> In order for **Amtrak to continue advancing a new era of passenger rail,** we must make **generational investments that require federal funding.**

UNION PACIFIC NS

5 MAKING THE CASE FOR PASSENGER RAIL FUNDING

11 AMTRAK NEXTGEN TRAINSETS

15 THE BIGGEST RAIL MERGER

High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail

SPEEDLINES

APRIL 2026
ISSUE #44

CONTENTS

ABOVE:
MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION CENTERS INTEGRATE AUTOMOBILES, TRAINS, PUBLIC TRANSIT, BICYCLES, AND PEDESTRIANS INTO CONVENIENT HUBS, PRIMARILY AROUND RAIL LINES IN THE U.S.

ON THE FRONT COVER: "THE STATES ROUNDUP" –CORRIDOR ID COLLABORATING WITH FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, LEGISLATORS, RAIL PARTNERS, AND OTHERS TO SUPPORT NUMEROUS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION REQUIRES CLOSE PLANNING AND COOPERATION, DESPITE CHALLENGES, GROWING SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT PLANS IS HELPING TRANSFORM THESE PROJECTS INTO REALITY. ENJOY THE FEATURED 2026 RECAP!

3 CHAIRMAN'S LETTER
Greetings from our Chair, Chad Edison

5 MAKING THE CASE FOR PASSENGER RAIL FUNDING

6 INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL FUNDING

7 TEXAS CENTRAL RAILWAY

11 AMTRAK'S NEW GENERATION OF TRAINS

13 RAILWAY TERMINOLOGY PUZZLE

14 SPOTLIGHT

15 THE BIGGEST RAIL MERGER

19 STB REGULATORY REVISIONS

21 WASHINGTON WIRE

24 IN MEMORIAM - ROD DIRIDON, SR.

FEATURE ARTICLE:
25 CORRIDOR ID STATES ROUNDUP

46 IN MEMORIAM - DICK COGSWELL, JR.

49 RAIL SNIPPETS

SPEEDLINES is published in cooperation with:
AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION
1300 I Street NW, Suite 1200 East
Washington, DC 20005

HS&IPR Committee & Friends

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

A MESSAGE FROM CHAD EDISON

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), expires at the end of September this year. Discussions have begun framing the new surface transportation bill in the 119th Congress. Sam Graves, Chairman of the House Transportation Infrastructure Committee says he wants a "clean highway bill" to replace the IIJA. He has signaled that he wants a traditional highway authorization, not a large multi-modal package.

With the advent of these reauthorization discussions, it is important for us to highlight the important role intercity passenger rail plays in economic development. Passenger rail connects rural communities, increases employment and helps rebuild our domestic manufacturing capacity. We need to make the business case for continued investment in high-speed and intercity passenger rail. APTA has produced the 2026 Surface Transportation Authorization Recommendations outlining its legislative priorities for reauthorization. There is an entire section devoted to passenger rail. You can access this information at this link: Legislative Priorities.

This issue of SPEEDLINES highlights the significant progress being made in the Corridor Identification and Development Program (Corridor ID). The article is filled with up-to-date information about the 69 projects that are in the Corridor ID pipeline. The article also highlights a few new projects being proposed for the next round of Corridor ID grant applications expected to be sought later this year. What is important to emphasize is the breadth of projects in the planning pipeline, which demonstrates the need and desire for an expanded passenger rail network.

I have formed a Nominating Committee to review and recommend a slate of HSIPR Committee officer candidates for the next two-year term commencing in June. The slate will be announced and voted on at the Rail Conference in Baltimore. If you are interested in becoming a committee officer, please let me or Art Guzzetti know so we can forward your expressed interest to the Nominating Committee.

In the meantime, enjoy this edition of SPEEDLINES. We hope to see you at the Legislative Conference and our next High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Committee meeting in Washington, DC on April 12th.

CHAD EDISON

UPCOMING

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL BUS ROADEO
MAY 15 – 19, 2026
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

MOBILITY CONFERENCE
MAY 17 – 20, 2026
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

WORKFORCE SUMMIT
MAY 20 – 21, 2026
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

RAIL CONFERENCE
JUNE 28 – JULY 1, 2026
BALTIMORE, MD

TRANSIT BOARD MEMBERS &
BOARD ADMINISTRATORS SEMINAR
JULY 17 – 20, 2026
DETROIT, MI

SUSTAINABILITY/OPERATIONS
PLANNING AND SCHEDULING
WORKSHOP
AUGUST 9 – 12, 2026
ST. LOUIS, MO

APTATECH
AUGUST 9 – 12, 2026
ST. LOUIS, MO

APTA 2026 TRANSFORM & EXPO
OCTOBER 4 – 7, 2026
CHICAGO, IL

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT
SEMINAR
DECEMBER 6 – 9, 2026
MIAMI, FL

MAKING THE CASE FOR PASSENGER RAIL FUNDING

Contributed by: Rebecca Higgins, Vice President, ENO Center for Transportation

Intercity passenger rail in the United States has depended on public funding for its entire modern history, yet federal support has been marked by political ambivalence and episodic investment. Unlike highways, transit, and aviation, intercity passenger rail lacks a dedicated federal revenue source and remains subject to annual discretionary appropriations. Funding for intercity passenger rail is characterized by long periods of underfunding but interspersed with significant but short-term infusions of capital. The uncertainty inherent in this approach creates inefficiency by undermining long-term planning, inflating costs, delaying major projects, and limiting the system's ability to modernize or expand passenger service to meet growing demand.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) temporarily disrupted this cycle by providing five years of advanced appropriations in the amount of $66 billion total. This medium-term certainty enabled Amtrak and their state and regional partners to expand staff capacity, advance long-delayed major projects, replace aging rolling stock, and begin addressing a substantial state-of-good-repair backlog and planning for corridor expansions. As a result, several major capital projects are now fully funded for the first time, and Amtrak has achieved record ridership and revenue.

However, the IIJA did not resolve the underlying structural challenge facing intercity passenger rail. The advance appropriations expire in September 2026 at which point federal funding is at risk of reverting to the prior model. That unstable annual funding framework has always constrained efficiency and performance, but returning to such a model at this moment will be uniquely damaging because it will waste the opportunity created by agencies' investments in project development and staffing capacity.

The paper I wrote for the Eno Center for Transportation argues that future federal policy should acknowledge the permanence and necessity of rail funding and commit to a long-term funding framework to improve efficiency in budgets and timelines. Different categories of rail investment may require different funding mechanisms based on the planning and development timeline for each category, but all types of projects require a greater degree of certainty. Routine capital renewal would benefit from short-term advance appropriations to improve planning certainty. Major modernization and backlog projects require phased, fully funded grant agreements that match the scale and complexity of megaprojects. Service expansion depends on a reformed development process paired with predictable capital funding.

Congress has repeatedly demonstrated that it will not abandon intercity passenger rail. A more thoughtful approach to funding that provides long-term certainty would enable agencies to conduct planning and development in a way that prioritizes both efficiency and outcomes. IIJA has provided a new foundation of readiness and capacity for a new phase of intercity passenger rail service. The question now facing policymakers is whether to commit to a stable and outcome-oriented approach to rail capital funding that improves efficiency and performance, or to allow that opportunity to be wasted.

CLICK HERE to read the full paper at Eno Report on Passenger Rail Funding

INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL FUNDING

Contributed by: Wendy Wenner

For FY 2026, passenger and freight rail funding has been established at $15.9 billion, reflecting a $298 million reduction compared to FY 2025. The agreement also dismisses a prior proposal to divert funds intended for future passenger rail improvements toward Amtrak's operational expenses. This funding framework underscores essential elements of the legislation, emphasizing key allocations, strategic policy directions, and oversight measures crucial for advancing passenger rail services and infrastructure nationwide.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) designates $1.2 trillion for transportation and infrastructure improvements, including a five-year reauthorization of surface transportation funding, with $7.2 billion in advance funding presently being allocated.

AMTRAK SPECIFICS:

The Bill includes $2.4 billion for Amtrak with funding levels remaining unchanged from last year's allocation.

- $1.6 billion for the National Network.
- $850 million for the Northeast Corridor.

KEY DIRECTIVES INCLUDE:

- Amtrak to brief congressional committees within 30 days regarding new initiatives and challenges, such as the rollout of NextGen Acelas and modernization efforts.
- A feasibility study for expanded long-distance services supporting the 2034 Salt Lake City Olympics.
- Set-aside funding of $5 million for the Atlanta passenger rail hub.

KEY RAIL GRANT PROGRAMS:

Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP):

- Allocated $65 million, a slight reduction from FY 2025, but preserved funds compared to House proposals.

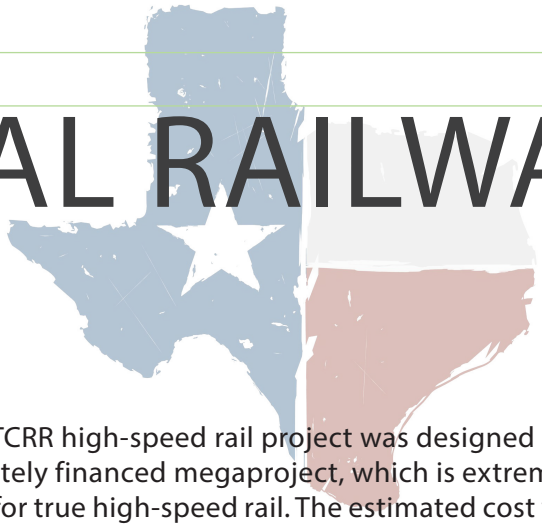
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI):

- Increased funding to $137 million, including earmarked rail infrastructure and passenger rail projects.
- The bill rescinds $928.6 million from previously appropriated high-speed rail funds.

POLICY DIRECTIVES:

- The bill emphasizes rapid disbursement of funds, requiring the FTA to report on grants backlog and processing capacity issues within 120 days.
- It mandates detailed reporting on awarded but unspent funds, ensuring transparency and accountability in the utilization of public rail funding.

TEXAS CENTRAL RAILWAY



Contributed by: Ken Sislak, AECOM

Transportation planners have envisioned a Dallas–Houston high-speed rail line for nearly 40 years. Planning started in 1989 when the Texas Turnpike Authority (TTA) studied the feasibility of high-speed rail in the Texas Triangle region. The TTA recommended the formation of an independent state agency to manage construction.

The Texas High-Speed Rail Authority (THSRA) was created by the Texas Legislature to explore high-speed rail. The THSRA was abolished in the early 1990s after a French companys bid failed to meet financial deadlines after a $70 million investment. The states high-speed rail movement stalled.

But in 2009, Lone Star High-Speed Rail LLC was founded to revive the high-speed rail dream. In 2012, the name changed to Texas Central Railway (TCRR). In 2014, TCRR unveiled the Dallas-Houston bullet train project. The proposed high-speed rail project promised a transformative shift in Texas travel by operating trains that only take 90 minutes between the state's two largest cities, using Japanese Shinkansen technology and privately financed infrastructure. For more than a decade, the proposed high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston has existed in an in-between state: too advanced to dismiss, too incomplete to build. Today, it is still envisioned but not yet built.

A PROJECT THAT ALMOST BECAME REAL

By the early 2020s, TCRR had cleared some of its biggest hurdles. Environmental reviews were completed. A Record of Decision (ROD) and Rule of Particular Applicability (RPA) were approved by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in September 2020. After receiving federal clearance in 2020, the Dallas-Houston high-speed rail project looked closer than ever to construction. Land acquisition, while contentious, was underway. But instead of breaking ground, the project stalled. The reasons weren't technical. They were financial, political, and institutional.

The TCRR high-speed rail project was designed as a privately financed megaproject, which is extremely rare for true high-speed rail. The estimated cost was $30B–$40B.

The revenue model depended on cash flow from high ridership projections and private investors accepting long-term risk. The problem? Private capital generally avoids projects with long payback periods and is replete with political uncertainty and legal risks (such as land acquisition battles). The project also lacked strong state backing. Opposition came from rural landowners along the route and Texas legislators responding to constituents' concerns in affected districts. Key issues included property rights and the use of eminent domain to acquire rural farmland. This resulted in a steady stream of lawsuits and legislative efforts to block or limit the project. Lawfare (a term for endless lawsuits) created ongoing uncertainty for investors, and the legal battles slowed land acquisition. The project lost key partners.

To move forward, TCRR needed to assemble hundreds of miles of right-of-way across private and agricultural land, a process that quickly became mired in litigation. At the center of the legal battles was a fundamental question: did TCRR qualify as a "railroad" under Texas law, and if so, did it hold the power of eminent domain? That question wound through years of court proceedings before being only partially resolved, leaving land acquisition in a prolonged state of uncertainty. Ultimately, the project stalled under the combined weight of an unresolved funding gap and sustained opposition from landowners, legislators, and local communities unwilling to cede ground, literally or politically.

The project depended heavily on partnerships. In other countries such as Spain, France, Japan, and China, high-speed rail projects are publicly funded and centrally planned. TCRR tried something different. They attempted to build a Japanese-style bullet train with mostly private money in a politically

fragmented environment. That combination has proven to be extremely difficult, but not impossible.

An example has emerged in Japan where the Chūō Shinkansen (Tokyo–Nagoya–Osaka maglev), a private-sector-driven project, uses a hybrid financing model. JR Central is the primary builder and operator of this new high-speed line. It is financing most of the construction costs itself through cash reserves, corporate bonds, and loans. JR Central is highly profitable from the Tōkaidō Shinkansen. That line generates enough cash flow to support massive borrowing. But to reduce financing costs and risk, the Japanese government is providing a low-interest, long-term loan (~¥3 trillion / ~$20–30 billion) through the Japan Railway Construction, Transport and Technology Agency.

The Chūō Shinkansen model works because it's built on top of one of the most profitable rail corridors on the planet. The Dallas–Houston corridor is highly traveled, but the high-speed rail line doesn't have an equivalent foundation to the Tōkaidō Shinkansen, so it would need more public involvement and risk-sharing to make something similar happen. However, parts of the financing plan could be adapted.

After 2020, progress in Texas depended on solving three things simultaneously: financing, land acquisition, and political alignment. None were fully resolved, and each made the others harder to resolve. As a result, the project lay dormant once again. Amtrak joined the effort.

Amtrak's decision to engage with TCRR in 2023 and 2024 was driven by strategic, financial, and political calculus, not because the project had suddenly become easy, but because it represented a genuinely rare opportunity. TCRR already had in place what most nascent rail projects spend decades trying to assemble: a defined corridor between two of the country's fastest-growing metros, a completed environmental review (ROD), a customized federal regulatory framework (RPA), and advanced engineering plans. For Amtrak, this wasn't a greenfield concept; it was a partially built foundation that simply lacked financing, a combination that almost never exists at this scale. As a federally chartered public operator, Amtrak brought something TCRR could not obtain on its own: access to federal grant programs unlocked by the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which directed billions toward passenger rail. The strategy was to convert TCRR from a purely private venture into a public-

private partnership, with Amtrak's institutional standing serving as the bridge to public capital. For a time, it looked like it might work. The unraveling That momentum didn't last. The same issues that stalled the project before Amtrak's involvement didn't disappear. The funding gap remained enormous, Texas' political support remained weak, and land acquisition issues persisted.

In January 2025, the new Administration took office, changing infrastructure investment priorities. On April 14, 2025, FRA and Amtrak agreed to terminate a $63.9 million Corridor ID grant for design and engineering. The rationale given was that the project had become too expensive ($> 40B) and was considered an inappropriate use of taxpayer funds. The decision effectively severed the project's most viable connection to public funding. Without Amtrak, TCRR reverted to what it had always claimed to be: a privately led megaproject. But that model has always been its greatest vulnerability.

Building a true high-speed rail line, dedicated tracks, fully grade-separated, designed for speeds over 200 mph, is extraordinarily expensive. Estimates for the Dallas – Houston high-speed rail line range from $30 billion to over $40 billion. No such system has been built in the United States without substantial public subsidy. With federal backing gone, the financial path forward was unclear. A project without a build phase Despite years of planning, one fact defines the current moment: construction has not begun. No track has been laid between Dallas and Houston. No stations have been built. Much of the required land remains unassembled, tied up in negotiations and legal disputes. Supporters argue the project is "shovel-ready," pointing to completed studies and engineering plans. Critics counter that without financing; readiness is largely theoretical. The gap between planning and execution remains vast.

POLITICAL RESISTANCE AND LOCAL PUSHBACK

Even if funding were secured, the project would still face persistent political headwinds. Texas lawmakers, particularly those from rural districts along the proposed route, have continued to challenge the use of eminent domain and seek to limit state involvement. Local governments have raised concerns about routing, station placement, and community impact. What makes the TCRR project unusual is that it lacks the broad public-sector sponsorship typical of global high-speed rail systems. In countries like Japan, France, or China, national governments play a central role in funding and coordination. In Texas, the project needs to navigate a far more fragmented political landscape.

While Texas struggles to move forward, high-speed rail continues to expand elsewhere. Countries across Asia and Europe are building new lines, upgrading rolling stock, and integrating cross-border networks. Even within the United States, other projects—such as Brightline West—have made more tangible progress toward construction. Financially, Brightline West still has significant funding gaps and risks. The difference is

that it has progress plus some financing momentum, not that it's fully solved. The contrast highlights a central challenge: high-speed rail is not simply an engineering project, but a financial and political one.

As Rebecca Higgins of the Eno Center for Transportation has pointed out in her January 2026 report "Looking Down the Tracks: A Case for More Predictable Intercity Passenger Rail Funding", funding for high-speed and intercity passenger rail in the US is characterized by long periods of underfunding interspersed with significant but short-term infusions of capital. The uncertainty inherent in this approach creates inefficiency by undermining long-term planning, inflating costs, delaying major projects, and limiting the ability to expand passenger rail service to meet growing demand.

THE RESURRECTION: STILL ALIVE BUT FOR HOW LONG?

Despite its setbacks, TCRR has not shut down. The company maintains that the project is viable and continues to pursue private investment. Some land has been acquired. Regulatory approvals remain in place. Kleinheinz Capital Partners became the lead investor and effective project sponsor in 2025. They bought out earlier Japanese equity shares and are explicitly shifting the project back to a predominantly private-finance model. Kleinheinz has repeatedly described a hybrid financing model including private equity / investor capital (led by Kleinheinz Capital), debt financing (likely project finance / infrastructure debt), selective public funding (federal programs, not state taxes), and international partners (notably Japanese technology / finance for rolling stock and systems.

The underlying demand—fast travel between two booming metro areas—has not changed. That leaves the project in a rare category: a mega-project that is neither advancing nor canceled. Its future depends on whether a new funding structure—public, private, or the hybrid model proposed by Kleinheinz Capital—emerges to replace what was lost when Amtrak stepped away.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Dallas – Houston high-speed rail line is no longer on the brink of construction. But it is not a failed idea either. It is, instead, a test case. Can a privately driven high-speed rail project succeed in the United States? Can political resistance be overcome without sustained public backing? And can a vision that has lingered for more than a decade finally translate into steel and concrete? Can US transportation policy ever evolve to catch up with the rest of the world to build true high-speed rail?

Until those questions are answered, the fastest train Texas has ever imagined remains exactly that... imagined.

AMTRAK'S NEW GENERATION OF TRAINS

Contributed by: SPEEDLINES Staff

Amtrak is undergoing one of its largest fleet modernization efforts. Over the next decade, it will introduce new equipment across almost every service, from high-speed Northeast Corridor trains to regional and long-distance railcars.

Three core initiatives drive this transformation: introducing Avelia Liberty trains on the Northeast Corridor, expanding Amtrak Airo trainsets on state-supported and regional routes, and adopting a new plan to replace aging long-distance cars. Collectively, these initiatives mark a major shift in Amtrak's approach to addressing rising passenger demand and replacing aging equipment.

HIGH-SPEED SERVICE: THE NEXT GENERATION ACELA

Amtrak's most visible equipment upgrade is the introduction of the Avelia Liberty (NextGen Acela), which operates along the Northeast Corridor between Washington, New York, and Boston. Built by Alstom, the Avelia Liberty trains are the fastest in the U.S., reaching 160 miles per hour. Advanced tilt technology allows them to navigate curves at higher speeds.

The new fleet is designed to replace the original Acela Express trainsets introduced in 2000. Amtrak plans to operate 28 Next Generation Acela trainsets, increasing seating capacity by roughly 25 percent compared with the original equipment.

Amenities are also upgraded, with redesigned seating, power outlets, and USB ports at every seat, modern lighting, improved Wi-Fi, and a new café area. Increased capacity will let Amtrak expand frequencies and meet rising demand on the Northeast Corridor, the nation's busiest route.

AIRO: THE NEW STANDARD FOR CORRIDOR TRAINS

While the Acela program focuses on high-speed travel, Amtrak's largest equipment initiative is the introduction of the Amtrak Airo fleet for regional and state-supported routes.

Manufactured by Siemens Mobility, the Airo program will eventually deliver more than 80 trainsets for operation across the country. These trains will serve routes such as Amtrak Cascades in the Pacific Northwest, as well as several Midwest, California, and East Coast corridors.

Airo trainsets are set to replace aging equipment, including the Amfleet cars from the 1970s. Each Airo features semi-permanently coupled trainsets, business-class seating, and a café. Trains run up to 125 miles per hour and add several modern passenger features.

KEY IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDE:

- Large panoramic windows
- Touchless restroom technology
- Digital passenger information displays
- Power outlets and USB charging at every seat
- Improved Wi-Fi connectivity

The Airo fleet's hybrid power allows trains to switch between electric and non-electric tracks without changing locomotives. Amtrak officials say the Airo fleet will enhance consistency and reliability and reduce maintenance costs nationwide.

RETHINKING LONG-DISTANCE EQUIPMENT

In 2026, Amtrak announced it would drop plans to replace the Superliner fleet with new bi-level trainsets, opting for a single-level fleet for long-distance service nationwide. Superliner cars—introduced in the 1970s

and 1980s—remain crucial on many long-distance routes, especially west of Chicago. With their unique two-level design, they offer high capacity and the well-known Sightseer Lounge. However, at over 40 years old, replacements are urgent.

Amtrak sought new bi-level trainsets, but design complications, such as ADA-compliance elevator requirements, stalled procurement. After review, Amtrak chose standardized single-level cars to reduce risk, simplify operations, and attract more suppliers. A revised bid for these cars is planned, with deliveries in the early 2030s.

DEBATE OVER THE FUTURE OF LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS

The move away from bi-level replacements has sparked discussion among passenger rail advocates and industry observers. Groups like the Rail Passengers Association note a single-level fleet could improve accessibility and simplify operations, replacing Amtrak's equipment mix. However, some rail enthusiasts and industry analysts have expressed concern about losing the capacity and viewing advantages offered by bi-level cars.

The Superliner design provides a spacious feel and elevated views that many passengers associate with long-distance train travel, especially on scenic western routes. Via Rail in Canada is addressing this issue by introducing new panorama cars and a new version of the famous dome cars in its new long-distance fleet, which would allow passengers to admire the scenery from their seats. Still, supporters of the new plan argue that replacing old equipment quickly is essential.

A FLEET TRANSFORMATION UNDERWAY

Overall, these programs comprise a broad modernization of Amtrak's rolling stock. High-speed services will be handled by the new Avelia Liberty trains. Regional corridors will transition to Amtrak Airo trainsets. And long-distance routes will eventually receive a new generation of single-level passenger cars.

The transition will take years to fully implement. Some equipment, particularly the Superliner fleet, will remain in service into the next decade while replacement cars are designed and built. But together these initiatives signal a major shift in Amtrak's long-term strategy: a standardized, modern fleet designed to improve reliability, expand capacity, and create a more consistent passenger experience across the national rail network. If the plan succeeds, the train passengers boarding in the 2030s may represent the most significant transformation of American intercity passenger rail equipment since Amtrak's founding in 1971.

PUZZLE

Railroad Terminology

Y	O	L	L	A	N	I	M	R	E	T	E	C	O	U	P	L	E	R	M	W	B	W
S	S	I	G	N	A	L	M	J	U	N	C	T	I	O	N	B	H	O	G	C	R	U
H	M	D	I	S	P	A	T	C	H	E	R	Q	A	I	G	A	Z	Z	M	B	I	A
U	R	E	P	P	O	H	Q	K	C	O	T	S	G	N	I	L	L	O	R	I	D	E
N	Y	S	R	E	D	R	O	N	I	A	R	T	Q	T	I	L	L	P	D	F	G	V
T	D	E	R	A	I	L	M	E	N	T	U	F	X	E	P	A	C	Y	A	V	E	I
R	I	G	H	T	O	F	W	A	Y	S	I	D	E	R	F	S	T	R	E	H	P	T
G	T	E	H	H	C	R	O	S	S	I	N	G	A	L	O	T	E	A	H	P	L	O
D	R	O	O	D	P	A	R	T	Y	A	R	D	Y	O	U	E	S	N	D	A	A	M
S	I	S	G	V	T	A	P	P	R	O	A	C	H	C	L	G	N	E	A	R	T	O
W	P	D	O	D	E	G	N	A	L	F	C	L	W	K	I	A	I	T	E	G	E	C
I	N	T	E	R	M	O	D	A	L	X	R	Y	T	I	N	T	A	A	D	O	V	O
T	R	B	T	S	I	S	N	O	C	C	Q	O	H	N	G	L	R	C	P	T	Y	L
C	A	S	T	H	I	R	D	R	A	I	L	G	G	G	W	O	T	Y	T	N	I	H
H	P	Z	U	Q	O	B	A	G	G	A	G	E	C	A	R	V	R	X	Q	A	L	A
Y	D	N	E	D	A	E	H	D	D	E	I	F	I	L	A	U	Q	H	L	P	L	I

Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden ↑ and ↓ and → and ← and ↘

APPROACH	CROSSING	HOPPER	ROLLING STOCK	TRAP DOOR
BAGGAGE CAR	DEADHEAD	INTERLOCKING	SHUNT	TRIP
BALLAST	DERAILMENT	INTERMODAL	SIGNAL	VOLTAGE
BRIDGE PLATE	DISPATCHER	JUNCTION	SWITCH	WAYSIDE
CATENARY	FLANGE	LOCOMOTIVE	TERMINAL	YARD
CONSIST	FOULING	PANTOGRAPH	THIRD RAIL	
COUPLER	FROG	QUALIFIED	TRAIN ORDERS	
	HEAD END	RIGHTOFWAY	TRAINSET	

Created by WWenner

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

...you should get to know us

NORMAN FORDE

Facilities and Fleet Market Leader, Mott MacDonald

Specializing in rolling stock projects, handling everything from specifications through all phases of design engineering, construction, warranty, and vendor-managed inventory, including providing project management oversight for the FRA. *"High-speed and passenger rail together form the backbone of a cleaner, faster, more resilient transportation network—one that strengthens the communities we live in and the places we call home. And now, more than ever, we need to advocate to turn possibility into progress and progress into lasting impact."*

KAREN PHILBRICK, PHD

Executive Director, Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI)

Leading two competitively selected multi-university consortia: California State University Transportation Consortium, which unifies the surface transportation research and workforce development efforts of the 23-campus California State University system, and the Climate Change and Extreme Events Training & Research Program funded by the FRA. *"Passenger rail is nation-building infrastructure. It links regions, brings people together, and turns travel time into productive time. When we invest in rail, we aren't just moving people—we are moving the economy and country forward."*

BARBARA MORENO

Manager, Corridor Identification Program, Federal Railroad Administration

With a decade of experience driving major public sector initiatives, specializing in complex, high-impact programs that bring together federal agencies, local governments, and communities to deliver results that matter. *"The Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program represents a once in a generation opportunity to build a national pipeline of passenger rail projects that will shape mobility in the United States for decades to come. I'm proud to serve as the CID Program Manager helping advance this historic effort and supporting the communities and partners bringing these corridors to life."*

LAURA KLIEWER

Director, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission

With 30 years of passenger rail planning experience and helping to create the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact. "*MIPRC is quiet but mighty, helping states coordinate their passenger rail plans and develop the federal partnership necessary to see the region's plans realized. The original Midwest Regional Rail Initiative of 2000 was validated by the Midwest Regional Rail Plan of 2021, which we developed with the FRA. MIPRC is embarking on a project to further advance and define our region's passenger rail network through an FRA CRISI regional planning grant."*

THE BIGGEST RAIL MERGER... *WHAT IT MEANS FOR PASSENGER RAIL*

Contributed by: Jim Mathews, President & CEO, Rail Passengers Association

Union Pacific's proposed $85 billion acquisition of Norfolk Southern isn't just another railroad merger. If approved, it would create the first truly transcontinental freight railroad in American history — a single company controlling track from the Atlantic to the Pacific and hosting a majority of the nation's passenger rail network.

For those of us in the passenger rail world, that scale changes the conversation immediately. The combined railroad would host roughly 57 percent of Amtrak's state-supported and long-distance routes and carry about 63 percent of the riders on those services. Nearly half of the corridors selected by the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification Program would operate over the merged network of a single company.

In practical terms, that means one private freight railroad could become the dominant gatekeeper for the growth of intercity passenger rail in the United States. But there's also an additional, uncomfortable reality: the two railroads proposing to merge are also among the industry's worst performers when it comes to passenger train on-time performance and among the most frequently cited in communities across the country for long trains blocking public at-grade crossings.

Unprecedented scale paired with a troubled operating record. That's why this merger deserves particularly careful scrutiny as the Surface Transportation Board (STB) begins evaluating what is the largest railroad consolidation ever proposed.

AN STB RESET

In January, the STB effectively hit the reset button on the merger review process. The Board unanimously rejected the railroads' initial filing, not because it had reached a judgment on the merger itself, but because the application failed to meet basic regulatory requirements.

Among other deficiencies, the applicants did not provide forward-looking market-share projections, despite claiming that the merger would significantly increase traffic. They also failed to submit key schedules from the merger agreement and misclassified a related control application involving the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. Under federal law, those omissions meant the application was incomplete, and the Board had no choice but to reject it. But in its details and reasoning, the Board's procedural ruling carried an important message about how Board members are likely to review the transaction once a revised application is filed.

Under STB's current major merger rules, adopted in 2001, applicants must do more than demonstrate that a merger will not cause harm. They must affirmatively prove that the transaction serves the public interest and, where necessary, enhances competition to offset potential harm. The regulations require detailed information on operational impairments, environmental consequences, and potential effects on passenger and commuter rail operations, along with robust service assurance plans that describe mitigations that could be put in place.

That burden of proof is intentionally high. The history of railroad consolidation in the United States includes painful lessons about service disruptions, reduced competition, and long periods of operational instability following major mergers. Consider what now-retired Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman said in 2016 about big railroad mergers: "*A well-executed large railroad merger is an oxymoron. Every rail merger of significant size, and a couple that weren't, have been extremely disruptive for a period of time.*"

Amidst those prolonged disruptions and despite a vocally aggrieved shipper community, in 1999 BNSF and Canadian National came before the STB proposing yet another major merger. STB recognized the incipient crisis and imposed a 15-month moratorium on mergers, and two years later adopted new, tougher rules under which today's Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern tie-up will be judged.

For passenger rail operators and public agencies, these were hard lessons learned at the expense of service deterioration, higher prices, and lost jobs, and not just policy abstractions. And, mindful of its institutional history, the STB used language in its decision rejecting their initial application to make clear to Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern that Board members won't accept only surface-level engagement with what the 2001 merger rules require.

PRESERVATION IS NOT PROGRESS

Throughout their original application filed in December, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern repeatedly made the same central claim: the combined railroad would be able to add new freight trains while maintaining current passenger service levels. At first glance, that sounds reassuring. But from a passenger rail perspective, it sets a remarkably low bar. Maintaining today's service is not the same as enabling growth.

For several decades now, but particularly since passage of the historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, federal transportation policy has moved decisively toward expanding passenger rail service. Congress created the Corridor Identification Program to develop new routes, funded major infrastructure improvements across the national network, and directed federal agencies to support higher frequencies and improved reliability. In legislation across many years, from PRIIA to FAST to IIJA, the policy direction has been crystal clear: the United States is trying to grow passenger rail.

Yet, the merger application largely frames success as avoiding degradation of existing services rather than facilitating expansion. Strictly speaking, that is all the regulatory language requires for passenger rail. But a merger application like this, open to public scrutiny, is as much a sales pitch as it is a legal document, and UP and NS need to use their filing to convince the STB Members — who are the public's stand-ins as they consider the public benefits, and potential harms, of the transaction — that this merger is a good deal not just for the companies and their executives but for the public at large. That's the bare minimum for a transaction that would reshape the freight rail landscape for decades. Preserving the status quo may be acceptable from the perspective of freight railroads, but it's far short of what we need to assure a national passenger rail strategy built on growth.

THE CAPACITY QUESTION

In multiple corridors, the applicants argue that additional freight traffic can be accommodated without affecting passenger operations because existing capacity is sufficient. That assertion might come as a surprise to the dozens of communities over the years that have been stymied by UP and NS whenever potential new passenger rail service was up for discussion.

For years, passenger rail operators and state governments have been told that adding even modest new pas-

senger frequencies would require substantial, sometimes staggering, infrastructure investments. In many cases, Class I freight railroads have presented public agencies with price tags of billions of dollars just to run one or two passenger trains per day in places where trains are already operating with ample capacity.

Yet in the merger filing, the railroads suggest that substantial freight growth can occur on many of the same corridors without similar investments.

If that's true, it raises an obvious question: what does that imply about previous capacity claims when passenger rail operators sought modest service expansions? The STB's insistence on data and forward-looking analysis in its initial ruling suggests that these questions will get close attention when the revised application is reviewed.

THE MISSING PASSENGER VISION

Perhaps the most striking feature of the merger proposal is not what it contains, but what it doesn't. For a transaction of this magnitude, the filing offers little evidence of a forward-looking passenger rail strategy. There are no binding commitments to expand passenger service. There are no explicit capacity set-asides for future frequencies. There are no merger conditions designed to support national passenger rail objectives.

In several cases, the application cites potential improvements to passenger routes such as the Crescent, Carolinian, Piedmont, and Pennsylvanian. But those benefits often depend on publicly funded infrastructure projects already planned by states or underway through federal programs. In other words, many of the improvements attributed to the merger would likely occur regardless of the transaction. In our view, regulators will ultimately have to decide whether, if the public sector is providing the investments needed to expand passenger service, the merger itself provides any additional public benefit.

Passenger rail stakeholders are also watching the merger through the lens of recent operating history. Let's not forget that this merger would combine two railroads which each faced federal investigations for violating Amtrak's legal right in 49 U.S.C. § 24308(c) to preferential dispatching — Union Pacific in a proceeding before the STB itself, and Norfolk Southern in a D.C. Federal district court before Judge Amy Berman Jackson following a Dept. of Justice civil complaint filed during the final year of the Biden Administration.

With the acquisition deal looming, both railroads did their best to clean up the dockets before moving forward. Norfolk Southern agreed to a rather extraordinary settlement with the Trump Administration's DOJ, while Amtrak reached a private deal with Union Pacific and asked the STB to allow Amtrak to withdraw its late-trains complaint against UP. Notably, neither railroad moved to do the right thing on its own; instead, they settled only after years of expensive litigation. Against that backdrop, generic assurances that passenger service will simply be "maintained" may not, on their own, provide sufficient confidence.

The scale of the proposed merger could amplify these concerns. When a single company controls such a large share of the infrastructure used by passenger trains, operational decisions made primarily for freight efficiency can have system-wide implications for passenger reliability. Can those conflicts be managed? Of

course. But the priority stipulations in Norfolk Southern's DOJ settlement are a good guide, and merger approval should occur only after conflicts are addressed transparently and with enforceable commitments, as in that settlement.

Passenger rail is not the only public interest concern associated with the merger. Communities across the country are increasingly focused on issues such as blocked grade crossings and freight train lengths, problems that affect emergency response, local mobility, and quality of life. Both Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern have faced criticism in recent years related to blocked crossings in communities along their routes. The STB's merger review rules explicitly require applicants to address these types of impacts and demonstrate how they will be mitigated, and we'll have to see how well the applicants meet that test in their refiled application.

As the review process moves forward, those local impacts will likely become part of the broader discussion about whether the transaction ultimately serves the public interest.

A DEFINING MOMENT FOR RAIL POLICY

The Surface Transportation Board has not yet ruled on the merits of the proposed Union Pacific–Norfolk Southern merger. Because the Board rejected the railroads' first filing as incomplete and required them to start over, it hasn't even begun that review in earnest. That clock restarts once they refile early this Spring.

But even before the revised application arrives, one thing is already clear: a transaction of this magnitude can't be evaluated solely through the lens of freight rail economics. Passenger rail now sits at the center of U.S. transportation policy. Congress has directed federal agencies to expand service, states are investing billions in new corridors, and communities across the country are asking for more reliable, more frequent trains.

A merger that would place such a large share of that network under the operational control of a single private freight carrier inevitably raises questions about reliability, accountability, and future growth. The real potential for one private entity to effectively wield a veto over passenger-rail expansion in the U.S. means those questions deserve clear answers backed by real data, not just hand-waving assurances. When the largest railroad merger in history is under review, preserving the status quo is not enough. The public — and the passengers who depend on this network — deserve to know whether the rail system that emerges will make it easier, or harder, for passenger rail in America to grow.

ENVIRONMENTAL STREAMLINING –

STB PROPOSES SIGNIFICANT REGULATORY REVISIONS

Contributed by: Christian L. Alexander, Grant Glovin, and Allison Ishihara Fultz – Kaplan Kirsch LLP

On March 25, 2026, the federal regulator of the country's interstate rail network, the Surface Transportation Board (STB or Board), issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) proposing the most comprehensive revision to its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations in more than three decades. If adopted, the proposal would alter how environmental reviews are conducted for a wide range of rail-related proceedings, with potentially far-reaching implications for passenger rail, whether commuter rail or intercity rail projects that make use of the interstate rail network or are high-speed passenger operations on dedicated right-of-way.

THE STB'S ROLE IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The STB is the independent federal agency charged with the economic regulation of various forms of surface transportation, primarily interstate freight rail service. Its activities include licensing the acquisition, construction, operation, transfer, discontinuance, and abandonment of common carrier rail lines and service.

Certain types of primarily metropolitan passenger rail service, specifically street, suburban, and interurban electric railways, and mass transportation provided by a local government authority, are excluded from the STB's jurisdiction and are more typically subject to the Federal Transit Administration's environmental consultation requirements. The STB retains authority over interstate passenger rail service, such as the proposed high-speed rail Bright Line West service between Rancho Cucamonga, California and Las Vegas, Nevada. STB regulations can also indirectly affect other forms of passenger rail service, such as most commuter rail services, that jointly operate over freight rail lines that are subject to STB licensing.

A LONG-AWAITED UPDATE TO STB'S NEPA REGULATIONS

The STB's existing environmental rules, codified at 49 C.F.R. Part 1105, were last substantially revised in the early 1990s—before subsequent changes in federal environmental law, technology, and agency practice, including significant recent changes in the interpretation of NEPA itself. The proposed rule reflects multiple recent developments, including amendments to NEPA enacted in 2023 and 2025, the rescission of the Council on Environmental Quality's prior NEPA implementing regulations, recent Supreme Court precedent, and new executive branch directives focused on permitting reform. In the NPRM, the Board explains that its proposal is intended to align STB procedures with current legal requirements and government-wide efforts to streamline permitting while maintaining environmental protections.

NARROWING THE SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

A central feature of the NPRM is a narrower definition of the environmental "effects" the STB must consider when reviewing proposed actions. Under the proposal, the Board would limit its analysis to effects that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the agency action or its alternatives. Effects that are remote in time or geography, the product of lengthy causal chains, outside the Board's ability to prevent, or attributable to independent third-party actions would generally fall outside the scope of review.

For rail construction projects in particular, the proposal clarifies that the STB would not be required to analyze impacts associated with increased traffic on existing rail

lines that are not part of the proposed action. This clarification codifies what the Board describes as its longstanding practice and responds directly to recent Supreme Court decisions concerning the scope of STB environmental review.

EXPANDING EXCLUSIONS AND REDUCING REVIEW

The NPRM also proposes to expand the list of actions that either do not require environmental review at all or that would qualify for categorical exclusions. Certain proceedings—such as railbanking actions, declaratory orders, and matters involving modified certificates—would be exempt from environmental review entirely. Other actions, including specific abandonments and discontinuances, offers of financial assistance, reciprocal switching orders, certain Amtrak-related proceedings, and construction of connecting track within existing rights-of-way, would presumptively qualify for categorical exclusions absent extraordinary circumstances.

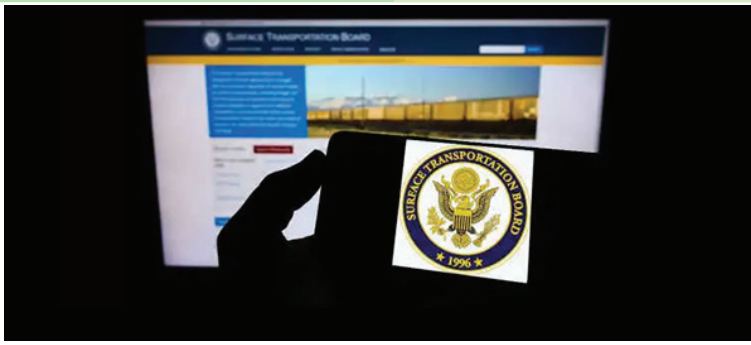
For passenger rail sponsors, these changes could translate into more predictable timelines and lower administrative costs for projects involving STB licensing. At the same time, the Board emphasizes that its Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) would retain discretion to require additional review where warranted.

PAGE LIMITS, DEADLINES, AND APPLICANT FLEXIBILITY

In another notable shift, and consistent with recent statutory changes to NEPA, the NPRM introduces formal page limits and preparation deadlines for environmental documents. Environmental Assessments (EAs) would generally be capped at 75 pages and completed within one year, while Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) would be limited to 150 pages—300 pages in extraordinarily complex cases—and completed within two years.

Consistent with the 2025 NEPA amendments, the proposal allows applicants to shorten these timelines by up to half by paying a fee equal to 125 percent of the Board's environmental review costs. The NPRM also makes the preparation of draft EAs and EISs optional and reduces scoping requirements for EAs, providing additional flexibility for project sponsors.

The proposed rules further establish procedures for applicant-prepared environmental documents, interagency coordination, and emergency environmental reviews, while delegating additional authority to OEA to manage the process efficiently.



RESPONDING TO RECENT COURT DECISIONS

The STB's proposal is closely informed by the U.S. Supreme Court's 2025 decision in Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colorado, which addressed the permissible scope of environmental review under NEPA for rail projects approved by the Board. In that case, the Court held that the STB was not required to analyze the environmental impacts of upstream oil production or downstream refining activities that were separate in time and place from construction of the rail line under review.

By incorporating the Court's reasoning into its regulations, the NPRM seeks to provide greater regulatory certainty and reduce the risk that project approvals will be delayed or overturned due to disputes over indirect or attenuated environmental effects.

WHAT COMES NEXT FOR PASSENGER RAIL STAKEHOLDERS

Comments on the proposed rule are due no later than April 24, 2026, and the STB has invited feedback from railroads, public agencies, project sponsors, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders. For the passenger rail community, the NPRM presents both opportunities and questions: opportunities to advance projects more efficiently, and questions about how the revised framework will be applied in practice to large, complex corridor investments.

As federal and state agencies continue to pursue ambitious passenger rail and high-speed rail initiatives, the outcome of this rulemaking will be closely watched. If finalized largely as proposed, the new regulations could help streamline one important aspect of federal licensing decisions required for the delivery of critical rail infrastructure across the United States.

WASHINGTON WIRE

Contributed by: Harrison Wadsworth

On March 2, 2026, Congress approved the FY 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations Act, providing immediate discretionary funding for rail projects while the long-term reauthorization of highway, rail and transit programs is negotiated. The current authorization under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is set to expire on September 30, 2026, and Congress has made little progress in coming to consensus on reauthorization.

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) is currently working on the next multi-year reauthorization package. Official bill text for the next reauthorization has not yet been released, and we do not expect text to be released until there is agreement on a path to floor votes, which may not come until later this spring at the earliest. The Committee began holding preparatory hearings in early 2026 to gather data on rail, highway, and transit programs. Sam Graves, Chairman of the House T&I Committee, says he wants a "clean highway bill" in the context of the upcoming reauthorization of the surface transportation law that will replace the IIJA. He has signaled that he wants a traditional highway authorization, not a large multi-modal package like the IIJA, which included water, energy and environment programs.

Graves (R, MO) is not generally considered a champion of passenger rail, though he is not outrightly opposed to it. His approach is cautious and pragmatic. His emphasis is on highways, aviation and freight rail. Graves is also committed to keeping the bill bipartisan, as Democratic votes will almost certainly be required to pass the bill in the House, and are absolutely required to pass the bill in the Senate. He has a private pilot's license and the Committee has devoted a lot of its energies in recent months to aviation safety legislation.

A "clean highway bill" in congressional transportation politics usually means:

1.) Focusing on core highway programs, primarily funding for the Federal Aid Highway Program and the Highway Trust Fund.

2.) Avoiding policy add-ons unrelated to highways. Examples often debated include climate mandates, EV requirements, environmental reforms, or broader social policy riders.

3.) Limiting new spending categories - Keep the bill centered on roads, bridges, and freight corridors rather than expanding transit, rail, or other modes.

4.) Avoiding inclusion of the Rail Safety Act, championed by Vice President Vance in response to the East Palestine rail accident.

WHY PASSENGER RAIL COMPLICATES THIS

Passenger rail is governed by a separate authorization track. Intercity passenger rail programs—primarily those for Amtrak—are authorized under rail titles in surface transportation laws and earlier legislation like the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA). The IIJA included a large Rail Title that authorized $66 billion in advanced appropriations for:

- Amtrak capital grants
- Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail
- Corridor ID Program

These rail authorizations expire around the same time as the highway programs, so technically Congress needs to reauthorize both. There are three realistic legislative paths for Congress to reconcile the discrepancy:

1.) Split the bills (most consistent with Graves' comment)
2.) Pass a highway-focused surface transportation bill.
3.) Reauthorize rail separately through a stand-alone rail authorization.

This keeps the highway bill "clean." Congress could include only technical rail reauthorization language to

extend existing programs but avoid major policy expansions.

SENATE FORCES A MULTIMODAL PACKAGE

The U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation controls passenger rail policy in the Senate. The Senate often prefers combined multimodal surface transportation bills. In conference negotiations, rail provisions could get added back. There is a jurisdictional split in Congress:

- House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (Graves) highways, transit, and rail infrastructure
- House Ways and Means Committee tax (i.e. fuel taxes and other user fees)
- Senate Commerce Committee rail safety, passenger rail and Amtrak policy
- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Highways
- Senate Banking Committee transit
- Senate Finance Committee tax (i.e. fuel taxes and other user fees)

Because of that split, rail sometimes becomes a negotiating chip during the final conference between House and Senate bills. However, Ted Cruz (R, TX), Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, is generally not strongly supportive of expanding federal passenger-rail funding, especially for programs centered on Amtrak. His position is better described as skeptical of large federal subsidies and critical of how funding is allocated, though he does not oppose passenger rail entirely. Despite that criticism, Cruz has not argued about eliminating passenger rail entirely. In hearings and policy discussions he has expressed support for competition in passenger rail operations. Has shown interest in private-sector models such as privately run intercity rail systems like BrightLine. That approach favors private or state-led projects rather than heavy federal subsidy. That could mean continued support for Federal-State Partnership and Corridor ID Programs.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE RAIL TITLE

Stakeholders are advocating several major components to be included in the new Rail Title:

- Funding Levels: APTA is requesting $130 billion for passenger rail over the next five years.
- Rail Safety: Labor leaders and safety advocates are pushing to incorporate comprehensive safety mandates—such as those from the stalled Rail Safety Act and the Under Pressure Act—directly into the reauthorization bill.
- Infrastructure Modernization: Priorities include sustained investment in the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Railroad Crossing Elimination Program and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants.
- Passenger Rail Modernization and Supply Chain: IIJA introduced historic levels of federal spending towards passenger rail. The Railway Supply Institute (RSI) supports sustained federal investment in passenger rail programs that strengthen the domestic manufacturing base and enable deployment of next-generation equipment. As private-sector partners on major transit and intercity rail projects, RSI members bring advanced technologies to market that improve safety, efficiency, and service reliability. Federal investment in the rail industry has been proven to provide economic benefits throughout the country.
- Railcar Replacement and Modernization: RSI supports continued funding for programs that replace aging passenger railcars and address state-of-good-repair backlogs. Modern fleet investment improves system reliability, enhances passenger comfort, safety, and reduces long-term operating costs while supporting American manufacturing and job creation.
- Regulatory Streamlining: There is significant pressure from industry groups to modernize and "streamline" federal regulatory reviews to reduce project costs and delays.

BOTTOM LINE

When Sam Graves says "clean highway bill," he generally means a roads-and-bridges focused authorization with few policy riders and limited multimodal expansion

But because rail programs must also be reauthorized, Congress will likely act in some fashion. The passenger rail advocacy community must make the case for continued funding of the Rail Title so the current investment momentum is not lost. At stake is the rebirth of American passenger rail manufacturing capacity and supply-chain.

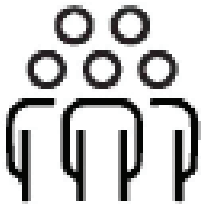
The "hard deadline" for Congress to pass the new bill or a temporary extension to prevent a funding lapse is September 30, 2026. As of this writing, an extension seems to be the most likely outcome, but that could change with effective advocacy from our industry. It's worth noting that there is no recent precedent for Congress reauthorizing this legislation in the absence of strong Presidential leadership. While the Administration kicked off a stakeholder engagement process last summer, there has been minimal discussion of the bill since then, and President Trump has not identified reauthorization as a top priority.

Public Transit Investment Drives Our Economy

APTA's 2026 Economic Impact Report shows how Federal investments in public transportation fuel economic growth nationwide.

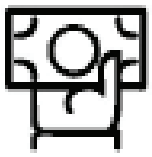
$1 Billion in public transit investment generates:

$5 Billion
IN ADDITIONAL GDP



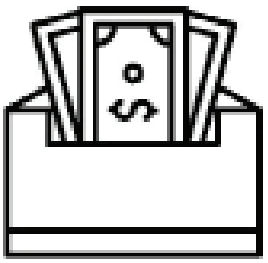
41,400 Jobs

$251 Million
IN TAX REVENUE



$550 Million
IN SAFETY BENEFITS

$3.1 Billion
IN WAGES



The *APTA Surface Transportation Authorization Recommendations* will create an additional **$140 billion** in annual impacts on the economy.

American Public Transportation Association

Remembering Life—
A Lasting Legacy
in the Industry

In Memoriam

HON. RODNEY JOHN DIRIDON, SR.

On Friday, April 3, we said goodbye to Rod Diridon, Sr., a mentor, friend, and Founding Executive Director of the Mineta Transportation Institute, whose 87 years were defined by building a lifetime of public service and a deep commitment to improving lives through transportation. He helped establish MTI as a nationally recognized center for transportation policy and innovation, shaping it into a leading voice in research, education, and thought leadership. Under his guidance, the institute became a bridge between academia and practice, advancing ideas that strengthened communities and expanded opportunity.

Widely regarded as the father of modern transit in Silicon Valley, Rod chaired and advised more than 100 international, national, state, and local initiatives focused largely on transit and the environment. He served as chair emeritus of the California High-Speed Rail Authority Board after appointments by Governors Gray Davis and Arnold Schwarzenegger, and he played a foundational role within the American Public Transportation Association, and was inducted into the APTA Hall of Fame in 2014, chaired the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Committee and the National High-Speed Rail Corridors Coalition. He also contributed extensively to national research and policy efforts, advising the Federal Transit Administration, leading Transportation Research Board panels, and delivering keynote addresses across the country and abroad.

For more than two decades, Rod served the Bay Area in elected office, from City Council member to chair of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and the Transit Board. He also chaired the region's three major planning agencies and guided numerous successful rail development projects. In recognition of his extraordinary impact, San José's main train station was renamed San José Diridon Station in his honor.

Rod spent decades shaping the systems we depend on today, advancing better rail, research, and infrastructure. Yet beyond his titles and accomplishments, his greatest legacy lies in the people he mentored and inspired. We are profoundly grateful for his lasting contributions and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and all who were touched by his life and work.

CORRIDOR ID STATE ROUNDUP

Contributed by: Ken Sislak, AECOM, David Wilcock, VHB

The FRA Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program was highlighted last year in SPEEDLINES Issue 42. The article described the 69 projects awarded grants to prepare the Step 1 Scope, Schedule and Budgets needed to prepare Service Development Plans (SDPs) in Step 2. The map below shows the breadth of projects in the Corridor ID pipeline.

PROJECTS ACCEPTED INTO FRA CORRIDOR ID PROGRAM

Since that publication, the FRA has received and reviewed the Step 1 deliverables from many of the project sponsors. As a result of that review, FRA has amended its guidance and policies regarding the program. FRA held a policy update webinar in December 2025 announcing significant structural changes to the program. The updates are designed to better tailor federal resources to the specific readiness levels of different rail corridors, splitting the planning process into "Comprehensive", "Core", and "Near-Term" tracks.

The FRA acknowledged that requiring deep technical analysis too early can stall the development of new corridors. For routes with little prior planning the FRA introduced the Core SDP, or Step 2A of the Corridor ID program. Rather than immediately funding expensive, detailed engineering and micro-simulation rail capacity modeling, the Step 2A Core SDP focuses on establishing underlying project feasibility. Sponsors must complete three "Core Planning Elements":

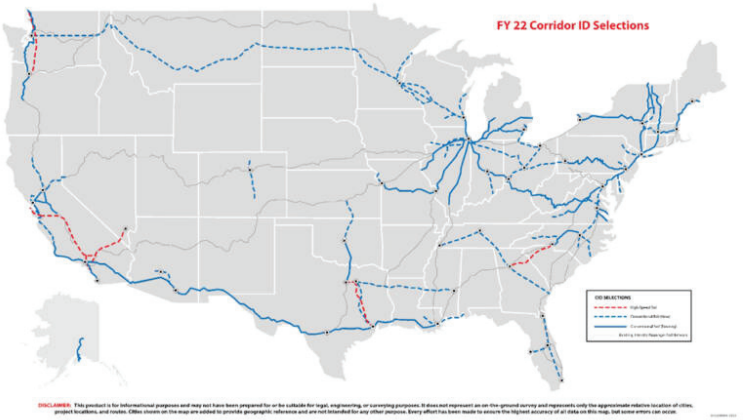
- Market Analysis: Proving ridership demand and economic connection.
- Feasibility Study: Identifying high-level infrastructure needs and costs.
- Initial Timetables: Developing conceptual schedules.

FRA officials also noted that host railroads have expressed concern regarding "robust engagement" on corridors that are not yet defined. The Core SDP aims to solve this by using "parametric models" (high-level rail network capacity estimates) rather than detailed simulations to prove viability first. Once a corridor passes the Core SDP review, it can graduate to a Comprehensive SDP for detailed design and environmental clearance.

For corridors that already have trains running—such as the route used by the Cardinal—the FRA introduced the Near-Term SDP. This mechanism allows project sponsors to strip out specific, ready-to-go capital projects (such as new passing sidings, signal upgrades, or station improvements) and advance them to construction funding immediately, without waiting for the full corridor-wide study to be completed. To qualify, projects must be located on track segments where passenger service currently exists and have stakeholder support, meaning host freight railroad acceptance.

FRA also announced it plans to open the Step 2 Directed Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process in early 2026. This is the administrative mechanism that will release funds to project sponsors to begin either their Step 2 Comprehensive, Core or Near-Term SDP study processes.

A roundup of the status reports for each of the 69 corridors currently in the Corridor ID program is provided in the following pages, organized by state. The status of each project and grant award is highlighted. As of now, seven projects have been advanced to Step 2 for Comprehensive SDP. Approximately 23



projects have been approved for Core SDP and are awaiting the Directed Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO).
Potential new corridors are also highlighted and discussed. For regions looking to propose entirely new routes not currently in the Corridor ID program, the FRA plans a new round of competitive NOFO applications later in calendar year 2026.

ALABAMA

Alabama has no projects in the current Corridor ID pipeline. Birmingham's local leadership has endorsed a proposal for a Birmingham–Atlanta passenger rail service. No formal application has been submitted to the FRA. The Huntsville MPO is proposing a study of intercity passenger rail corridors connecting Huntsville to major cities including Birmingham, Nashville, Atlanta, Chattanooga and Florence. The MPO is contemplating making application for a Corridor ID grant in the next round of NOFO grants.
The City of Mobile, Alabama got reconnected to the Amtrak national network. Amtrak's Mardi Gras, a new intercity passenger train running twice daily between New Orleans and Mobile, officially commenced revenue service on August 18, 2025. This marked the first regular passenger rail service along that Gulf Coast corridor in nearly 20 years. Ridership on the Mardi Gras has been very strong and ahead of expectations. The number of riders as of the end of January 2026 was about 70,500, which exceeded the original annual forecast of 60,000 riders.

ALASKA

The proposed Anchorage North and South Corridor spans 470 miles between Fairbanks and Seward, AK, including Anchorage, Whittier, Wasilla, Talkeetna, Denali National Park, Nenana, and other intermediate points. The project would provide improvements to the existing intercity passenger rail services operated by Alaska Railroad Corporation by adding new frequencies, reducing travel times, and improving reliability. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in May 2024. The Alaska Railroad requested proposals in late August 2024 from consulting firms interested in providing planning and engineering services to prepare a comprehensive intercity passenger rail SDP under the Corridor ID program. HDR was selected. Step 1 was submitted to FRA in 2025 and is awaiting approval.

^ The Amtrak Mardi Gras Service had its celebratory inaugural run on Saturday, Aug. 16, 2025, departing from Union Passenger Terminal in New Orleans and stopping in four coastal Mississippi cities -- Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi and Pascagoula -- before arriving into Mobile, Alabama.

AMTRAK (NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION)

Amtrak received grants for four corridors: Daily Cardinal, Daily Sunset Limited, Long Island Northeast Regional extension, and Texas High-Speed Rail service. Amtrak is also working with current and potential state partners to support other proposed corridors.
Amtrak's Long Island Extension, Daily Cardinal, and Daily Sunset Limited projects have all been obligated in Step 2. The FRA rescinded the grant for the Dallas – Houston high-speed rail project, which was in Step 3 Project Development.

DAILY CARDINAL SERVICE

The proposed Corridor would provide improvements to the existing Amtrak Cardinal Service between New York City, NY and Chicago, IL via Philadelphia, PA, Baltimore, MD, Washington, DC, and the States of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois (including Cincinnati, OH and Indianapolis, IN) by increasing service frequency from three days per week to daily. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in July 2024. Amtrak contracted with AECOM to provide consultant assistance to complete Step 2 of the program to develop an SDP. In addition to the Cardinal Service, Amtrak is coordinating with Indiana DOT on the Chicago – Indianapolis corridor and

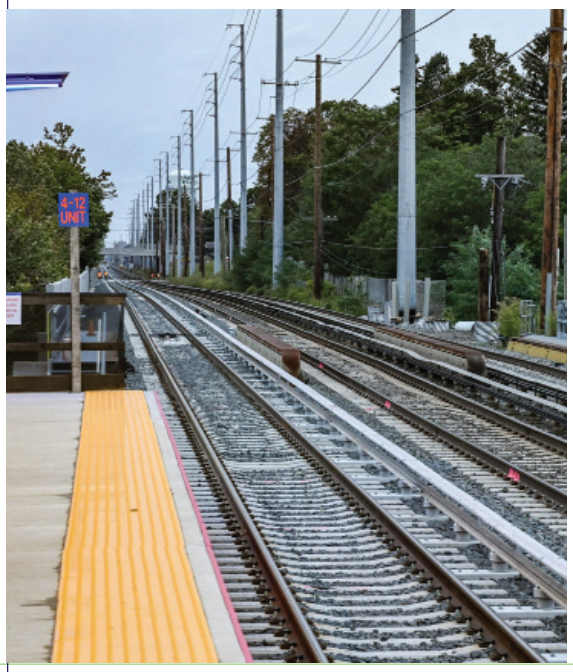
Kentuckiana Regional Planning & Development Agency (KIPDA) on the Louisville – Indianapolis Corridor (see Indiana update, page 34).

DAILY SUNSET LIMITED SERVICE

The proposed Corridor would provide improvements to the existing Amtrak long-distance Sunset Limited between Los Angeles, CA and New Orleans, LA by increasing service frequency from thrice weekly to daily. Intermediate cities served include Houston, San Antonio and El Paso, TX and Tucson, AZ. Funding was obligated for Step 1 in August 2024. Amtrak selected Gannett Fleming/Transystems (GFT) for the Step 2 SDP consulting assignment.

LONG ISLAND EXTENSION

The proposed extension would better connect Long Island, NY to the national intercity passenger train network by extending three existing daily Amtrak Northeast Regional roundtrips between Washington, DC, and New York, NY, east to Ronkonkoma, NY, with stops in Jamaica (Queens, NY) and Hicksville, NY. The proposed extension would entail upgrades to the track, stations, and infrastructure to accommodate these trains and better integrate Amtrak service with existing Long Island Rail Road commuter service. Step 1 is



complete. In July 2025, FRA obligated just over $5 million for the SDP. Amtrak selected AECOM to prepare the SDP, which began in Fall 2025 and continues through planning stages. The SDP will analyze infrastructure needs, such as additional track/platform capacity at Ronkonkoma, and operational requirements for Amtrak service on Long Island.

DALLAS – HOUSTON

The proposed Amtrak Texas High-Speed Rail Corridor would have connected Dallas and Houston, TX with a new, dedicated and grade-separated high speed passenger rail service. The project moved quickly through Steps 1 and 2 and was admitted into Step 3 project development with a funding obligation of $63.9 million in September 2024. However, USDOT announced on April 14, 2025, that FRA and Amtrak agreed to terminate the $63.9 million grant that had been awarded under the Corridor ID Program. This rescission effectively removed the project from federal grant obligations at that stage and coincided with Amtrak ending its participation in the corridor's development. With federal involvement cut off, the initiative has reverted into private leadership.

Kleinheinz Capital Partners (a private investor group) now leads the project and has stated publicly that the plan is "shovel-ready" — meaning environmental approvals and station sites are in place. The company has reported acquiring some land and permits and has acknowledged that additional funding will be needed to move forward. Texas state lawmakers have not authorized public funds for the project. Some local officials have raised objections on eminent domain and property-rights grounds. Legislation has been introduced in Congress that would prohibit federal funding for a Texas high-speed rail project. Full project financing has not been secured, and construction has not begun. With Amtrak withdrawn and federal funding eliminated, the project is now entirely private sector-driven and faces unresolved financing, legal, and political challenges.

ARIZONA

The Arizona Department of Transportation proposed a Phoenix-Tucson Corridor that would connect Phoenix and Tucson, AZ, with multiple daily frequencies. The proposed Corridor would reinstate service on an existing alignment over which Amtrak discontinued service in 1997, rerouting the long-distance Sunset Limited to a more southerly alignment through Maricopa, AZ (the corridor would use the same route as the existing Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle between Picacho and Tucson). Funding for Step 1 was obligated in May 2024. Arizona DOT contracted with a consultant team led by WSP and supported by AECOM to assist them in completing Step 1 of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Step 1 tasks were completed and forwarded to FRA for approval to move into Step 2, which it has done. The project will now move into Step 2 and prepare a Comprehensive SDP.

CALIFORNIA

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is the sponsor for five corridors. Caltrans worked with each of the respective corridor partners to develop a scope, schedule, and budget for a Service Development Plan (SDP) that reflects the needs of the corridor. Caltrans did not utilize consultants to complete Step 1 scoping but instead worked with each of the respective corridor partners to develop a scope, schedule, and budget for an SDP that reflects the needs of the corridor. FRA staff have approved all five scopes and Caltrans is waiting for obligation of Step 2 funds to begin working on the SDPs. Caltrans and corridor partners will collaborate to utilize subject matter expertise within each agency to lead the development of specific tasks and subtasks outlined in the FRA Framework for SDPs. Caltrans will provide contract management for FRA and consultant support. Caltrans will select consultants to assist them in preparing the Step 2 SDP for each of the corridors. Through the SDP process, a phased implementation plan will be developed with prioritized infrastructure investments for each corridor.

In addition to the five Caltrans sponsored corridors, there are three other corridors: High Desert Corridor (sponsored by High Desert Joint Powers Authority), Brightline West Corridor (see Nevada), and Sunset Limited Corridor (see Amtrak). California High-Speed Rail Authority was formally removed from the Corridor ID program. However, Caltrans and other relevant partners will continue planning and project development coordination with the Authority.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would provide improvements to the existing state-supported Gold Runner service between Sacramento/Oakland and Bakersfield, CA with an extension north from Sacramento to Chico and Redding, CA. The proposed Corridor would also include added service frequencies. The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority is the lead project partner. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in May 2024. The scope, schedule, and budget for the SDP is approved by FRA and Caltrans is awaiting Step 2 obligation.

LOS ANGELES – SAN DIEGO – SAN LUIS OBISPO (LOSSAN) RAIL CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would enhance the existing Pacific Surfliner between San Luis Obispo and San Diego, CA, with an extension south to the US/Mexico border in San Ysidro, CA. The proposed Corridor would also include additional service frequencies, improvements to reliability, and climate resiliency considerations. The Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN) is a joint powers authority formed to manage the coastal rail line between San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Luis Obispo. The LOSSAN JPA is the lead partner working to deliver improvements to the LOSSAN corridor. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in May 2024. The Step 1 scope, schedule, and budget for the SDP is approved by FRA and Caltrans is awaiting Step 2 obligation.

COACHELLA VALLEY RAIL CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would provide new service between Los Angeles and Coachella, CA using existing alignments currently served by Amtrak's long-distance Southwest Chief (Los Angeles to Colton via Fullerton) and Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle (Colton to Coachella), with intermediate stops including Palm Springs and Indio, CA. The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) is the lead partner work-

ing with Caltrans to deliver this project. The scope, schedule, and budget for the SDP is approved by FRA and Caltrans is awaiting Step 2 obligation. The RCTC awarded an $80 million contract to HDR Engineering in January 2026 for the Coachella Valley Rail Project. This contract covers the SDP and Tier 2 environmental study, preliminary design, and station planning for the 144-mile passenger line, moving the project toward future construction.

CENTRAL COAST CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would provide new service over a route currently only served by Amtrak's long-distance Coast Starlight between San Jose and San Luis Obispo, CA by adding new frequencies. The corridor includes evaluation of service to Santa Cruz from Watsonville on the Santa Cruz Branch Line. The entire corridor will assess phasing initial service in the northern segment to Salinas and expansion to San Luis Obispo, with new interim station stops including Pajaro/Watsonville, Castroville, Soledad, and King City. The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), and Coast Rail Coordinating Council (CRCC) are key project partners. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in May 2024. The scope, schedule, and budget for the SDP is approved by FRA and Caltrans is awaiting Step 2 obligation.

CAPITOL CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would enhance the existing state-supported Capitol Corridor service between San Jose and Auburn, CA with an extension to San Francisco, Salinas, and Novato, and Reno/Sparks, NV. The proposed Corridor would also include new frequencies and reliability improvements. The Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) is the lead partner working with Caltrans. The Step 1 scope, schedule, and budget for the SDP is approved by FRA and Caltrans is awaiting Step 2 obligation.

HIGH DESERT INTERCITY HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

The High Desert Intercity High-Speed Rail Corridor would connect Victor Valley to Palmdale, CA. The proposed Corridor would provide new high speed rail service on a new alignment, serving to link together two other high speed rail lines under development: Brightline West (Las Vegas, NV to Rancho Cucamonga, CA) and California High Speed Rail Phase 1 (San Francisco to Los Angeles/Anaheim, CA). Funding for Step 1 was obligated in August 2024. On October 1, 2024, the FRA approved the High Desert Corridor (HDC) Step 1 scope of work, schedule and budget paving the way for the HDC and LA Metro to complete the HDC Service Development and Funding Plan in 2025. InfraStrategies has been supporting the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Authority with grant administration and financial planning support services. The High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Authority (HDC JPA) awarded a 5-year, $42 million contract to HDR in May 2025 for engineering, design, and advisory services for the 54-mile High Desert Intercity High-Speed Rail Corridor project. This contract covers rail design, stations, and environmental documentation, with construction targeted to begin in the early 2030s.

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROGRAM

The FRA has rescinded a sizable portion of the federal funding previously obligated to the California high-speed rail project, including the Corridor ID and construction-related grants. In mid-July 2025, the FRA terminated approximately $4 billion in unspent federal grant funding that had been awarded to the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) for its high-speed rail program, citing a compliance review that found the project was not meeting milestones and lacked a viable plan for completion. The $4 billion included funds that remained unspent from prior federal awards for design and construction work — including funds originally secured under programs like the FRA Federal-State Partnership. California filed a lawsuit in July 2025 seeking to block the rescission. However, by December 2025 California voluntarily dropped that lawsuit, indicating the dispute over the rescission's legality was effectively concluded and the withdrawal of federal funds stands. The Corridor ID planning grant itself remains on the books and was not explicitly rescinded — but the major federal grant funding beyond planning was terminated in July 2025. Without federal funding, the Authority has been exploring other funding avenues including State support and private investment. California secured $1 billion annually from its cap-and-trade (Cap-and-Invest) program through at least 2045 to support rail construction. CHSRA has initiated processes to seek private partners and investors to help accelerate construction and

commercialize assets. CHSRA is also progressing with its Draft 2026 Business Plan outlining a revised strategy for project delivery and financing. AECOM-Fluor JV is providing program management services under a multi-year contract. This team is responsible for broad program delivery support — including planning, design coordination, construction oversight strategy and quality assurance.

COLORADO

FRONT RANGE CORRIDOR

The Front Range Corridor would connect Fort Collins to Pueblo, CO, with intermediate stops at Boulder, Denver, Colorado Springs, and other points. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment, including a first phase of service between Fort Collins and Denver by 2029. The SDP is scheduled for completion by Summer 2026. That SDP is being prepared by HNTB, Steer and others and is administered by Colorado DOT (CDOT). The CDOT SDP grant award predates the Corridor ID program and formation of Front Range Passenger Rail District, which is the corridor sponsor. AECOM and HDR (separately) are also under a Project Development MSA with the Front Range Passenger Rail District.

MOUNTAIN RAIL

The Mountain Rail project is not in the Corridor ID program. It is being separately funded by Colorado. The Mountain Rail route will use the existing rail line that extends from Denver to Craig through Winter Park and Steamboat Springs. The specific station locations along the new route are still under consideration, and CDOT is currently evaluating multiple factors to identify the most suitable sites for these stations. WSP was selected by CDOT in July 2024 to support preparation of a non-federalized SDP. As a part of this ongoing study, community feedback has been crucial in shaping the final decisions. This input is integrated with engineering requirements and design constraints to ensure station locations meet operational, practical and community needs. Public meetings were held throughout the corridor in 2025. The next step in the process, after the successful completion of the SDP, are Preliminary Engineering, cost estimating and environmental studies required to move the project toward construction and revenue service. The first phase of service between Denver Union Station and Granby is targeted for revenue operations in November 2026. WSP is CDOT's consultant for operating contractor selection, rolling stock, FRA regulatory compliance, revenue readiness, and design services for a new layover facility.

CONNECTICUT

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) proposed Hartford Line Corridor improvements would include restoring and constructing new rail infrastructure including track, stations, signal upgrades and safety enhancements for the purpose of increasing regional intercity passenger rail service through additional frequencies and improved reliability for the existing Amtrak Northeast Regional, Springfield Shuttles, Valley

Flyer and CTrail Hartford Line service as well as the Vermonter and future Inland Route Corridors among New Haven CT, Hartford CT and Springfield, MA. The Hartford Line improvements are part of a wider vision developed by the Departments of Transportation in the six New England states for a New England High-Speed and Intercity Rail Network. This vision will be revisited as part of the SDP in coordination with the FRA, Amtrak, Massachusetts, Vermont, and other stakeholders. The Corridor ID Step 1 grant was obligated on March 27, 2024. It is anticipated that the Step 1 efforts related to SDP scoping, scheduling, and cost estimating process will be completed soon allowing Step 2 SDP planning efforts to begin in late spring or summer 2026, with anticipated completion in 2027. The broader New Haven–Hartford–Springfield rail program has historically used WSP as a program manager with STV as a subconsultant, and WSP has been tasked with both Step 1 and Step 2 under the Corridor ID program.

DELAWARE

The proposed Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) Diamond State Line would connect at least one point on the Northeast Corridor in northern Delaware (i.e., Newark or Wilmington) with a point in eastern Maryland (Salisbury or Berlin) via central Delaware, including the state capital of Dover. The Diamond State Line seeks to address the acute shortage of viable transportation options in a corridor that lacks both a direct interstate highway connection and the passenger rail option that other Northeast states and regions enjoy. It would restore passenger rail access to and from Delaware's largest cities and provide opportunities for multimodal connections to the communities that swell during the summer. This project supports DelDOT's goals of enhancing equity by serving historically underserved communities with better access to opportunities. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in March 2024. The DTC selected Rummel, Klepper & Kahl (RK&K) with WSP to assist with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program and develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. The Step 1 deliverables were submitted to FRA in April 2025.

FLORIDA

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) received grants for two corridors: the Miami – Orlando – Tampa and Jacksonville – Orlando – Miami Corridors listed below.

MIAMI-ORLANDO-TAMPA CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would connect Miami, Orlando and Tampa, FL. It would provide new or enhanced service on one or more existing alignments, and potentially a new alignment between Orlando International Airport and Tampa. Funds were obligated for Step 1 in March 2024. FDOT is working with project partners in Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Brightline currently operates passenger rail service between Miami – Orlando and is planning to extend its service to Tampa. The project is separate from, but complementary to, potential SunRail extensions in Polk County and the ongoing Sunshine Corridor study. A sizable portion of the current delay or extended timeline of the Step 1 process involves the Transit Concepts and Alternatives Review (TCAR), which was finalized in late 2024/early 2025 to align the private Brightline extension with the public SunRail "Sunshine Corridor" expansion. The FRA and FDOT "Gap Analysis" is determining if previous studies (like the 2023 Passenger Rail Corridor Assessment) can be used to fast-track certain Step 1 re-

^ *Silver Meteor in Orlando, FL*

quirements.

The Sunshine Corridor is a major proposed extension of the SunRail commuter rail and Brightline intercity rail services to the Orlando International Airport (MCO), the Orange County Convention Center, I-Drive, and Disney Springs. Supported by the Central Florida Commuter Rail Commission, this $4+ billion project is currently undergoing a two-year, $6 million Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study launched in 2025 to finalize plans, with construction potentially beginning after 2027. This is a key planning step that evaluates feasibility, cost, environmental impacts, and federal funding readiness. FDOT is contributing to the study with local counties (Seminole, Osceola, Orange) and the City of Orlando also pledging funds. A total study cost of approximately $6 million is expected, with work projected over about two years (2025–2027).

JACKSONVILLE-ORLANDO-MIAMI CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would connect Jacksonville, Orlando and Miami, FL. The proposed Corridor would provide new or enhanced service on one or more existing alignments. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in September 2024. FDOT is working with project partners for Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Amtrak's Silver Meteor and Floridian trains operate over this route between Jacksonville and Miami via Orlando. The Jacksonville – Orlando – Miami Corridor remains in the early Corridor ID planning phase with federal funding supporting preparatory work for Step 1.

GEORGIA

The proposed Georgia Department of Transportation Atlanta – Savannah Corridor would connect Atlanta and Savannah, GA. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on existing or new alignment, with potential intermediate stops including Athens, Augusta, and Macon, GA. The project entered Step 1 of the Corridor ID program via a CRISI grant. GDOT contracted with WSP to prepare the SDP and initiate the environmental process. The SDP is funded with $8 million in Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) identified by Senator Jon Ossoff and $2 million in state matching funds from GDOT, for a total cost of $10 million. The SDP will identify the costs and potential funding sources for future activities beyond the study, including environmental approval, design, construction, right-of-way acquisition, operation, and maintenance. A variety of federal, state, local, and private sources will be considered to develop a financial plan for the project. The SDP commenced in late 2023 and is expected to be completed by early 2028.

IDAHO

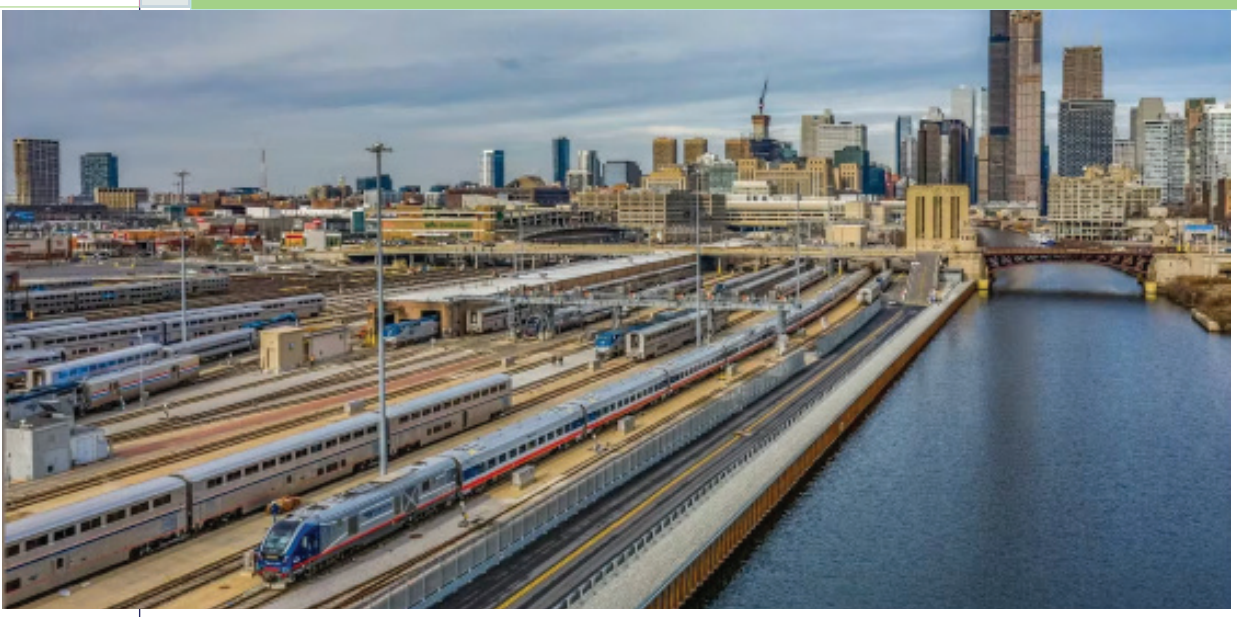
Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) submitted grant applications for the Pioneer Corridor in March 2023. The application was for potential re-establishment of a route from Salt Lake City to Boise (previously the Pioneer route under Amtrak). Partners included Utah Transit Authority (UTA), Utah DOT, and City of Boise. The grant was not awarded. ITD mistakenly submitted its application to the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant program rather than the Corridor ID program. The error was not discovered until after the deadline had passed, and ITD's application was not considered under Corridor ID. ITD is working with the Utah Department of Transportation on initial system planning to prepare for future Corridor ID program grant applications.

ILLINOIS

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has a long history of investing in state-supported passenger rail corridors. In partnership with Amtrak, Illinois sponsors multiple daily round trips, including:

- Four Lincoln Service round trips
  (Chicago, IL – St. Louis, MO)
- Two Illinois Zephyr/Carl Sandburg round trips
  (Chicago, IL – Quincy, IL)
- Two Illini/Saluki round trips
  (Chicago, IL – Carbondale, IL)

From 2007 to the present, the Lincoln Service has experienced notable growth in ridership. In 2007, ridership stood at 359,020, which increased to 627,599 in 2019, prior to the pandemic. Since then, ridership has been recovering, reaching 592,735 in 2025, which is approximately 94.4 percent of the pre-pandemic peak.



^ *Chicago*

IDOT, the Missouri Department of Transportation, Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), and Amtrak also partnered to combine one daily Lincoln Service round trip with the Missouri River Runner creating a seamless Chicago – Kansas City connection branded as the Lincoln Service Missouri River Runner. In June 2023, the three Lincoln Service and one Lincoln Service Missouri River Runner frequencies began operating at 110 mph between Joliet, IL and Alton, IL.

Illinois also jointly supports additional intercity corridors:
• Six Hiawatha round trips (Chicago, IL – Milwaukee, WI) with Wisconsin Department of Transportation
• One Borealis round trip (Chicago, IL – Milwaukee, WI – St. Paul, MN) with Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation
Illinois has four projects in the Corridor ID program. IDOT received FRA Corridor ID selections for three corridors and the City of Peoria, IL received its own selection. Project updates for each corridor are provided below:

CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS HIGHER SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

The IDOT proposed capital improvements to the corridor would include extensive double tracking along the existing 284-mile route to improve reliability and accommodate the phasing of four additional round trips to provide more flexible travel options. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in June 2024. In addition to evaluating the entire corridor in Step 2, IDOT would work with partners UPRR, Amtrak, and Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation (Metra) to evaluate improvements needed between Joliet and the south concourse of Chicago Union Station to optimize a route shift to Metra's Rock Island District. IDOT contracted with WSP, the Program Manager for corridor improvement projects since 2010, to assist with Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for development of its Service Development Plan (SDP). Once the FRA approves the Step 1 deliverables (expected in mid-2026), IDOT would be eligible to apply for Step 2 funding to develop the SDP.

CHICAGO TO QUAD CITIES SERVICE EXTENSION

The IDOT proposed corridor would provide two new daily round trips connecting Chicago, IL to Moline, IL via BNSF Railway and Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS). In late 2024 as part of an ongoing FRA High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grant, IDOT, IAIS, BNSF, and Amtrak formally signed Preliminary Engineering plans detailing the infrastructure improvements needed, including a new track connection between BNSF and IAIS at Wyanet, IL. IDOT continues to discuss with FRA the best path and timeline for expeditiously starting service. Funds awarded for Step 1 have not yet been obligated, but Quandel Consultants is the selected Program Management Consultant for Step 1 project planning.

CHICAGO TO CARBONDALE CORRIDOR

The IDOT program would evaluate capital needed to improve travel times and reliability and phase two additional round trips with partners Canadian National Railway (CN) and Amtrak. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in June 2024. IDOT contracted with Quandel Consultants to assist with Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for development of its Service Development Plan. Once the FRA approves the Step 1 deliverables (expected in mid-2026), IDOT would be eligible to apply for Step 2 fund-

ing to develop the SDP.

PEORIA TO CHICAGO PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

The City of Peoria proposed Peoria – Chicago Corridor service would connect Peoria, IL to Chicago, IL through Ottawa, IL. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in March 2024. The Corridor sponsor contracted with Chicago-based Patrick Engineering (now RINA, SpA) to complete Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. In late 2025, city officials updated the Peoria City Council that Step 1 was still in progress, with Step 2 expected to follow once FRA approval is secured. The total cost for Peoria's Step 2A Core SDP has been estimated at $1.6 million, requiring a local match of approximately $160,000 from the city and its partners.

INDIANA

There are several corridors in Indiana that have received FRA grants to complete Step 1 of the Corridor ID program. Amtrak is studying the daily Cardinal that serves Indiana (see earlier Amtrak update). The City of Fort Wayne, along with its project partner, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) in Columbus, Ohio, is studying a corridor linking Chicago, Fort Wayne, Columbus, and Pittsburgh. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) is studying the restoration of the Hoosier passenger train service between Chicago and Indianapolis. The Hoosier ran on the four days each week when the Cardinal did not, providing daily rail service on the Chicago–Indianapolis corridor. The Hoosier ceased operations on June 30, 2019, after state funding for the train was not included in Indiana's 2019 state budget. Finally, the Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency (KIPDA) is studying the restoration of passenger rail service between Louisville and Indianapolis as an extension of the Chicago – Indianapolis service being studied by INDOT.

CHICAGO, FORT WAYNE, COLUMBUS, AND PITTSBURGH (MIDWEST CONNECT)

The City of Fort Wayne, in partnership with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) in Ohio, proposed the Midwest Connect Corridor, which would connect Chicago, IL, to Pittsburgh, PA via Fort Wayne, IN, and Columbus, OH. The proposed Corridor would reinstate service on an existing alignment. Funds were obligated for Step 1 in March 2024. The project partners contracted with HNTB to assist them in completing Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. HNTB has engaged local stakeholders and briefed them on the project. The local match for Step 2 planning has been secured; a combined local funding commitment (about $650,000 total) was raised to meet the 10 percent local match required to move forward with the next corridor planning phase. Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the Columbus MPO, contributed roughly $425,000 toward that match. It is expected that FRA will approve the project to move into preparing a Core SDP.

INDIANAPOLIS - CHICAGO CORRIDOR (HOOSIER)

The proposed Corridor by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) would provide improvements to the existing Amtrak route between Indianapolis, IN and Chicago, IL by adding new frequencies and improving travel times. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. INDOT has contracted with WSP to assist them with Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, and documenting its SDP. This effort is being undertaken in coordination with Amtrak's Corridor ID project to increase service frequency on the entirety of the New York-Chicago Cardinal route from thrice weekly to daily and with the KIPDA Louisville – Indianapolis project. Formal approval of the Step 1 deliverables by the FRA is expected to occur in the first half of 2026.

LOUISVILLE-INDIANAPOLIS PASSENGER RAIL CORRIDOR (KENTUCKY CARDINAL)

The proposed Louisville-Indianapolis Corridor by KIPDA would restore the Kentucky Cardinal service and connect Indianapolis, IN to Louisville, KY. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment over which Amtrak discontinued service in the early 2000s. Funding was obligated in March 2024. KIPDA contracted with AECOM to assist them in completing Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP. AECOM completed the assigned tasks in Step 1 in Fall 2024. KIPDA received notice from FRA in December 2025 that the project needs to be refined and modified for a Core SDP. KIPDA has revised its schedule and budget in accordance with FRA revisions to the scope of work. KIPDA expects ap-

proval to move forward with the Step 2 Core SDP work in late spring 2026.

KANSAS

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) proposed the Heartland Flyer Extension corridor, which would connect the existing Heartland Flyer intercity passenger rail service between Fort Worth, TX, and Oklahoma City, OK with an extension north to Wichita, KS and then Newton, KS. The proposed Corridor would include new station stops in Edmond, OK, Perry, OK, Ponca City, OK, Arkansas City, KS, Wichita, KS, and Newton, KS. Prior to development of the FRA Corridor ID program, KDOT contracted with DB ECO to develop an SDP, which was completed in early 2025. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in May 2024, with the intent to scope a revision to the then in-process SDP to meet Corridor ID requirements. The project to revise the SDP was launched in February 2026, with completion anticipated for Q4 2026.

KENTUCKY

Bowling Green and Warren County officials have taken steps toward establishing passenger rail service connecting Louisville and Nashville. The proposed route aligns with the FRA long-distance service study, which identified Bowling Green as a potential "restored service" stop for routes such as Chicago-to-Miami or Detroit-to-New Orleans. In March 2025, the City of Bowling Green and Warren County signed an agreement with HDR Engineering to pursue federal grants for a stop on a proposed Cincinnati-Louisville-Bowling Green-Nashville corridor. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) referenced the study of this intercity corridor in its 2025 Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan.

LOUISIANA

The proposed Baton Rouge - New Orleans Corridor project would provide new intercity passenger rail service on an existing alignment that last hosted passenger trains in 1969. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in June 2024. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) hired HNTB to assist them with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program. HNTB was tasked to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP in accordance with the FRA framework. The LADOTD reported that all documentation for Step 1 of the Corridor ID program (Gap Analysis / planning deliverables) was completed and submitted to the FRA in June 2025. Because the LADOTD had already defined the scope of a SDP through previous studies, the FRA formally considers Step 1 complete. HNTB led the primary feasibility studies for the corridor, including infrastructure assessments and coordination with host railroad CPKC. The FRA recently targeted opening the "Directed Notice of Funding Opportunity" for Step 2 in January 2026, which provides the administrative mechanism for LADOTD to begin intensive SDP work.

MASSACHUSETTS

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) proposed a Boston and Albany Corridor that would connect Boston, MA and Albany, NY via Springfield, MA. The proposed Corridor would provide up to eight daily round-trip passenger trains on an existing alignment that is currently being used by Amtrak's long-distance Lake Shore Limited. MassDOT has completed Step 1 of the program which included development of a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing the SDP. In early July 2024, MassDOT solicited services to support Step 2 of the Corridor ID process. An award was made in early August 2024 to Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) to support the state with the preparation of the SDP pending approval by the FRA for MassDOT to enter Step 2 of the program. In late August 2025, the FRA awarded a $3.5 million grant to MassDOT to support the Boston-Albany Corridor SDP, which is an essential step in expanding and enhancing passenger rail service between Boston and Albany, New York, via Springfield. The grant award was finalized in early 2026 allowing MassDOT and VHB to commence work on the SDP.

MAINE

The Downeaster Corridor project would improve the existing Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) Downeaster corridor service, connecting Boston, MA to Brunswick, ME via Portland, ME. The proposed improvements include added frequencies, reduced travel times, improved reliability, a new infill

station at West Falmouth, ME, and technology improvements to make it easier for passengers to connect between the Downeaster and other Amtrak services in Boston (the Downeaster serves North Station in Boston while all Amtrak NEC services use South Station). The service improvements also include an extension east to Rockland, ME. The NNEPRA completed Step 1 of the program which included development of a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. NNEPRA is currently coordinating with the FRA to finalize Step 1 deliverables. Once approved, the project will be eligible for Step 2 funding to complete the formal SDP, a process the FRA targets for early 2026. NNEPRA selected DB E.C.O. North America for support with Step 2 pending FRA approval.

MICHIGAN

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) sponsors three intercity passenger rail routes that serves 22 station communities. Amtrak operates the services. MDOT provides capital and operating assistance, technical support, and safety oversight of Michigan's passenger rail system. In addition, MDOT owns a segment of the rail corridor that connects Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac. It funds all capital and maintenance work on the segment of the corridor between Kalamazoo and Dearborn. Currently, efforts are focused on increasing passenger speeds up to 110 mph in this area. Passenger trains have traveled up to 110 mph since 2012 on the Amtrak-owned portion of the rail corridor between Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Porter, Indiana.

CHICAGO TO DETROIT/PONTIAC CORRIDOR (WOLVERINE)

The 304-mile corridor between Detroit/Pontiac, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois is part of the "Chicago Hub"

^ *Wolverine Service No. 353 is moments away from joining the Chicago Line of Norfolk Southern to reach Chicago.*

Passenger Rail Network and is a federally designated High-Speed Rail Corridor. This existing corridor is one of several major branches in the hub and spoke passenger rail system centered on Chicago, as identified in the Midwest Regional Rail Plan, published by FRA in 2021.

There are 11 ARRA grants totaling $600 million that funded improvements to this corridor. Passenger service is provided by Amtrak's Wolverine route. Major project elements included purchase of 135 miles of Norfolk Southern track and right-of-way; a flyover eliminating the level crossing of two busy freight rail lines reducing delays; and infrastructure improvements that increased track speeds to allow trains to reach speeds up to 110 mph. Travel time was reduced by 30 minutes making train travel competitive with driving.

MDOT proposes to extend the existing Wolverine service to Windsor, Ontario, Canada. The proposed Corridor would also include improvements to travel times and reliability. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in June 2024. MDOT contracted with HNTB to assist with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP.

Beyond the four Corridor ID projects, MDOT is studying a new east-west passenger rail route connecting Holland, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Ann Arbor, and Detroit. Additionally, a north-south line connecting Southeast Michigan to Traverse City/Petoskey is proposed, along with a new multimodal transportation hub in Detroit.

Chicago to Grand Rapids Corridor (Pere Marquette)

The 176-mile corridor between Grand Rapids, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois is part of the Chicago Hub Passenger Rail Network. This existing corridor is one of several branches in the hub and spoke passenger rail system centered on Chicago, as identified in the Midwest Regional Rail Plan, published by FRA in 2021. The pro-

posed corridor improvements would provide added new frequencies and improving reliability to the existing Pere Marquette service between Grand Rapids, MI and Chicago, IL. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in June 2024. MDOT contracted with HNTB to assist with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP.

CHICAGO TO PORT HURON CORRIDOR (BLUE WATER)

The 319-mile corridor between Port Huron, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois is part of the Chicago Hub Passenger Rail Network. This existing corridor is also one of several branches in the hub and spoke passenger rail system centered on Chicago, as identified in the Midwest Regional Rail Plan, published by FRA in 2021. The proposed Corridor would provide improvements to the existing Blue Water service between Port Huron, MI and Chicago, IL by adding new frequencies and improving reliability. Funds for Step 1 were obligated in June 2024. MDOT contracted with HNTB in October 2024 to assist with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP.

MINNESOTA

The Minnesota Department of Transportation proposed Northern Lights Express Corridor would connect Minneapolis, MN to Duluth, MN through Cambridge, MN and Hinckley, MN. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. MnDOT completed Step 1 in-house with the support of CPCS. FRA accepted MnDOT's deliverables in March 2025, but it has not yet officially been admitted into Step 2 by the FRA. MnDOT is positioned to begin Step 2 once the FRA executes that grant State funding for the required local match is already in place. MnDOT has selected HNTB/HDR to complete Step 2.

MISSISSIPPI

I-20 CORRIDOR INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) has proposed the I-20 Corridor to connect Dallas, TX to Meridian, MS and plans to serve the following cities in Texas: Fort Worth, Mineola, Longview, and Marshall; the following cities in Louisiana: Shreveport, Ruston, and Monroe; and the following cities in Mississippi: Vicksburg and Jackson. The proposed project would provide new passenger rail service on an existing alignment. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in August 2024. Finalizing the Statement of Work (SOW) and budget for FRA

approval is expected in mid-2026. The FRA targets opening the Directed Notice of Funding Opportunity for Step 2 in early 2026. Amtrak has committed to leading the application for the Federal-State Partnership Program funding to support construction activities needed for this extension. There is no clear public record that the SRC has formally hired a consultant team yet for the project. However, consultants and technical partners are already involved through partner agencies and local governments, and consultant procurement is expected as the project advances into formal planning stages. HNTB/CSRS have already done preliminary work for local partners supporting the project. With FRA planning funds now secured, a formal consultant procurement for the SDP is the next step.

GULF COAST PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

The Amtrak Mardi Gras service officially commenced on August 18, 2025, restoring passenger rail to the Gulf Coast for the first time in nearly 20 years. The service has significantly exceeded initial ridership projections, with officials describing it as one of the most successful launches in Amtrak history. The service surpassed its entire first-year forecast in less than six months. Due to high demand, Amtrak added an extra coach car for the 2026 Mardi Gras carnival season.

MISSOURI

KANSAS CITY, MO TO ST JOSEPH, MO

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) proposed Kansas City – St. Joseph Corridor would connect St. Joseph, MO and Kansas City, MO, and include connection with the existing state-supported Missouri River Runner route to St. Louis, MO. The re-

sult of this planned project is a new route. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. MoDOT selected Crawford, Murphy & Tilly (CMT) to assist with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Quandel Consultants is part of the team. The project is currently undergoing its initial feasibility and scoping study. While the study was initially targeted for completion in spring 2025, recent updates from the MoDOT indicate it is now expected to be finalized by the end of summer 2026. MoDOT has already included placeholder funding in its recent fiscal year budget requests to ensure it can provide the required local match for Step 2 if approved.

HANNIBAL EXTENSION OF EXISTING CHICAGO-QUINCY CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would connect Hannibal, MO to Chicago, IL by extending an existing State-supported route (the Illinois Zephyr/Carl Sandburg between Chicago and Quincy, IL) and the activities undertaken as part of the development of the Corridor would result in an extension of an existing route. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. MODOT selected Crawford, Murphy & Tilly (CMT) to assist with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Quandel Consultants is part of the team. MoDOT must submit the completed Step 1 Statement of Work, schedule, and budget to the FRA for approval, which is anticipated by mid-2026.

MONTANA

The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) proposed the Big Sky North Coast Corridor, which is new rail service on an existing alignment that would restore a route that Amtrak discontinued in 1979. Grant funding for Step 1 of the Corridor ID program was obligated in March 2024. On July 30, 2024, the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) announced it had hired a consultant team led by David Evans and Associates, including Quandel Consultants, KLJ Engineering, and the Steer Group for work in developing the SDP for the Big Sky North Coast Corridor. The BSPRA submitted its Step 1 deliverables—the scope, schedule, and budget for an SDP—to the FRA in mid-2025. Once the FRA approves the Step 1 submission (expected in 2026), the corridor will enter the Step 2 SDP phase.

NEVADA

The Nevada Department of Transportation is working in partnership with Brightline West on the proposed Brightline West High-Speed Rail Corridor that would connect Rancho Cucamonga, CA to Las Vegas, NV, providing new service on a new high speed rail alignment with intermediate stops at Hesperia and Victorville, CA. Although approved into the Corridor ID program in December 2023, the Brightline West project itself has moved far beyond pure planning into active construction. There are no public updates indicating FRA has yet obligated Step 1 funds or that Step 1 is complete or advancing to Step 2 under the Corridor ID program. A $3 billion Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant has also been signed with the FRA to support project delivery.

Brightline West officially broke ground on the nation's first true high-speed rail system in April 2024. Construction is estimated to take five years, and service is now expected to be inaugurated in 2029, missing its hoped for 2028 inauguration for the Los Angels Olympic Games. As of now, Brightline West is in the civil construction phase, doing preparatory work such as site grading, drainage, utility relocations and bridge work along the planned 218-mile route between Las Vegas and Rancho Cucamonga, CA. Field work in southern Nevada (geological and soil surveys) has been completed, helping pave the way for expanded heavy construction in the I-15 corridor. Heavy construction is underway at the future main Las Vegas station site just south of the Strip near the I-15/I-215 interchange. Work includes station building progress and associated infrastructure (parking, grade work, utility relocation). This was the site of the project's official groundbreaking in April 2024, and civil work there has progressed into structural construction. Track has not yet been laid and no firm date for putting rails in the ground has been officially announced.

NEW YORK

EMPIRE CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would improve the existing Amtrak Empire Service between New York, NY, and Niagara Falls, NY via Albany, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo by adding frequencies, reducing travel time, and improving reliability. HNTB has been engaged in working on the Empire Corridor for many years. HNTB prepared the Final EIS for the High-Speed Empire Corridor in January 2023. FRA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) of the proposed improvements to intercity passenger rail services along the 464-mile Empire

Corridor, connecting Pennsylvania (Penn) Station in New York City with Niagara Falls International Railway Station and Transportation Center in Niagara Falls, New York. The ROD was signed in April 2023. HNTB was selected by the NYSDOT to assist them with Step 1 of the Corridor ID program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. No public notification of Step 2 progress has yet been issued by the FRA.

ADIRONDACK CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would provide improvements to the existing Amtrak Adirondack service between New York City, NY and Montreal, Quebec, Canada via Albany, NY, by completing a U.S. Customs Pre-Clearance Facility in Montreal, adding a second daily round-trip, and making track and infrastructure improvements to increase reliability, reduce trip times, increase safety, and achieve a state of good repair. NYSDOT selected HNTB to assist with Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. No public notification of Step 2 progress has yet been issued by the FRA.

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has a long history of supporting the expansion and improvement of passenger rail to spur economic development and accommodate population growth. Mott MacDonald was hired by NCDOT to be the program manager for all Corridor ID projects. Step 1 for each corridor was assigned to separate consulting teams to complete the scope, schedule and budget for the corridor SDP. Described below is the status of each corridor as reported by NCDOT.

WILMINGTON TO RALEIGH CORRIDOR

The corridor would provide new service to Raleigh, NC from Wilmington, NC on an existing alignment, part of which must be reconstructed. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in 2024. NCDOT selected Stantec to prepare Step 1 deliverables including a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP. FRA has approved this corridor to prepare a Core SDP as the first work product in Step 2.

^ *North Carolina by Train & Amtrak Connection Bus*

FAYETTEVILLE TO RALEIGH CORRIDOR

The proposed new service would connect Fayetteville, NC with Raleigh, NC, using an existing alignment. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in 2024. NCDOT selected Jacobs to prepare the Step 1 deliverables including a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP. This corridor is anticipated to move into Step 2 to complete a Comprehensive SDP in 2026, pending identification of local match funding.

CHARLOTTE TO KINGS MOUNTAIN CORRIDOR

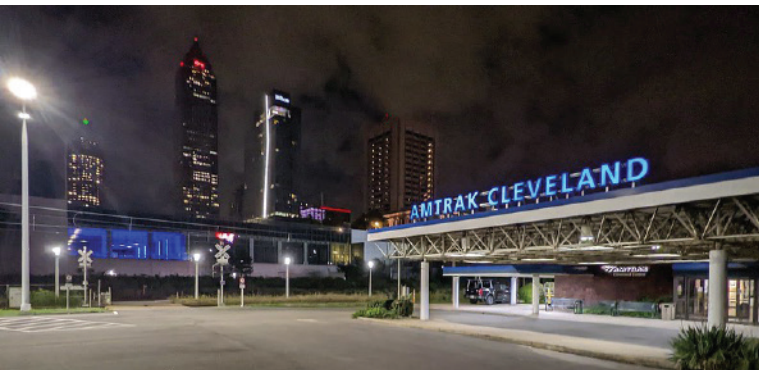
The proposed corridor would provide new service to Kings Mountain, NC from Charlotte, NC on existing alignment with capacity improvements west of the Charlotte Gateway Station. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in 2024. NCDOT selected Moffatt and Nichol to prepare the Step 1 deliverables including a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP. This corridor will have a Core SDP as the first work product in Step 2.

WINSTON-SALEM TO RALEIGH CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would connect Winston-Salem, NC with Raleigh, NC, with intermediate stops at Greensboro, Burlington, Durham, and Cary, complementing the existing state-supported Piedmont and Carolinian services. This Corridor would also include new frequencies, improvements to reliability, and new stations. In June 2024, funding was obligated for Step 1 of the Corridor ID program. NCDOT selected AECOM to prepare the Step 1 deliverables including a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP. This corridor will have a Core SDP as the first work product in Step 2.

ASHEVILLE TO SALISBURY CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment between Asheville and Salisbury in western North Carolina, following a line that last hosted passenger trains in 1975. Funding was obligated for Step 1 of the Corridor ID program in 2024. NCDOT selected Pinecone Transportation



^ *Amtrak Cleveland Lakefront Station*

Professionals to prepare the Step 1 deliverables including a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP. Realization of this corridor would require repairing and rebuilding trackage that was heavily damaged by Hurricane Helene in September 2024. This corridor will have a Core SDP as the first work product in Step 2 and is anticipated to enter Step 2 in 2026. A recent Economic Impact Study for the corridor estimates that the service would yield nearly $60 million in annual ongoing economic impact, after an initial implementation impact of over $1 billion.

CHARLOTTE TO ATLANTA HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

The proposed new high speed rail alignment would connect Charlotte, NC and Atlanta, GA, with potential intermediate stops including Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport in South Carolina and Augusta and Athens in Georgia then serving a downtown Atlanta station and terminating at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the world's busiest. The scope of this service was defined by a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement completed by Georgia DOT in 2021. NCDOT selected WSP to assist with the Step 1 task deliverables to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP. This corridor will have a Core SDP as the first work product in Step 2.

CHARLOTTE TO WASHINGTON, DC CORRIDOR

The proposed project would provide improvements to the existing state-supported Carolinian service between Charlotte, NC and Washington, DC as well as existing Virginia-supported services between Richmond, VA and Washington, DC. Passenger rail services will be improved in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, High Point, Raleigh, Durham, Salisbury, and Burlington NC and Petersburg, Richmond, Fredericksburg and Alexandria, Virginia by addressing infrastructure capacity constraints. Improvements include constructing/rehabilitating a partially abandoned alignment between Raleigh, NC and Petersburg, VA, which is a more direct route than the existing route through Rocky Mount, NC. This routing will potentially shave more than an hour off the end-to-end travel time. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. Mott Macdonald was contracted for this corridor in Step 1. A Near-Term SDP has been drafted to continue implementation of the 2002 Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the corridor as well as the subsequent Tier II EIS/Records of Decision (RODs) for Raleigh to Richmond (R2R) and DC to Richmond (DC2RVA). North Carolina plans to move into Step 2 in 2026 with a multiple planning efforts approach and completion of the Near-Term SDP among the first milestones in Step 2.

OHIO

The FRA requires the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) to perform a high-level analysis of ridership markets, equipment needs, and station locations as part of a Core SDP for both corridors in the Corridor ID program, as noted below. Core SDP will not include coordination with the host freight railroads or estimate the capital costs associated with the infrastructure improvements needed. Because both the Cincinnati-Dayton-Columbus-Cleveland (3C&D) and Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit (CTD) routes exclusively use major Class 1 railroad infrastructure, a significant portion of the analysis will not be performed in this interim step. ORDC will be required to re-advertise for consultant services for the Core SDP tasks.

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), the MPO for Cleveland, plans to submit new applications in the next round of Corridor ID grants. The NOACA grant applications will seek funding to study capacity enhancements that permit increased daytime service frequencies on existing Amtrak routes serving Cleveland. NOACA is considering Cleveland – Erie – Buffalo connecting New York Empire Corridor service and Cleveland – Pittsburgh connecting to the Pennsylvanian.

CLEVELAND-COLUMBUS-DAYTON-CINCINNATI CORRIDOR (3C&D)

The proposed Corridor would connect Cleveland, OH, Columbus, OH, Dayton, OH, and Cincinnati, OH. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. ORDC hired HDR to assist them in completing Step

1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. HDR submitted all the Step 1 deliverables to ORDC and FRA. The FRA has determined that the 3C&D Corridor will be required to prepare a Core SDP as part of Step 2 process. ORDC recently received draft documents from FRA that are now being edited by ORDC and its consultant to include Ohio-specific criteria as outlined in the initial application.

CLEVELAND-TOLEDO-DETROIT CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would connect Cleveland, OH to Detroit, MI through Toledo, OH. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in April 2024. The ORDC hired HDR to assist them with Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. FRA has determined that the Detroit – Toledo – Cleveland corridor will be required to prepare a Core SDP as part of the FRA Step 2 process. This is the same level of analysis as Midwest Connect and 3C&D. ORDC indicated that once the FRA accepts the 3C&D revisions, the Detroit – Toledo – Cleveland revisions will be submitted.

PENNSYLVANIA

KEYSTONE CORRIDOR: PITTSBURGH TO PHILADELPHIA

The proposed Corridor would improve the existing Amtrak Keystone and Pennsylvanian services between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, PA via Lancaster, Harrisburg, Altoona, Johnstown, and other intermediate points by adding frequencies (including at least one additional daily round-trip between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh), reducing end-to-end travel time, and improving reliability. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in May 2024. PennDOT is completing the Step 1 scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing an SDP in-house. PennDOT posted a procurement notice in February 2026 seeking design and planning services to complete Step 2 of the SDP.

Although the Corridor ID work is still in Step 1 planning, a separately funded program of projects is already advancing on the western segment between Harrisburg–Pittsburgh. About $143.6 million Federal-State Partnership Program grants for track and signal improvements are advancing. These upgrades support a second daily round trip of the Amtrak Pennsylvanian between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg.

SCRANTON TO NEW YORK PENN STATION CORRIDOR

The PennDOT proposed 140-mile corridor would connect Scranton, PA and New York, NY, with intermediate stops at Stroudsburg and Mt. Pocono, PA, Blairstown, Dover, Montclair, Morristown and Newark, NJ. The proposed route would provide new service (three daily roundtrips) on a mostly existing alignment, plus abandoned track to be rebuilt. The entirety of the alignment for this corridor is under public ownership. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in May 2024. In December 2024, FRA obligated $4.9 million for the Step 2 SDP. The cost of the SDP is estimated at $5.46 million. KCI Technologies is serving in a key role in assisting PennDOT as a program manager for the Scranton – New York City corridor program. GFT is preparing the SDP and engineering studies.

READING - PHILADELPHIA - NEW YORK CORRIDOR

Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA) has pro-

^ *Memphis Central Station, referred to as Grand Central Station prior to 1944*

posed a Corridor that would connect Reading, PA with Philadelphia, PA and New York, NY, with new intermediate stops at Pottstown, Phoenixville and potentially Norristown, PA, then using the Northeast Corridor between Philadelphia and New York. The proposed Corridor would provide new service (four to eight daily roundtrips) on an existing alignment that last hosted passenger trains in 1983. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in March 2024. The SRPRA hired AECOM to assist them with Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing a Step 2 SDP. FRA approved Step 1 documents in September 2025. The directed NOFO for a comprehensive SDP is awaiting final FRA signature. Estimated cost for the SDP is ≈$2.5 million.

TENNESSEE

A multi-state regional effort known as the Sunbelt-Atlantic Rail Coalition (involving Tennessee, Georgia, and potentially extending toward Alabama) has been accepted into the FRA's Corridor ID Program recently — with the City of Chattanooga leading the coalition. The proposed Atlanta-Chattanooga-Nashville-Memphis Corridor would link these southern cities with new passenger rail service on existing alignments. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in May 2024. WSP was awarded a contract to assist the coalition with Step 1 of the program and was tasked to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting the SDP in accordance with the FRA framework. Step 1 is expected to be completed and reviewed by FRA later this spring 2026.

TEXAS

The Corridor ID projects in Texas are facing strong headwinds. Beyond the Dallas–Houston route, other corridors have struggled with funding, political, and logistical hurdles. TxDOT has not formally "put a hold" on its Corridor ID projects as an agency action, but progress remains sluggish. Local and state leaders have had trouble generating enough political support for matching funds needed for advancing these Corridor ID projects.

FORT WORTH-TO-HOUSTON HIGH SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

North Central Texas Council of Governments proposed a corridor that would connect Fort Worth, Dallas, and Houston, TX with a new high speed passenger rail service. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on a new alignment, with station stops in Fort Worth, Arlington, Dallas, Brazos Valley, and Houston. Funding for Step 1 of the Corridor ID program were obligated on May 16, 2024. The project sponsor selected HNTB to develop a Step 1 scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP for the Fort Worth – Dallas segment of the Dallas - Houston HSR project. HNTB was already conducting the environmental assessment for the Fort Worth – Dallas segment. In January 2026, the Dallas City Council reaffirmed restrictions against aboveground high-speed rail through key parts of central Dallas. Without a Dallas alignment, the Fort Worth–Dallas connection cannot be finalized, slowing the corridor study. The FRA rescinded funding for the Dallas – Houston high-speed rail project, complicating this proposed program and delaying submittal of Step 1 documents.

TEXAS TRIANGLE: DALLAS-FORT WORTH – HOUSTON INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL CORRIDOR

Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) proposed a corridor that would connect Fort Worth, Dallas and Houston, Texas with a new conventional speed (79 mph) intercity passenger rail service over an existing alignment over which Amtrak discontinued service (between Dallas and Houston) in 1995. The proposed Corridor would have additional station stops in Corsicana, Hearne, College Station, and Navasota, TX. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in July 2024. HDR was selected to help TxDOT complete Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. TXDOT submitted Step 1 and is working with FRA on addressing comments. The Texas Triangle corridor and the Fort Worth–Houston HSR corridor may eventually be merged into one federal corridor pipeline, and there are already hints of that in planning documents. That has major implications for how FRA funding could flow.

HOUSTON TO SAN ANTONIO CORRIDOR

TXDOT also proposed a corridor would connect Houston and San Antonio, TX with a new conventional intercity passenger rail service using the route of Amtrak's existing long-distance Sunset Limited service. The proposed Corridor would have additional station stops in Rosenberg, Flatonia, and Seguin, TX. HDR was selected to help TxDOT complete Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. TXDOT submitted Step 1 to FRA and is working to address comments.

^ *FrontRunner is UTA's commuter rail system currently providing service from Ogden to Provo along an 83-mile corridor serving 15 stations in Weber, Davis, Salt Lake and Utah Counties.*

UTAH

Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) submitted a grant application for the Salt Lake City - Las Vegas Corridor in March 2023. UDOT's application was for potential re-establishment of a route between Salt Lake City and Las Vegas. The grant application was not successful due to lack of quantitative data to inform the service vision (e.g. projected ridership, estimated costs and benefits). UDOT selected AECOM to conduct a high-level statewide passenger rail feasibility study to gather more information on the potential for passenger rail in Utah and to prepare for future Corridor ID grant opportunities. The study is exploring a variety of destination/route options, which could include new routes; evaluation of both conventional (<80 mph, using shared freight track) and high-speed (>125 mph, using dedicated track) options; quantification of the costs and benefits of potential passenger rail services and gathering of additional information needed to support a potential future Corridor ID application.

VERMONT

VERMONTER (ADDED FREQUENCIES)

Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) proposed a corridor would that provide improvements to the existing Amtrak Vermonter service between Washington, DC and St. Albans, VT via Philadelphia, PA, New York, NY, Hartford, CT, Springfield, MA and other intermediate points by adding frequencies (starting with an additional daily round-trip between New York, NY and White River Junction, VT), reducing travel time (by 90 minutes between Springfield, MA and St. Albans, VT), improving reliability and extending service north to Montreal, Quebec, Canada (with the completion of a new U.S. Customs preclearance facility at Montreal's Central Station). Funding for Step 1 was obligated on May 8, 2024. In mid-August, VTrans solicited the Step 1 services for this corridor jointly with the Green Mountain Corridor. The contract was awarded to Cambridge Systematics (CS) in late September. They are currently moving forward with developing the SDP scope, schedule, and cost estimate. Step 1 is expected to be finished in the spring of 2026.

GREEN MOUNTAIN CORRIDOR

VTrans also proposed a new corridor that would connect New York, NY, with Burlington, VT via Albany, NY, and Rutland, VT, dovetailing with the existing Amtrak Ethan Allen Express by providing new service to communities in southwestern Vermont (including Bennington and Manchester) and east-central New York State (Mechanicville). VTrans selected Cambridge Systematics to prepare the Step 1 deliverables, with completion expected in spring 2026.

VIRGINIA

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) submitted two applications for the Corridor ID program. One application was for the east-to-west Commonwealth Corridor between Hampton Roads and the New River Valley, and the second application was for the corridor between Washington, D.C., and Bristol, VA. DRPT will continue coordination with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, North Carolina DOT and Tennessee DOT to explore coordination opportunities with adjoining passenger rail corridors under development.

WASHINGTON, DC TO BRISTOL CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would extend the existing state-supported Amtrak Northeast Regional service between Washington, DC and Roanoke, VA with an extension to Bristol, VA. The proposed Corridor would also include new frequencies, improved travel times, improvements to reliability, and new stations, including a new infill station at Bedford, VA. Funding for Step 1 was obligated on May 14, 2024. The VADRPT

contracted with AECOM to complete Step 1 of the program. AECOM completed a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP and submitted it to FRA through DRPT. FRA has commented on the submittals. DRPT has responded to the FRA comments and is awaiting FRA approval to move forward into Step 2.

HAMPTON ROADS – NEW RIVER VALLEY COMMONWEALTH CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would connect Newport News with Richmond, Charlottesville, and the New River Valley in Virginia. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on existing alignment, complementing existing state-supported Northeast Regional services connecting Washington, DC with Newport News and Roanoke, VA. Funding for Step 1 was obligated on May 12, 2024. The DRPT contracted with AECOM to complete Step 1 of the program. AECOM completed a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP and submitted it to FRA through DRPT. FRA has commented on the submittals. DRPT has responded to the FRA comments and is awaiting FRA approval to move forward into Step 2.

WASHINGTON

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and its partners continued the study of the high-speed rail option for the Cascadia region and improvements to the state-supported Amtrak Cascades service.

CASCADIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

Cascadia High-Speed Rail would connect Seattle, WA to Portland, OR and Vancouver, B.C. with fast, frequent, and reliable high-speed rail service on new alignment. In November 2024, WSDOT was awarded $49.7 million by the FRA to complete Step 2 of the Corridor ID program, supported by $5.5 million from Washington state. Step 2 of the Corridor ID program includes the delivery of a Service Development Plan, which will evaluate the feasibility of high-speed rail passenger service along the 345-mile (555km) corridor. This planning-level effort will explore potential geographic areas for route options, define potential service concepts, and identify options for long-term governance and funding. The Service Development Plan will be completed at the end of 2028.

CASCADES CORRIDOR

The Corridor ID program would provide improvements to the existing state-supported Amtrak Cascades between Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and Eugene, OR, including Seattle, WA, Portland, OR and other intermediate points, by exploring ways to reduce travel times, improve reliability and add new frequencies. Funding was obligated for Step 1 of the CID program in March 2024. The Cascades corridor is working with the FRA to advance into Step 2. The corridor already had a preliminary service development plan prepared by AECOM in 2024, which identified multiple service alternatives for further study includ-

^ *Amtrak Hiawatha Service train from Chicago, arrives at the Milwaukee Intermodal Station in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

ing more frequencies. Entry into Step 2 (full-Service Development Plan) is anticipated around Q1 2026.

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin has a long history of supporting passenger rail service, especially in the Hiawatha Corridor connecting Chicago and Milwaukee. WisDOT and project partners applied for a total of five FRA Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) grants.

TWIN CITIES – MILWAUKEE – CHICAGO (TCMC) SERVICE EXPANSION VIA LA CROSSE

The proposed Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Corridor would establish a new daily round-trip between Chicago, IL, and St. Paul, MN, complementing the existing Amtrak long-distance Empire Builder and the state-supported Borealis, with a potential extension to Minneapolis, MN. The proposed Corridor would also include a study of potential additional frequencies. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in June 2024. HDR was selected by WisDOT to assist in preparing the Step 1 work tasks to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. WisDOT submitted the second round of Step 1 deliverables to FRA and is awaiting comments or obligation.

MILWAUKEE TO GREEN BAY (HIAWATHA SERVICE EXTENSION)

The proposed Corridor would connect the existing Hiawatha service between Chicago, IL and Milwaukee, WI with an extension to Green Bay, WI. Funding for Step 1 was obligated on May 17, 2024. WisDOT contracted with AECOM to assist them in completing Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its SDP. Step 1 deliverables were submitted July 2025. FRA instructed WisDOT to revise the Step 2 process to follow the new FRA guidance for Core SDP.

MILWAUKEE TO CHICAGO HIAWATHA SERVICE EXPANSION

The proposed Corridor would improve the existing Hiawatha service between Milwaukee, WI, and Chicago, IL by adding new frequencies. Funding for Step 1 was obligated in April 2024. Quandel Consultants has been assisting WisDOT in preparing the Step 1 deliverables. Step 1 deliverables were finalized and submitted to FRA in December 2025. Pending FRA approval of the Step 1 package, WisDOT intends to start Step 2 in early 2026. Step 2 will produce the full SDP. Once the Step 2 funding is obligated, WisDOT will determine how to procure the Step 2 SDP contract — either by extending Quandel's work via a new task order under the same contract vehicle or by issuing a new procurement that could bring in additional or different firms.

MILWAUKEE – MADISON – EAU CLAIRE – TWIN CITIES PASSENGER RAIL EXTENSION

The proposed Corridor would connect Milwaukee, WI to Minneapolis, MN through Madison, WI and Eau Claire, WI. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment. Funds for Step 1 were obligated on May 1, 2024. WisDOT selected HNTB to assist in preparing the Step 1 scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting an SDP. The Step 1 deliverables were submitted in December 2025 and are pending FRA approval for Step 2.

EAU CLAIRE-TWIN CITIES CORRIDOR

The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment and proposes to use an innovative method of directly negotiating track access with the host railroad while competitively contracting out passenger train operations, maintenance, and equipment provision. Funds for Step 1 were obligated on June 24, 2024. Eau Claire County selected a team led by HDR with HNTB supporting to complete the Step 1 deliverables. WisDOT submitted revised deliverables for Step 1 to FRA in May 2025 and is awaiting comments. However, due to FRA process changes, deliverables are being revised before effective Step 2 initiation.

IN MEMORIAM

Richard "Dick" Upton Cogswell, Jr.

Photo of Dick included in a pullout, titled "Reasons for CETC - A Federal View," that was part of a 1990 brochure on CETC published following the completion of its implementation.

On September 19, 2025, passenger railroading in America lost one of its long-recognized giants when Dick Cogswell, engineering and planning fixture of the Federal Railroad Administration's Office of Railroad Development (and its predecessors), passed away in his hotel bed in Istanbul, Turkey, during the final night of his annual vacation abroad. That Dick departed under these circumstances was undeniably fitting, as he had just completed a luxury trans-European rail tour which began in Paris a week earlier. Dick spent his last day on earth touring the seven hills of that ancient city on the Bosphorus, something he had been greatly anticipating, having had his plans to do so the year prior foiled by bad weather.

Dick was born in Concord, New Hampshire, on New Year's Day, 1944, graduated in 1961 from Simonds Free High School in Warner, New Hampshire, and went on to earn a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of New Hampshire in 1965. According to his two surviving younger sisters, Mary and Nancy, Dick had always been fascinated by railroads. They recall a time when Dick "dragged" them both on a trip to ride the cog railway to the summit of Mount Washington in New Hampshire, during which both sisters remember themselves being interminably bored, while Dick "was out the window watching every move and taking pictures all the time. He loved those trains!"

Dick's formal career in railroading began in 1969 following a four-year stint as an Air Force Aircraft Maintenance Officer, in part spent at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where he oversaw a unit of Lockheed C-130 transport planes during the Vietnam War. He subsequently joined the Illinois Central Railroad in Chicago, where, while working out of an office in the soon-to-be-demolished Central Station, he "commuted" regularly to the railroad's shops in Paducah, Kentucky, where he helped run a rebuild program that was converting first-generation EMD diesels to second-generation standards. His time on the IC was shared with several other legends of the industry, including three future Amtrak presidents – Alan Boyd (who, prior to becoming president of the IC, served as the first Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation), Paul Reistrup, and Dick's fellow Northern New Englander and contemporary David Gunn.

In 1975, Dick accepted a position in Washington with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), where he would spend the remaining fifty years of his life and career. Soon after he joined FRA, Congress established the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP) under the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform (4R) Act, and Dick was immediately enlisted to serve as one of the project's key architects and technical leaders. Dick's roles in NECIP were numerous, spanning operations analysis, track design, electric traction, and communications and signaling. However, the role about which he was perhaps most proud was his management of the development and implementation of an entirely new dispatching and power direction system for the Northeast Corridor - the Centralized Electrification and Train Control System (CETC). In this role, Dick led the creation of the world's first system combining the operations of signaling, electrical transmission, and traction distribution within a centralized "operating theater"-style control center. Years later, it was not unusual to hear Dick, when discussing how busy he was at any given time, say that it was nothing compared to the time he personally reviewed tens of thousands of lines of code for the CETC system software.

"Dick had an incredible ability to grasp complicated rail network questions. I quickly learned that the best approach was to agree with him. 'Okay, Dick, if you say so' was always the right idea – it saved time because I knew I would end up agreeing with him eventually. The real problem was understanding why he was right because he thought it was so obvious that no explanation should be needed."

–Lou Thompson, former FRA Director of the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project and Railways Advisor to the World Bank

NECIP ended in the mid-1980s, although Dick would never concede that the project had been "completed." Not infrequently, he would express his anger, frustration, and sadness about feeling that the January 4, 1987 collision at Chase, Maryland, between Amtrak's Colonial and a Conrail light engine move (the latter of which had operated into the path of the former past an absolute Stop signal), which resulted in the death of fourteen passengers, was directly the result of early-1980s budget cuts which brought NECIP to a premature end. Dick would point out that the curtailing of NECIP prevented the expansion of Automatic Train Control (ATC), a technology that would have prevented the collision, to all freight locomotives operating on the corridor. ATC was, indeed, immediately mandated for all operations on the Northeast Corridor as a result of the Chase collision.

While NECIP may have concluded, Dick's career was, in many ways, just getting started. In the 1990s, he led FRA's technical oversight of and participation in the Northeast High-Speed Rail Improvement Program (NEHRIP), a "son-of-NECIP" that implemented many of the improvements originally intended for completion under the earlier program. Among the elements of NEHRIP to which Dick contributed were the deployment of Positive Train Control through the Advanced Civil Speed Enforcement System (ACSES) and the completion of the electrification of the corridor from New Haven north to Boston, all of which culminated in the introduction of the Acela high-speed rail service in 2000. Also, beginning in the 1990s, Dick assumed a new and central role in providing railroad engineering and planning technical assistance, oversight, and training to states' then-nascent efforts nationwide to spearhead intercity passenger rail expansion and improvement. It was in fulfilling this role that Dick spent much of the remainder of his career, as those early efforts expanded exponentially with the passage of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

Also in the 1990s, Dick became USDOT's leading expert in implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions related to accessibility to passenger trains and station facilities. Whenever anyone would raise questions about potential conflicts between railroad operations and engineering considerations and the imperatives of the ADA, Dick's reply was always simple, swift, and certain – "the ADA is a civil rights law – it comes above all else, and it's up to us to find the technical solutions."

"Dick was the earliest of accidental advocates for people with disabilities. Not because he sought it but because it was the right thing to do. He was principled and passionate and had a wicked New England born sense of humor (we shared) that came out rarely at work. I loved making him break the veil at meetings and smile."

Linda Martin, FRA Assistant Chief Counsel

Lastly, much of Dick's later career was spent mentoring younger generations of FRA employees on a wide range of railroad technical matters. This role was, in fact, incorporated into Dick's official duties, and his numerous protégés would see Dick as a pivotal influence whose teachings would guide them through the remainder of their careers. His younger colleagues would often arrive at work in the morning to find a photocopy from Dick waiting for them on their desk chair (he almost always being one of the earliest to the office) – sometimes an employee timetable or track chart dating from the "high-point" of American passenger railroading in the 1950s; sometimes a scroll of detailed, hand-drawn, linear-scale track schematics that captured Dick's design concept for a particular project, a type of document that some referred to as "Cogswell-CAD;" and at least once, several reams worth of paper comprising a copy of the American Society of Civil Engineers' two-volume, 900-page Transactions from

^ Dick, along with his fellow NECIP veteran Alex Chavrid, with several junior FRA colleagues during a site visit to Philadelphia's 30th Street Station in 2007.

1910 on the topic of "The New York Tunnel Extension, the Pennsylvania Railroad" (a document which Dick himself had painstakingly photocopied, as an essential technical resource during the height of NECIP, from the original at the Library of Congress). While Dick made an incalculable contribution to his mentees' knowledge of railroading, perhaps even more important was his imparting on them an unwavering commitment to technical integrity and excellence in the face of potential countervailing political and policy influences – something Dick himself embodied to the fullest. Dick will be greatly missed by all those who had a chance to work with him, but his countless positive contributions to the industry he loved so much and gave so much to will long outlive him. Whenever one steps on board a passenger train in the United States, one experiences the results of the work he did, whether through the ADA accommodations in all US rail passenger cars, the infrastructure along the Northeast Corridor, or in the numerous projects Dick made key technical contributions towards, which benefit passenger rail services across the country.

I first worked with Dick when I was all of 19 years old, when I was a GS-4 summer hire at FRA in 1998 following my sophomore year of college. I would go on to work with him for 20 years, and incongruously served as Dick's supervisor by the time I left the agency (although, in reality, I never stopped working for Dick!). Dick exemplified that all-too-rare ability to instinctively understand how all of the complex and varied elements of a railroad interrelate to one another – and how a change with one element can directly result in major changes to others that may, at first glance, seem only distantly related in substance and geography.

Peter Schwartz, HNTB Railroad Development Practice Lead
and former Director of FRA's Office of Railroad Planning and Engineering

^ In September 2025, Dick, wearing a white windbreaker, was photographed in front of the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, Serbia, during one of his last notable vacations abroad.

Rail 2026 Snippets

Governor Polis announces "Colorado Connector" as the winning name for the future Front Range Passenger Rail train.

COLORADO CONNECTOR (CoCo)

With nearly 26,000 votes cast by residents of Colorado, the Front Range Passenger Rail District and Governor Polis revealed today the chosen name for the forthcoming Front Range passenger rail service: Colorado Connector, abbreviated as "CoCo." The public naming initiative encouraged Coloradans statewide to contribute to the selection of a name for the express intercity train that will link communities along the Front Range beginning in 2029. The campaign saw robust statewide engagement, with citizens sharing videos, promoting posts on social media, and rallying friends and neighbors to support their preferred choice. From the four contenders, Colorado Connector ("CoCo") garnered the highest number of votes, clearly distinguishing itself as the favored option in this endeavor aimed at involving the public in shaping Colorado's passenger rail future. The designation Colorado Connector emphasizes the train's primary mission: connecting communities, enhancing mobility, and simplifying travel between cities on the Front Range. Officials assert that the name also encapsulates a larger vision for the future of transportation in Colorado, emphasizing connection, accessibility, and shared opportunities. This chosen name is grounded in the belief that modern rail can enhance the bonds between cities, workers, families, and visitors throughout Colorado's most rapidly expanding areas. The line is expected to run from Fort Collins to Pueblo, with stops in cities and regions like Loveland, Longmont, Boulder, Louisville, Broomfield, Westminster, Denver, Littleton, Douglas County, Colorado Springs and Trinidad. If it's approved, more stops along the corridor could be up and running by 2032.

PORTAL NORTH BRIDGE

In 2026, the Portal North Bridge became a pivotal achievement of the Gateway Program, with its first track entering service over the Hackensack River and replacing a century-old swing bridge prone to delays. Designed to improve capacity and reliability for Amtrak, Northeast Regional, and NJ Transit trains, the new fixed-span structure eliminates disruptions caused by marine traffic and mechanical failures. As part of a broader federal investment in the Northeast Corridor, the project is expected to reduce delays, shorten travel times, and strengthen service along one of the nation's busiest rail routes.

NORFOLK SOUTHERN EAST EDGE P3

In January 2026, Norfolk Southern's $64 million EAST EDGE public-private partnership (P3) marked the culmination of more than three years of intensive infrastructure upgrades—and decades of complex logistical challenges—by transforming its Chicago-to-Boston corridor into a fully double-stack intermodal route. Connecting Chicago, the nation's rail hub, to Ayer, Massachusetts, New England's primary intermodal terminal just outside Boston's I-495 beltway, the new service enables daily 9,000-foot double-stack trains to move containers and truck trailers with unprecedented efficiency. Achieving this milestone required overcoming formidable engineering and regulatory obstacles across multiple states, including lowering tunnel floors, raising bridge clearances, rebuilding miles of track, and coordinating with several rail and government partners. By opening a direct double-stack route into the Northeast, the East Edge service significantly increases freight capacity, reduces transit times, and offers shippers a more resilient and sustainable alternative to long-haul trucking in one of the nation's most congested and high-demand regions.

TEXAS EAGLE

The Texas Eagle is undergoing a significant service expansion centered on increased capacity and the return of popular amenities. Most notably, Amtrak has reintroduced the iconic Sightseer Lounge car to the route, restoring panoramic views of the Mississippi River and the Ozarks for all passengers. To meet growing demand, the train's standard consist has been expanded to include two sleeping cars and three coach cars, providing more seats and private rooms on the journey between Chicago and San Antonio.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST - AMTRAK CASCADES UPGRADES 2026

In 2026, Amtrak Cascades is redefining rail travel in the Pacific Northwest with the introduction of its new Airo trainsets, ushering in a modern era for the scenic corridor linking Vancouver, B.C., Seattle, Portland, and Eugene. While the route has long been celebrated for its breathtaking coastal views and mountain backdrops, the latest upgrades emphasize both operational efficiency and passenger experience. The state-of-the-art trainsets—capable of higher maximum speeds and designed with improved ride quality—feature panoramic windows, wider seating, expanded capacity, onboard Wi-Fi, and enhanced accessibility, all wrapped in a design inspired by the region's natural landscape. Although track conditions currently limit operating speeds, the new equipment represents a significant investment in smoother, more sustainable, and more reliable service along the I-5 corridor. By pairing technological modernization with the enduring appeal of scenic rail travel, Amtrak Cascades reinforces its reputation as a premier transportation option for travelers who value both comfort and connection to the landscape.

SIEMENS IN NORTH CAROLINA

In early April 2026, officials and rail industry leaders celebrated the completion of Siemens Mobility's $220 million manufacturing and rail services facility in Lexington, North Carolina, where production has begun and the first locally built passenger coaches are scheduled for delivery in summer 2026. Designed to meet growing national demand for passenger rail, the site will become the first facility in North America capable of performing full overhauls of both coaches and locomotives while incorporating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, real-time analytics, and augmented reality to enhance efficiency and modernize manufacturing. Located in Davidson County within the Piedmont Triad, the plant benefits from a strong workforce and key transportation links, and with support from a state Job Development Investment Grant projected to add $1.6 billion to the economy over twelve years, it reinforces Siemens' long-term commitment to strengthening American rail manufacturing.