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"Fighting to Keep Amtrak in Big Sky Country"

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

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Record Type*: **Speeches & Remarks**

MONTH/YEAR of Records*: **April-1995**

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(1) Subject*: **Transportation**

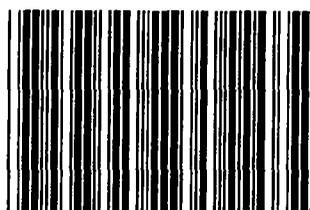
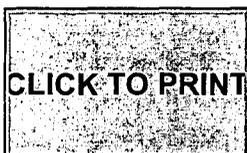
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) Subject* **Fighting to Keep Amtrak in Big Sky Country**

DOCUMENT DATE*: **04/29/1995**

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* "required information"



BAUCUS

STATEMENT OF SENATOR
Max Baucus
April 29, 1995
Fighting to Keep Amtrak in
Big Sky Country

Thank you all for taking time out of your weekend to meet on a very important matter -- fighting to keep Amtrak in Big Sky Country.

I want to give special thanks to Jerry Smith and Darlene Jenkins. They have made Amtrak their lives these past few months. Jerry, Darlene and I, and all of us here today, have worked hand in hand, and we are making a difference.

It's been a long time since I've seen so many members of county government under one roof. It is a real testament to just how important Amtrak is to northern Montana.

In Whitefish, Amtrak is the key to a strong tourist industry. On down the road, when the ski area near Libby is up and running, the same will be true there. For folks along the High Line, in many cases it is the only real form of public transportation. We just can't let Amtrak leave.

LEADING THE FIGHT IN WASHINGTON

Let me review where we stand.

Last January, I met with Tom Downs, the President of Amtrak, to tell him it was a bad idea for Amtrak to cut back service on the Empire Builder.

It was a heated meeting, to say the least -- because, I think, he came in expecting us to thank him for not cutting us out completely.

But what surprised him the most was when, at the end of the meeting, I handed him a stack a petitions a foot high wrapped in a yellow ribbon. Mr. Downs just didn't realize how important Amtrak was to Montana.

Seeing those thousands of signatures left no doubt in his mind that Montana wasn't going to sit quietly and let him take away Amtrak Service.

And I don't plan on sitting quiet when it comes to Amtrak. As you all know, we have a lot of new faces in Congress.

They don't quite understand what Amtrak service means to places like northern Montana. And they're not big on listening, either. In fact, both the Senate and House Budget Committee's are thinking about phasing out federal funding of Amtrak.

Some of these same people have fought me tooth and nail when I began cutting courthouse money. Last year I found federal judges in New York, Texas, Boston and Phoenix spending our money to buy themselves rosewood panelled offices and private kitchens.

I don't think Americans need that. We do need Amtrak. It is vital to rural America. Amtrak is worth our investment.

I have been working with other Senators to get this message out loud and clear. Last month I sent a letter that was signed by 40 Senators and 84 Congressmen that reaffirmed the need to maintain federal support for Amtrak.

As Senate begins to debate the federal budget this summer, I will continue to speak up for Amtrak. And as Montanans stand up for Amtrak, Amtrak ought to stick by people in Havre and Whitefish and Libby.

INVESTING IN AMTRAK'S FUTURE

Now, 40 Senators is a good start. But what we need is fifty-one. That is going to be tough. So we need to work together now on new ideas that will make sure Amtrak service is secure.

I have always taken a special interest in transportation. Montanans know how critical well maintained highways are. Some of us drive 300 or 400 miles in a day for our jobs, or for a weekend at Glacier Park or the CMR. Long distance travel is a way of life in Montana.