

Mica: No privatization for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor

Privatization plans for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor will not be pursued further after congressional lawmakers refused support for the idea, said House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman John Mica, R-Fla. Mica is now suggesting that any returned high-speed rail funds go toward the Northeast Corridor. "I could probably pass just about anything in committee, but I want to make something happen," said Mica. [Google/The Associated Press](#) (11/8), [The Wall Street Journal \(tiered subscription model\)/Metropolis Blog](#) (11/8)

Lawmaker: Amtrak can keep Northeast Corridor line

By CHRIS HAWLEY, Associated Press 6 21 hours ago

NEW YORK (AP) — The chairman of the House Transportation Committee says he'll no longer demand the government take away the Washington-to-Boston train line that is Amtrak's crown jewel.

U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Fla., had wanted to put the Northeast Corridor's tracks under control of the U.S. Department of Transportation or a new government-created corporation, then allow a private company to develop high-speed rail service on the route. But on Tuesday, he said fellow Congress members had balked at the plan and it was holding up high-speed rail efforts.

"I'm willing to compromise," he said. "I could probably pass just about anything in committee, but I want to make something happen."

Mica was in New York on Tuesday to speak to the U.S. High Speed Rail Association, a trade group that wants to build train systems capable of 225 mph like the ones in Europe and Asia. Amtrak's Acela trains can only manage 150 mph, and only along a few stretches.

Mica said he believes the heavily traveled Northeast Corridor is the best place to put a high-speed train line. He pledged he would try to funnel money from any other failed rail projects into it.

A report last week said California's plan to build a high-speed rail line between Los Angeles and San Francisco could cost \$98.5 billion. That's twice as much as originally budgeted.

Mica said he plans to hold a hearing in early December to look at whether the California plan and others are still feasible.

Mica has been a longtime critic of Amtrak. He has said another company could probably operate high-speed rail on the Northeast Corridor more efficiently, and in May he said he would make it a condition for funding such a project. But on Tuesday, he called the proposal a bluff.

"We did put a proposal out there that we knew would be tough for (lawmakers) to accept, but that's what you do sometimes in the legislative process to get them to the point where they'll be willing to work with you to make something happen," he said.

U.S. Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., said he welcomed the change.

"There is widespread agreement that some sort of private capital can be brought into this," Nadler said of the high-speed rail project. "But I think, I hope, we have agreement that Amtrak has to be the main vehicle for it."

Amtrak is a private corporation, but it depends on government subsidies.

Congress created the company in 1971 to provide passenger train service as airlines and interstate highways were making rail travel less profitable. But now U.S. airports and highways are becoming increasingly clogged, making rail travel more attractive in some parts of the country.

President Barack Obama has said he wants to put high-speed intercity trains within the reach of 80 percent of Americans by 2025, but some states have balked at the cost. Florida, Wisconsin and Ohio have all canceled passenger rail projects.

Amtrak has proposed its own plan to upgrade its Northeast Corridor track and trains, but the plan would be phased in over 30 years and cost \$117 billion to implement.