourage HSR ridership. Further, you must be aware that the current ridership of the Hiawatha line between Chicago and Milwaukee has fallen the past two years despite rising gas prices. As a matter of fact, the grant application states that "rising fuel prices will result in passengers opting for lower-cost alternatives to highway and air travel." The decreased Hiawatha ridership refutes that statement.

I would expect ridership on the Milwaukee-Madison line to mirror that of the Hiawatha line. The draw of travelers from Milwaukee to Madison is significantly less than Milwaukee to Chicago. Wisconsin taxpayers are already paying nearly \$7 million to supplement the Hiawatha and it is estimated that the price tag will more than double by 2013. With the construction of the Milwaukee-Madison line, Wisconsinites will be forced to supplement another federally mandated program when Washington fails to appropriate funding years down the road. The cost of this federally mandated program, which I suspect will cost taxpayers much more than \$8 million per year, is going to further burden Wisconsinites and will not provide an economically sound transportation option.

As a new Member to the House of Representatives in 1995, you supported H.R. 5, the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act of 1995. You also delivered a one minute speech on January 24, 1995 entitled "*Amnesia by the Democrats*," in which you stated that "The American people will now have debated a balanced budget amendment" and "unfunded mandates." Our national debt is \$8.4 trillion more than when you made these statements. I am perplexed as to why someone who professed concern about spending and unfunded mandates would now advocate for a boondoggle of a project.

I encourage you to relive the words you delivered as a new Member of the House and think twice about forcing Wisconsinites to accept and pay for President Obama's "national program" of intercity rail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.  
Member of Congress