

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 11, 2026

REPLY TO:

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President Roger Harris
Amtrak
1 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Harris,

The unique combination of America's 250th anniversary and hosting the World Cup in the same year is a historic opportunity not only for our country, but for New Jersey. This summer we're expecting visitors from around the world to visit our great state, but we are deeply concerned that Amtrak's recent service disruptions in the weeks leading to the World Cup threaten to create another Summer of Hell for fans and commuters alike.

On Friday May 29, an Amtrak contractor vehicle caught fire in the south tube of Hudson River tunnels suspending rail traffic between New York Penn Station and Newark Penn Station for most of the day and creating delays that lasted through the weekend¹. Now, nearly two weeks since the fire, residual catenary wire issues and lingering repairs in the tunnels continue to disrupt the commutes of millions of passengers.

Two years ago, I wrote to Amtrak when New Jersey's commuters faced the Summer of Hell, where we heard story after story of rail passengers being left stranded due to failing infrastructure. In one case, passengers were stuck in a tunnel for hours in a dark rail car without air conditioning. In response, I demanded answers and worked with Amtrak, NJ Transit, and the U.S. Department of Transportation to ensure that millions of dollars in federal funding would prioritize upgrading the region's ancient rail infrastructure, including catenary wires, signal equipment, and substations.

With the first New Jersey game of the World Cup taking place this weekend, concerns remain that these repairs are not complete and millions of fans and commuters will suffer as a result. Earlier this week, NJ TRANSIT announced contingency plans that would utilize buses and even ferries to bring fans to the games if Penn Station is shut down.²

Amtrak, as the owner and operator of the Northeast Corridor infrastructure, must take extraordinary steps to inspect critical assets, strategically position personnel and equipment, strengthen coordination with NJ TRANSIT, and ensure the fastest possible response and recovery should an incident occur during the World Cup tournament. For those reasons, I am requesting that you urgently implement the following measures:

¹ <https://www.nj.com/news/2026/05/amtrak-penn-station-fire-shuts-down-1-rail-tunnel-through-friday-rush-hour-and-this-weekend.html>

² <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/06/10/new-jersey-amtrak-meltdowns-world-cup-00957401>

- Enhanced pre-event inspections of critical Northeast Corridor infrastructure in the days leading up to each matchday, including tracks, switches, signals, catenary systems, power substations, and interlockings.
- Additional day-of-match inspections of key infrastructure components prior to the start of peak passenger movements.
- Deferral of non-essential maintenance activities that could reduce operational flexibility or introduce unnecessary risk during designated World Cup operating windows.
- Pre-positioning of specialized maintenance personnel at strategic locations along the Northeast Corridor to ensure the fastest possible response to any infrastructure issue.
- Strategic staging of repair equipment and materials, such as hi-rail vehicles, signal repair equipment, catenary maintenance vehicles, generators, replacement components, and other resources necessary to address common infrastructure failures.
- Enhanced staffing of dispatching and control centers responsible for overseeing Northeast Corridor operations during periods of peak World Cup travel demand.
- Real-time coordination between Amtrak, NJ TRANSIT, and other affected operators to ensure immediate communication and joint decision-making if service disruptions occur.
- Heightened monitoring of critical assets during matchday operating periods to identify emerging issues before they become service disruptions.
- Readiness of overhead wire and signal personnel to respond immediately to issues involving the two infrastructure systems most likely to cause widespread Northeast Corridor delays.
- Availability of mechanical rescue resources capable of removing disabled trains from service and reopening tracks as quickly as possible.
- Continuous coordination with utility providers to ensure rapid response capabilities in the event of external power-related incidents affecting railroad infrastructure.
- Timely and transparent customer communication protocols so that, if an infrastructure issue does occur, accurate information can be provided quickly to affected passengers.
- Post-event operational reviews following each match to identify lessons learned, evaluate the effectiveness of response measures, and implement adjustments before subsequent matches.

Amtrak must take prudent, extraordinary measures to reduce the likelihood of disruptions and maximize its ability to restore service quickly if an issue occurs. Amtrak has had years to prepare for this historic event, and we're concerned that you are turning the ball over at the very last minute. Millions of fans and commuters are counting on you to get this right.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Pallone, Jr." in a cursive style.

FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress