

**Testimony of Ms. Elaine Clegg
Nominee to the Amtrak Board of Directors
United States Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
Hearing on Nominations, September 11, 2024**

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, members of the Committee: Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. My name is Elaine Clegg, and I'm deeply honored to have been nominated to join the Amtrak Board of Directors.

I'm a resident of Boise, Idaho, and an Idaho native. I grew up loving train travel, traveling by train to Boise every summer while my family lived in Denver. My mother's family moved to Idaho by train and even lived in a boxcar on a siding for seven years as part of a fledgling logging community.

Idaho has been the fastest growing US state for most of the past decade and is part of the Mountain West Region - the fastest growing region in the country. The Mountain West has harsh winters that often close roads, an aging population and nearly 20 million people who experience lower levels of Amtrak and other public transportation services than found elsewhere in the country despite long travel distances. If confirmed, I will provide a Western point of view on our nation's rail needs.

My advocacy for better public transportation is accompanied by twenty years of experience overseeing public services for a city with over 230,000 residents as a member of the Boise City Council, where my primary focus was in land use and transportation. I also chaired the National League of Cities' Transportation and Infrastructure Services Committee and have served on numerous boards of city and professional organizations across the country. Before serving on the city council, I spent 15 years running a small business, then working for a non-profit organization, all while raising five children and finishing my college degree.

Since February of last year, I have been the CEO of Valley Regional Transit, where I previously served as a Board and Executive Board member and chair. Valley Regional Transit provides fixed route bus service throughout the Boise metropolitan area, serving over a million riders annually. We recently introduced a revised bus network offering better service while improving cost efficiencies in our operations.

The only Amtrak services in the Mountain West are four long-distance routes that skirt the edges of the region and operate once a day or less. There is no service at all in the heart of the inland northwest. Boise has one of the most beautiful train stations in the country, but it has been without a passenger train since the Pioneer, a long-distance train from Seattle through Denver to Chicago, was discontinued in 1997. Today, Idaho's only Amtrak train is the *Empire Builder*, stopping at a single station in a remote panhandle community in the middle of the night. Idaho, like other Mountain states, has little airline service outside of the Boise region, with very little air service and very sparse inter-city bus elsewhere.

Those of us who live in the Mountain West want and need passenger rail and other ways to travel. People move to our region to for the lifestyle, yet, because of the lack of transportation options, what they are finding in their new home is a lot of long-distance driving on difficult roads – even in bad weather.

One of my long-standing goals has been to bring more Amtrak service back to the Northwest. I helped organize the Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Working Group whose vision is to develop a multimodal, connected transportation network anchored by passenger rail. We worked on Corridor Identification Program applications to the Federal Railroad Administration, such as from Boise to Salt Lake City, and participated in the FRA-led Long-Distance Service Study required by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. I am excited the former Pioneer route through Boise is one of the routes to be included in FRA's proposed Amtrak long-distance service expansion.

I am a problem solver who recognizes the importance of collaboration, good planning, setting priorities, and managing lean budgets. I work by bringing creative ideas, a fresh perspective and working transparently with the public and decision makers so all have a voice and ownership in a way forward that everyone can get behind.

The United States was built on opportunity for all. We need more travel options, particularly for those who are aging, disabled, are unable to fly or drive, and especially in our small communities and rural areas. Without the train that brought my grandparents to Idaho they would not have had

the same opportunities. Without trains and other travel modes many Americans today can't take advantage of the opportunities that would otherwise improve their lives.

If confirmed as a member of Amtrak's Board, I will continue to work to bring passenger rail service to the places where it doesn't exist today and will provide a Western point of view and experience that the Amtrak Board needs.

I thank you for your time and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.