

The Honorable Mark Takano
41st District, California
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
Members' Day Hearing

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

This is a watershed moment for this Congress as we contemplate the clearest path forward to address the investment deficit facing our nation's infrastructure.

Our highways, airways, and waterways form the arteries that drive our nation and its economy forward – and it will be critical that any infrastructure priorities to move out of this committee truly reflect our values as a nation.

While most of the debate around infrastructure is largely dominated by talks of funding, I am here to discuss an even more important element in the debate – the human element.

This committee is about moving people, goods, and services safely and efficiently across the country. But without a vigorous and organized workforce, we could do none of those things.

That is why I am here today to share an experience from my district that undermined our workforce and the lessons I've learned going forward.

As the members of this committee may know, Amtrak used to maintain a reservation call center in my Congressional district in Riverside, CA before outsourcing those jobs to a foreign-owned call center in Florida.

In just a few weeks' time, nearly 500 highly-paid unionized jobs were traded for low-paying contract work.

It was a clear union-busting maneuver that forced the attrition of hard-working employees with good salaries and good benefits.

Hundreds of my constituents and their families had just 60 days' notice before deciding whether to uproot their lives and accept another Amtrak job across the country in Philadelphia – or accept a relatively meager severance package and keep their families rooted in the community they grew up in and love.

These practices should have no place in our country, and certainly not at Amtrak – an American corporation that is majority owned by the federal government and receives billions of tax dollars to subsidize their service.

That is why as the committee develops its legislative agenda, I am urging my colleagues to take greater steps to protect American workers and mitigate Amtrak's ability to further undermine our workforce and its national network of passenger rail service.

We can achieve this by:

- Requiring Amtrak to provide at least 6 months' notice to union stakeholders, employees, and Members of Congress before making any major staffing decisions;
- Considering stronger anti-outsourcing provisions in future surface transportation reauthorizations;
- And closing loopholes that Amtrak has since used to adhere to the letter, but not the spirit, of the law.

I hope this committee will consider language that works toward this end, not only out of respect for the families impacted in Riverside but also the families who may find themselves facing a similar situation in other parts of the country at the hands of Amtrak.

Thank you and I yield back.