EXHIBIT 3
DATE 3-16-05
SB 21

# AARP Montana

March 16, 2005

TO: Chairman Mendenhall and Members of the House Transportation Committee

FROM: Robert Speirer, Volunteer Advocate for AARP Montana

RE: Support of SJ21

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for the record my name is Robert Speirer, a Volunteer Advocate for AARP Montana. AARP is a non-partisan, non-profit organization with 143,000 members in the state.

Nearly 30 percent of households headed by someone 65 and over live in rural areas, where little if any public transportation is available. The long distances between rural residences and necessary services worsen problems for nondriving seniors, particularly for the one in four chronically disabled rural residents. AARP volunteers and staff know many seniors who rely on the Amtrak service in Northern Montana to travel to Seattle for specialized health care.

AARP believes Montana and the Federal Government should ensure funding mechanisms for operating and capital expenses for rural public transportation. Passenger rail is often the sole mobility option for midlife and older people who live in rural Montana. The 1995 American Travel Survey found that people age 65 and older make more than a half million long-distance trips by train. Amtrak estimates that nearly a quarter of its national ridership is age 55 and older, and that on nearly one-third of its routes, more than 30% of the riders are over age 55.

AARP believes the US Congress should support nationwide passenger rail services. Amtrak provides many services to residents of the hi-line in Montana that would not be available otherwise. Additionally, the negative impact to the economy in places like Whitefish, Havre, and Wolf Point would be devastating.

Please join Senator Roush to encourage Congress to continue funding for this vital service to many seniors in Montana. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

30 West 14th Street, Suite 301 | Great Northern Addition | Helena, MT 59601 | toll-free 866-295-7278 | 406-441-2230 fax | toll-free 877-434-7598 TTY
Marie F. Smith, President | William D. Novelli, Chief Executive Officer | www.aarp.org/mt