

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REQUIRING FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION TO PROVIDE CONGRESSIONAL NOTICE OF COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY ASSESSMENTS

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 543) to require the Federal Railroad Administration to provide appropriate congressional notice of comprehensive safety assessments conducted with respect to intercity or commuter rail passenger transportation.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 543

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. NOTICE OF COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY ASSESSMENTS.

(a) INITIAL NOTICE.—Not later than 10 business days after the Federal Railroad Administration initiates a comprehensive safety assessment of an entity providing regularly scheduled intercity or commuter rail passenger transportation, the Federal Railroad Administration shall notify in electronic format the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, and each member of Congress representing a State in which the service that is the subject of the assessment being conducted is located, of the initiation of that assessment.

(b) FINDINGS.—Not later than 90 days after completion of a comprehensive safety assessment described in subsection (a), the Federal Railroad Administration shall transmit in electronic format to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, and to each member of Congress representing a State in which the service that is the subject of the assessment being conducted is located, its findings of that assessment, including identified defects and any recommendations.

(c) DEFINITION.—For purpose of this section, the term “comprehensive safety assessment” means a focused review of the safety-related processes and procedures, compliance with safety regulations and requirements, and overall safety culture of an entity providing regularly scheduled intercity or commuter rail passenger transportation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MITCHELL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 543.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, on the morning of September 29, 2016, a New Jersey Transit train failed to stop, overrode a bumping post at the end of its track, and struck a wall of the Hoboken Terminal in Hoboken, New Jersey.

In the wake of this fatal accident, which killed a young mother and injured 110 passengers and crew members, it was made public that the Federal Railroad Administration had been conducting a so-called “deep audit” of New Jersey Transit, which was prompted by an increase in safety violations.

This bill requires that the FRA provide appropriate congressional notice when the agency initiates and completes a comprehensive safety assessment of an intercity or commuter rail passenger system.

It is important that Members of Congress are informed as soon as Federal safety assessments are underway so that we may work on ways to provide assistance and oversight for our districts’ intercity or commuter passenger rail services and inform our constituents of any safety issues before accidents like what happened in Hoboken occur again.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill would improve safety and transparency for our Nation’s railroads. Our constituents expect no less, by the way.

It requires notification of proper congressional committees and Members of Congress of the initiation of certain safety assessments for passenger railroads and rail transit agencies. Further, upon completion of those safety assessments, the bill requires the Federal Railroad Administration’s findings and recommendations be submitted to the proper committees and all affected Members of Congress.

Rail safety is critical to our Nation. When the FRA begins an in-depth safety assessment of a railroad, it means the agency has identified a significant and serious safety problem. Our constituents expect us to be advised of that, and, in fact, to keep them informed.

It is important that the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and affected Members be notified timely both that the investigation is underway and what the agency found as a result of it. Doing so can only help improve the safety of our passenger and commuter railroads, as well as keep our constituents informed.

The bill passed the committee and the House last year unanimously. I certainly hope we can get the Senate to give it considerable concern. I thank my colleague, Mr. SIRES, for his hard

work on this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIRES), the sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. SIRES. Madam Speaker, in 2016, in Hoboken, New Jersey, my district, a New Jersey Transit commuter train ran past the end of the track and into the terminal, killing a young mother and injuring over 100 passengers and crew members.

In the wake of this tragedy, it was made public that the Federal Railroad Administration had been conducting a deep audit on New Jersey Transit for months, prompted by an increase in safety violations. At that time, the safety review was not known to relevant Members of Congress or the public who relied on New Jersey Transit to take them to work and bring them home safely every day.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 543 is a simple, straightforward piece of legislation. When the FRA begins a safety assessment on an intercity or commuter passenger rail system, it must notify Members of Congress and Senators on committees of jurisdiction or representing the State in which the assessment is conducted. The FRA will have 10 business days after the assessment begins to notify these parties.

The FRA will also need to transmit its findings, including any safety recommendations, to the relevant parties within 90 days of completion of the assessment.

Madam Speaker, this bill brings us one step closer to ensuring full transparency for Federal agencies and helps us ensure that our rail transportation infrastructure is safe.

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers. I reserve the balance of my time to close.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, this bill, too, was considered in the Republican House. We are considering it here in the Democratic House. I certainly hope that the urgency of this bill is apparent.

I have no further speakers other than the gentleman from New Jersey, who knows this issue perhaps best, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I urge the Senate to move forward, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 543.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REVIVING AMERICA’S SCENIC BYWAYS ACT OF 2019

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the