

High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail

SPEEDLINES

March 2023
ISSUE #35



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North Carolina's New S-Line Railroad Corridor
Legislative Update

» p. 27



HS&IPR Committee & Friends

As we prepare for “Connecting America’s Cities” High-Speed Rail Seminar, we must express our appreciation to the 117th Congress for producing the historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (the IIJA) which appropriated and authorized historic sums for passenger rail in the US. This national investment in safe, reliable, energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly passenger rail is long overdue, and represents the culmination of decades of work.

As I said in my last letter, our challenge is to prove to the federal government and to the American people that their trust was wisely placed. We must continue to make the business case for high-speed and intercity passenger rail service investment.

I want to thank many members of APTA’s High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HS&IPR) Committee for organizing this year’s “Connecting America’s Cities” High-Speed Rail Seminar. The Seminar will immediately follow APTA’s March 12-14th Legislative Conference this year.

Building on the terrific conference held in Philadelphia last year in late March, this year’s Seminar on March 15th is noteworthy for a variety of reasons. This year’s Seminar will highlight the work being done to advance high-speed and intercity passenger rail through many programs being managed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), including the Corridor Identification and Federal/State Partnership programs.

The Seminar will feature appearances by FRA Administrator Amit Bose and Deputy Administrator Jennifer Mitchell; Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner; International Union of Railways (IUR) Director General François Davenne and feature speakers and panelists Graeme Hampshire, Project Director for the High Frequency Rail Project for Via Rail, and leaders of the most notable intercity passenger rail programs across the United States. Our keynote speaker for Wednesday’s luncheon session is none other than former USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood, a tireless champion of high-speed and intercity passenger rail.

And we hope that you will join us as we recognize Jolene Molitoris by presenting an APTA Lifetime Achievement Award to recognize her many accomplishments as a former FRA Administrator, Director of Ohio Department of Transportation and former Chair of the APTA HS&IPR Committee.

Our Committee is fortunate to have experienced and dedicated members, and we enjoy the strong support of APTA CEO Paul Skoutelas and Art Guzzetti and the rest of the APTA staff. I am convinced that our challenge to advance the cause of improving passenger rail is one that can be met.

Please enjoy this edition of SPEEDLINES and I hope to see you at the Legislative Conference, Congressional reception and the “Connecting America’s Cities” High Speed Rail Seminar on March 15th.

Chris Brady

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SPEEDLINES MAGAZINE

On the front cover:

THE POSSIBILITIES FOR HIGH-SPEED RAIL INNOVATION ARE MANY, AND ONCE THE LASTING INFRASTRUCTURE IS CONSTRUCTED, THE BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES ARE LONG-LASTING. THE RAIL INDUSTRY HAS GONE THROUGH CHANGES OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES, BUT THE CURRENT DECADE IS LIKELY GOING TO BE A TRANSFORMATIVE ONE. RAIL PROFESSIONALS ARE OCCUPIED WITH TECHNOLOGY CHOICES TO TALENT GAPS; MEANWHILE THE INDUSTRY IS EMBRACING A DIVERSE SET OF POWER SOLUTIONS AND SPEEDING UP THE CONNECTIVITY JOURNEY.

BELOW: TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY PETE BUTTIGIEG SPEAKS TO AMTRAK EMPLOYEES DURING A FEBRUARY VISIT TO UNION STATION IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



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Letter from our Publisher

*As we celebrate the success of SPEEDLINES--
with our colleagues, our supporters, and... our team.*



Dear Readers,

The editorial contributors and the leadership of the APTA High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Committee are pleased to present the 35th Issue of SPEEDLINES.

Now in its 12th year of publication, SPEEDLINES was created to share information and give a voice to efforts in the U.S. and abroad to the evolution of high-speed passenger rail transportation. During this past decade we have witnessed the massive growth and acceptance of high-speed rail technology throughout Europe, in many Asian countries, and even in some countries in parts of the world one would never have expected. At the same time, we have experienced the struggles and challenges to attaining approval and building an operable segment of true high-speed passenger rail in the United States. From what was thought to be an extraordinary authorization and appropriation of \$7 billion during the Obama administration for high-speed to authorizations and appropriations of over \$60 billion in the Biden administration, the renaissance of passenger rail in the United States is progressing, and the hope for true high-speed passenger rail in the United States is still the goal.

This edition of SPEEDLINES is largely dedicated to efforts of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to launch passenger rail corridor identification among multiple states, and the response of the myriad states to position themselves to utilize the new federal authorization and funding to plan, build, and operate a passenger rail network that is more national in scope, evolving to provide faster, more frequent, and reliable service that is appealing to travelers, and more environmentally sensitive than other forms of passenger transportation.

Let us remain well-positioned for continued success in 2023 and beyond,

Eric Peterson and Volunteer Contributors of Speedlines

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

NORTH CAROLINA

S LINE PROGRAM

Contributed by: Candice Andre, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

The Rail Division of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is responsible for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods on North Carolina's railroads and for supporting rail-related job creation and economic growth statewide. Through a comprehensive program of improvements focusing on freight, safety and passenger initiatives, the impact of rail programs and services in the state is increasing dramatically. NCDOT has made significant progress in planning for the future, supporting equity and sustainability, through the multimodal divisions collaborating as one to change the landscape of mobility.

OVERVIEW OF PASSENGER RAIL IN NC

Passenger rail service is provided in North Carolina by the "Piedmont" and the "Carolinian" under the NC By Train brand. NC By Train provides eight daily passenger trains that stop at 16 stations across North Carolina. The Carolinian offers daily service connecting Charlotte, Raleigh, and New York. The Piedmont is operated by Amtrak and runs three roundtrips a day (six trains) between Raleigh and Charlotte.

North Carolina recently experienced record ridership on the intercity passenger rail service, a 32 percent increase over the average pre-pandemic monthly ridership levels. In September 2022, more people rode the passenger rail train than any previous month in the 32-year history of the service.

NCDOT is planning to expand its passenger rail service along the S-Line, a high-performance passenger rail corridor being developed between Raleigh and Richmond. That line will better connect rural and urban communities and increase passenger rail services with shorter travel times between North Carolina, Virginia, and the Northeast.

THE S LINE AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The Raleigh to Richmond (R2R) Higher Speed Rail Line Project encompasses a 162 mile segment of the S-Line between Raleigh NC and Petersburg VA. Most of the 95-mile rail corridor in North Carolina remains active with





“A strong and growing state needs efficient transportation options and it’s clear that more people are choosing NC by Train. We should continue to invest to connect our communities with high-quality passenger rail.”

-North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper

some freight rail service provided. The segment of the corridor in Virginia is out of service. The Raleigh to Petersburg S Line connection is the missing link within the greater vision for passenger rail in the southeast. Currently, the S-Line is an under used freight rail line owned by CSX that connects Richmond, Virginia to Tampa, Florida. Virginia recently purchased the S Line right of way to grow freight and passenger rail service. The S-Line is essential to the Southeast Corridor that will provide high-performance passenger rail service in the Southeast.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has recognized the importance of high-performance rail in the United States since the 1990s. In 1992 when the first five routes were designated, among them was the Southeast Corridor connecting Charlotte, Raleigh, Richmond and Washington, DC. The S-Line once hosted dozens of freight and passenger trains daily and was the lifeline of the communities it served. Since the 1980s most freight service shifted to the CSX-owned A-Line, making the S-Line under utilized. The corridor represents the only opportunity to create additional capacity to connect the Southeast and Northeast with regular high-performance rail service as other North-South corridors are reserved for high volume freight.

The planned Southeast Corridor will provide higher speed intercity passenger rail between Charlotte and Washington, DC. Environmental documentation for the Raleigh to Richmond segment of the Southeast Corridor was completed in 2017. Together, municipalities and regional and local partners are working to achieve a multi-modal and resilient transit corridor that advances transformational, nationally significant passenger rail service.

As North Carolina continues to grow, particularly the Triangle Region, transportation options are desperately needed to reduce congestion along area roadways to serve the diverse communities and visitors. Many of the communities along the S-Line corridor have limited access to mobility options and include transportation disadvantaged populations.

The demand for multimodal options will only continue to grow with the rapid growth of the region where

industry continues to grow, and town limits continue to expand. Vehicular travel will only become more limiting and detrimental to not only community members' quality of life, but to the environment itself.

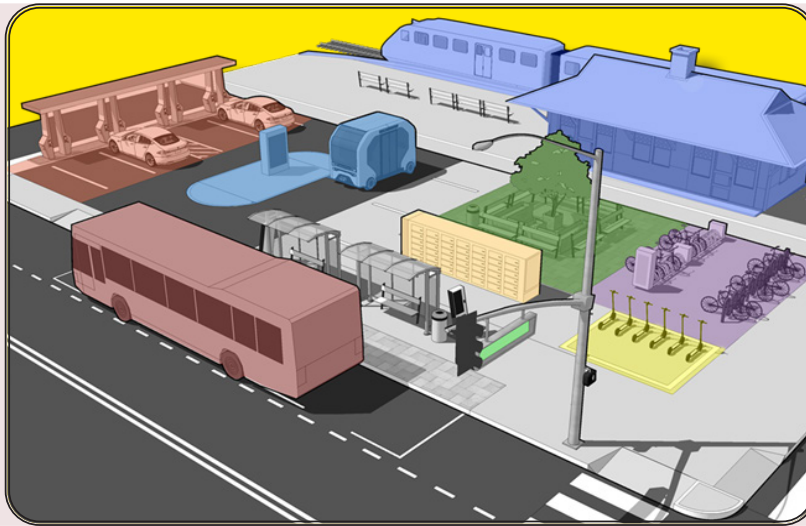
THE PROGRAM

NCDOT and partners are working to build one of the most technologically advanced railroads in the southeast as part of the vision for a high-performance rail network connecting passengers from Massachusetts to Florida. Planning and coordination for the S-Line revitalization started in 2002.

NCDOT is currently serving as the program lead for technical delivery of the design, construction, and service development, and working with Amtrak and Virginia to develop a memorandum of understanding which will further develop service plans that complement and expand the state supported service models in our states. Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) is working with NCDOT and Amtrak to develop the Richmond to Raleigh corridor for infrastructure and service. A phased delivery strategy will support incremental development of the corridor and provide rational project phasing and development as funding allows. NCDOT's track record of strong project delivery and operational knowledge of state-supported Amtrak service gives NCDOT the experience to develop, construct and operate this high-performance rail network.

The S-Line will advance regional multimodal transportation in central North Carolina – enhancing mobility options, improving social equity, increasing the resilience of the transportation network, and opening new doors for economic growth. Passenger rail will provide major environmental benefits, shifting trips from cars to rail, and reducing emissions, supporting Executive Orders 80 and 246 – North Carolina's Transformation to a Clean, Equitable Economy by attracting riders to rail from the highway network. It is anticipated that diverted cars, along with buses and air trips, would reduce air emissions by 3.6 million metric tons of carbon, 10 million metric tons of NOX, 237 metric tons of particulate matter (PM 2.5), and 31 metric tons of SO2. The program will:

- Create a robust, more reliable intercity passenger rail connection between NC, VA and the entire Southeast;
- Provide faster operating speeds of 110 mph, reducing travel times between Raleigh and Richmond by over an hour;
- Connect manufacturing and job centers to population centers, creating prospects for new industry and new community amenities;
- Enhance and creates economic opportunities in rural communities;
- Provide additional north-south freight capacity and network resiliency;
- Provide equitable transportation options and improved quality of life;
- Maximize safety along the corridor for growing passenger rail service;
- Create opportunities for transit-oriented development in communities along the line; and
- Create a shorter route for intercity rail service, avoiding A-Line freight congestion.



To prepare for passenger rail service, NCDOT has collaborated with local communities to develop transit-oriented development (or “TOD”) vision plans. Successful TOD can maximize the benefits of rail service in each community through land use planning, expanded multimodal infrastructure, and improved community resources like green spaces and parks. TOD creates places designed to bring people, businesses, retail, recreation, activities, and public spaces together with easy walking and cycling connections alongside transit. This type of development helps make communities more accessible – even without a personal vehicle – by building mixed-use neighborhoods that are more walkable, pedestrian- and transit-friendly.

These transit connections will provide more choices on where to live, will improve access to education, jobs, and healthcare, and will connect urban and rural economies. Rather than solely focusing on rail stations, NCDOT and communities along the corridor are planning for mobility hubs, places of connectivity where different travel options come together (e.g., intercity trains, commuter rail service, pedestrian, bicycle, transit/microtransit, shared mobility) and integrate mobility services, amenities, and supporting technologies.

Final station locations have not been determined, but NCDOT has secured funding to begin design of rail infrastructure and community mobility hubs. The mobility hubs will provide multimodal connections within each community, serve as an entry point to each community, and ensure vibrant and thriving communities for future generations. These hubs will transform the connectivity, innovation, growth, and overall vibrancy of not only the rural communities along the corridor, but the entire region.

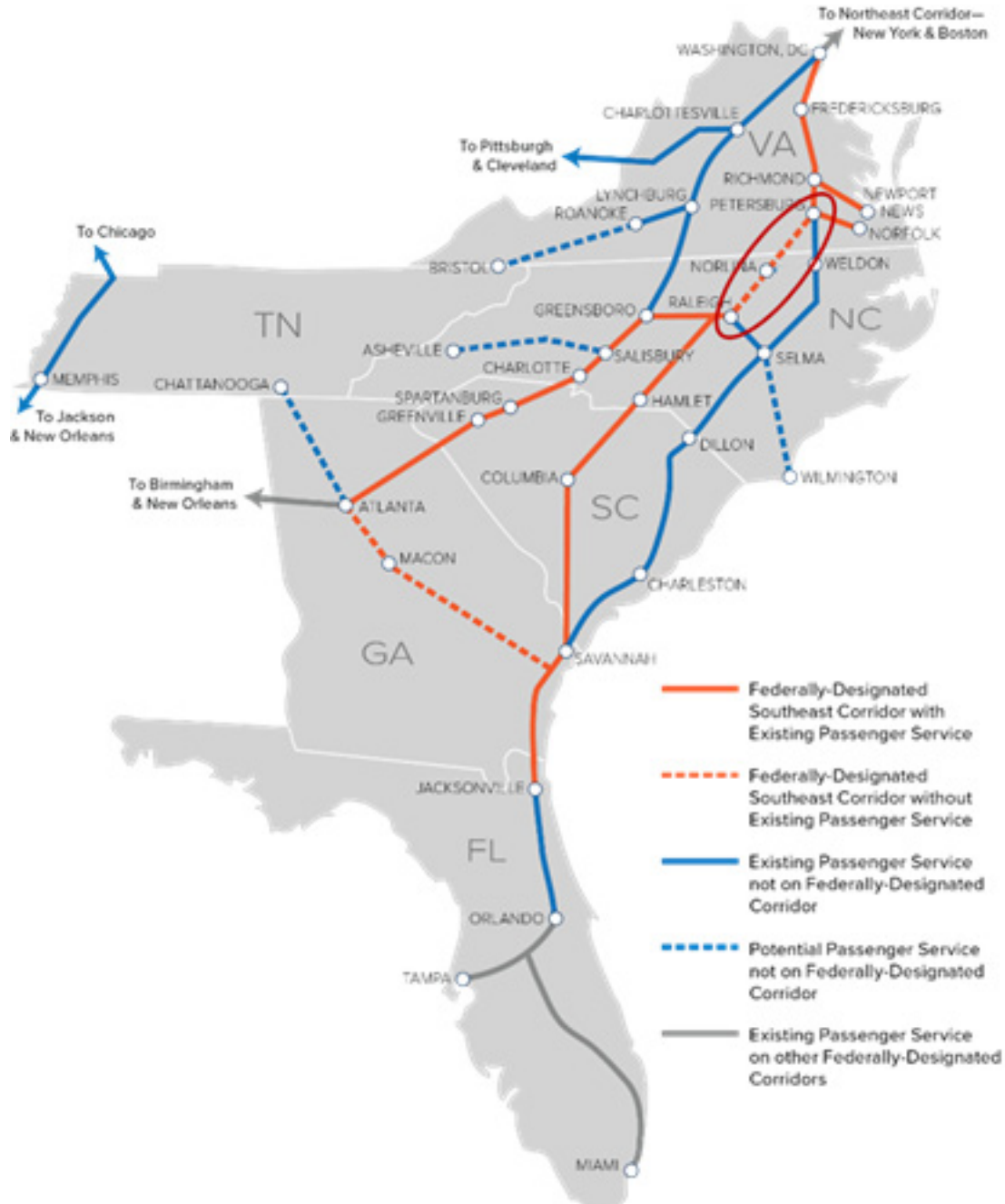
FUNDING

Partnerships along the corridor and the support of numerous federal, state, and regional agencies have



“Our community was founded on rail traffic in 1841. It is only natural that our resurgence is based on this same driving force for economic development, connecting us to greater opportunities. The regional cooperation and resulting benefit this project represent is government at its best.

-Mayor Eddie Ellington, Henderson



resulted in the award of \$108 million in federal grants and counting:

Once design and planning are complete, NCDOT and local communities will pursue funding to construct the rail infrastructure and mobility hubs. The funding strategy will continue to build off the success of collaborating across states, regions, and communities.

PROGRESS TO DATE

There has been significant progress on the S-Line corridor since 2002, which is anticipated to continue through construction and service development.

1992 – FRA designated the Southeast Rail Corridor

2002 – Charlotte to DC Tier I Record of Decision

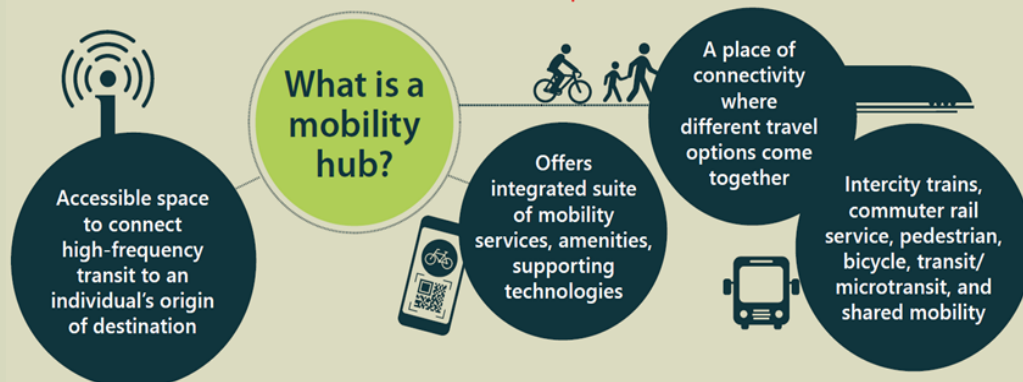
2017 – Raleigh to Richmond Tier II Record of Decision

2020 – NCDOT wins \$47.5M CRISI grant for corridor purchase

2022 –

- o NCDOT/VPRA wins \$58M CRISI grant for survey and preliminary engineering
- o NCDOT and corridor communities win \$3.4M RAISE grant for mobility hub planning and preliminary engineering

The partners are excited to continue the collaboration on progressing the S-Line vision forward and providing mobility options within the Southeast Corridor.



HUDSON RIVER TUNNEL PROJECT

■ THE NATION'S MOST URGENT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT IS MOVING FORWARD

Contributed by: Wendy Wenner

BUILDING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY... GATEWAY IS A PROJECT OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR A REGION OF THE COUNTRY THAT GENERATES ONE-FIFTH OF THE ENTIRE U.S. ECONOMY AND WILL PROVIDE COMMUTERS WITH SAFER AND MORE RELIABLE MASS TRANSPORTATION.

The Gateway Development Commission (GDC) is paving the way for the Hudson Tunnel Project.

A key rail infrastructure project is finally unfolding and a significant component. The first construction contract managed by the GDC in New Jersey will be the Tonelle Avenue Bridge and Utility Relocation in an effort to progress the Hudson Tunnel Project. The work will consist of building an overpass to carry Tonelle Avenue in North Bergen over the alignment of the new tunnel connecting to the New Jersey Palisades. Poised to move forward with federal support, this first procurement comes just two weeks after President Biden's public announcement of securing \$292m in funding for the Hudson Tunnel Project. This federal award is the most significant from the Department of Transportation included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

The Gateway Development Commission released an RFQ for a project delivery partner on the mega-project between Newark, NJ and New York City's Penn Station, in which plans are to seek a private partner for the planned \$16b Hudson River Tunnel Replacement Project.

The westbound concrete tunnel casing from Penn

Station to Tenth Avenue is complete and the federal funding will allow an extension of the concrete tunnel casing from Tenth Avenue west of Eleventh Avenue.

Together these two projects mark work on both sides of the Hudson River and New York commissioner and GDC co-chair Alicia Glen said it was "incredibly exciting" that early construction on the Hudson Tunnel project would begin in both New York and New Jersey this year.

With construction proceeding in the coming months, the rehabilitation of a 2.4-mile two-tube tunnel under the Hudson River is a vital step in connecting the region. The project would also undertake Amtrak's vulnerable 113-year-old North River rail tunnel damaged by the Super Storm Sandy surge in 2012.

GDC chief executive officer Kris Kolluri said 2023 is the year the Hudson Tunnel Project will move from planning to execution, and "starting work in both New York and New Jersey is the most tangible and visible demonstration of that".

RAIL CHANGES AHEAD

RIDERSHIP, EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

Contributed by: Ken Sislak

Passenger volumes on Amtrak is recovering from COVID as ridership on Amtrak trains grew to 22.9 million passengers in FY 2022. However, this is still about 7 million riders and 29.5 percent below its high-water mark of more than 32.5 million passengers carried in FY 2019. COVID-19 wiped away the record growth in Amtrak ridership as the news of the pandemic dramatically altered people's lives, interrupting work patterns, daily routines and travel plans.

Airline traffic plummeted as well. U.S. airlines carried 927 million passengers in pre-pandemic 2019. Passenger volumes declined to nearly 369 million in 2020. Traffic rebounded in 2021 by growing to 674 million passengers which is still 58 percent below pre-pandemic passenger volumes. System-wide 2021 enplanements comprised 612 million passengers on domestic flights and 62 million passengers on international flights. Data for 2022

is not yet available but the airlines do not expect enplanements to recover to pre-COVID levels for several more years.

Ridership recovered to 22.9 million passengers in FY 2022. The breakout of ridership includes:

- **Northeast Corridor:** Over 9.2 million people rode trains in the NEC during FY 2022 as compared to 12.5 million riders in pre-pandemic FY 2019. This is about 26.4 percent lower than the pre-pandemic ridership levels.
- **State-Supported Services:** A little over 10.2 million people rode state-supported corridor trains in FY 2022 compared to 15.4 million riders in FY 2019 – about 33.8 percent lower than the pre-pandemic ridership levels.
- **Long-distance trains:** Over 3.4 million travelers rode long distance trains in FY 2022 compared to



4.5 million riders in FY 2019 – a little over 24.4 percent lower than the pre-pandemic ridership levels.

NEW EQUIPMENT FOR AMTRAK

Amtrak announced it will be introducing its new Acela fleet on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) in 2023. The new fleet will upgrade the travel experience for millions of passengers via enhancements in comfort, technology, innovation, and safety on Amtrak's most used service.

Features of the new Acela trainsets include:

- Comfortable seating with personal outlets, USB ports and winged headrests to serve as a barrier between the customer and his/her seatmate
- Spacious restrooms with contactless features and automatic door access
- Onboard information system providing real-time information such as train location, train speed, and conductor announcements
- Contactless storage option for luggage

- Café Car enhancements including convenient self-service options

- Accessibility features for people with disabilities

Amtrak awarded a \$7.3 billion contract to Siemens to manufacture push-pull trainsets designed for its state-supported corridor services. Delivery of the new trainsets will begin in 2026. The Airo trains will feature panoramic windows, "bigger and sturdier" seat tray tables, a choice of double and single seats in business class, USB ports, onboard Wi-Fi, a redesigned café car among other features. The new trains will be able to travel at speeds up to 125 mph.

AMTRAK AIRO

These new trains will gradually be introduced across Amtrak's network, on routes including Northeast Regional, Empire Service, Virginia Services, Keystone Service, Downeaster, Cascades, Maple Leaf, New Haven/Springfield Service, Palmetto, Carolinian, Pennsylvanian, Vermonter, Ethan Allen Express and Adirondack. The trains are modeled after the highly-acclaimed Brightline trainsets operating in Florida.



PASSENGER RAIL

MULTIPHASED FRAMEWORK GUIDING FUTURE INVESTMENTS

Contributed by: APTA Staff

GULF COAST PASSENGER RAIL RESTORATION

The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) has been seeking the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger rail service linking New Orleans with Mobile since after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The objective of the service restoration is to initiate new daily passenger rail service between New Orleans and Mobile with two round trips each day, morning and evening, with stops in Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula offering business-friendly schedules. This route was previously served by the Amtrak Sunset Limited, which operated between Los Angeles, New Orleans and Jacksonville/Orlando. Following the hurricane, service was terminated at New Orleans. Progress towards restoring the service is finally getting closer to reality.

Restoration of Gulf Coast service is no longer the subject of Surface Transportation Board (STB) hearings. The STB had granted a request to extend mediation talks between Amtrak, CSX, Norfolk Southern Railway, the Alabama State Port Authority and its rail carrier, the Terminal Railway Alabama State Docks. The Class I and port authority have opposed Amtrak's proposal expressing concern that adding passenger trains could negatively impact its ability to move freight from the Port of Alabama.

Amtrak has been seeking a decision from the STB to force the Class I railroads to allow operation of two daily roundtrip passenger trains. Amtrak studies indicated the route had sufficient capacity to host both freight and passenger traffic. In fact, Amtrak used a time lapse video camera as evidence to illustrate the lack

of traffic on the line during the STB hearings. Amtrak asked the STB to require the Class 1 freight railroads to permit twice daily service unless the freight railroads could prove why passenger trains would cause irreparable harm to their freight operations.

STB ordered the railroads to mediate the dispute. In a November 10, 2022 filing with the STB, the parties indicated substantial progress had been made toward a settlement. On Tuesday, November 22, 2022, Amtrak, the freight railroads and the Alabama State Port Authority announced an agreement to allow for passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast corridor to resume ending a very prolonged and contentious disagreement that was brought before the STB. The restored service will include the connection from New Orleans to Mobile, with four stops in Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi and Pascagoula likely in coastal Mississippi.

Amtrak and the Southern Rail Commission (SRC), with the full support of CSX Transportation (CSXT), Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR), the Alabama State Port Authority and the states of Louisiana and Mississippi applied for federal funding for the Gulf Coast Corridor Improvement Project (GCCIP). The funding source would be FRA 2022 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Program.

The GCCIP is a series of infrastructure improvements in the rail corridor from the New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal to the Port of Mobile that will support the introduction



of intercity passenger rail while maintaining freight service reliability along the Gulf Coast. The improvements would include lengthening passing sidings to allow for longer freight trains, extending main tracks, installing new switches and turnouts, constructing additional crossovers, and improving stations, yards, and grade crossings. The estimated cost of the program of projects is \$223 million.

Amtrak and the railroads and Port Authority submitted a joint application to FRA and requested \$178.4 million in CRISI grant funds, matched by \$44.6 million in non-federal funding to allow for Project Development, including Preliminary Engineering and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, Final Design, and Construction. Initiating passenger rail service while maintaining the efficiency of freight service along the Gulf Coast will create pathways toward social equity, disaster resilience, regional

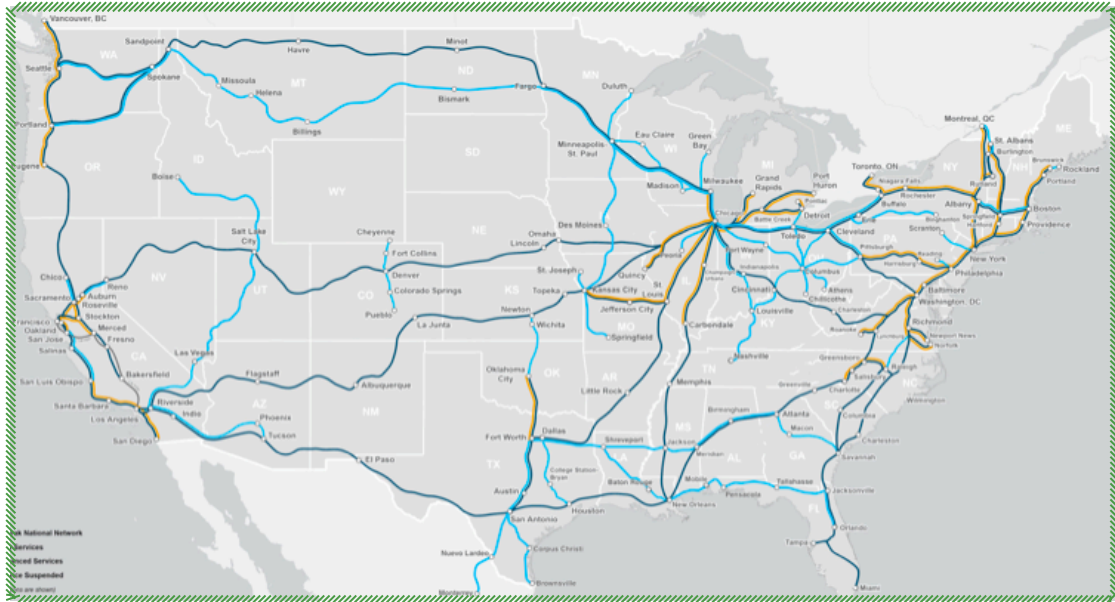
FRA CORRIDOR IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) required the Secretary of Transportation

to establish a Corridor Identification and Development Program (Corridor ID Program) to facilitate the development of intercity passenger rail corridors. The BIL also provided an historic, unprecedented level of funding for the improvement and expansion of intercity passenger rail service. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) was delegated the authority to establish and administer the Corridor ID Program.

The FRA has followed through on this legislative initiative and established a comprehensive multi-phased framework that will help guide future passenger rail project development and capital investments. The phases of the program will provide the resources necessary to manage the planning, project development and construction of projects intended to improve passenger rail service for the betterment of all Americans.

Last year, the FRA encouraged agencies and eligible project sponsors to submit expressions of interest in the Corridor ID Program. FRA received a tremendous response from potential project sponsors who submitted Expressions of



Interest and identified corridors they wanted enrolled in the program. The following tables summarize the submittals:

Over 75 corridors were identified by multiple eligible project sponsors including states, passenger rail authorities, municipalities, metropolitan planning organizations and Native American tribes. The map below depicts the corridors of interest.

CORRIDORS IDENTIFIED IN EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Since the Expressions of Interest were submitted, FRA published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) soliciting proposals by eligible entities to participate in the Corridor ID Program. The program presents a unique opportunity for selected corridors to receive sustained support through the Planning and Project Development stages of the project life cycle. In this approach, FRA will work with corridor sponsors to prepare a Service Development Plan for each selected corridor and advance capital projects identified in those plans to ready them for final design

and construction. Projects that are identified and fully developed through the program will benefit from a selection preference for future Federal-State Partnership-National funding opportunities, ensuring that investments yield benefits for communities impacted by new intercity passenger rail projects.

FRA also published a NOFO for the Federal-State Partnership (FSP) for Intercity Passenger Rail Program. The FSP Program provides over \$11 billion in funding for capital projects that reduce the state of good repair backlog, improve performance, or expand or establish new intercity passenger rail service, including privately operated intercity passenger rail service. The FSP-National NOFO describes the application submission requirements, and the selection and evaluation criteria for projects not located on the Northeast Corridor. This program is designed for those eligible project sponsors that have mature programs.



| State | Agency | Expressed Interest in Corridors |
|---------------|--|---|
| Arizona | Pima Association of Governments Maricopa Association of Governments | Tucson, AZ to Los Angeles, CA |
| California | California DOT (Caltrans) | https://downloads.regulations.gov/FRA-2022-0031-0034/attachment_2.pdf |
| California | California High Speed Rail Authority | San Francisco – Los Angeles/Anaheim |
| California | High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Authority | Palmdale to Victor Valley (Victorville) |
| California | Riverside County Transportation Commission | Los Angeles – Coachella Valley |
| California | Sonoma – Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) | Cloverdale to Larkspur on our north-south mainline, with an emphasis on the rural northern portions of the corridor between Cloverdale and Windsor; Novato to Suisun-Fairfield on our east-west Brazos branch line |
| Colorado | Front Range Passenger Rail District Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Wyoming DOT New Mexico DOT | Front Range Corridor: Cheyenne to Pueblo, CO and possible extension to Albuquerque |
| Georgia | Clayton County, GA | Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson International Airport to Macon and Robins AFB |
| Georgia | Georgia DOT | Atlanta – Savannah HSR |
| Idaho | City of Boise, ID | Boise – Salt Lake City |
| Idaho | Shoshone-Paiute Tribes | Boise – Elko, Nevada |
| Illinois | City of Peoria | Peoria - Chicago |
| Kansas | Kansas DOT, Oklahoma DOT and Texas DOT joint letter Oklahoma State Senate support letter | <i>Heartland Flyer</i> extension Oklahoma City, OK to Newton, KS |
| Kentucky | City of Louisville, KY | Louisville - Indianapolis, IN - Chicago Cincinnati, OH – Louisville - Nashville, TN |
| Louisiana | Southern Rail Commission | New Orleans - Mobile, AL (STB hearings) Baton Rouge - New Orleans Baton Rouge - Shreveport Meridian, MS to Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas (increase in service frequency as an extension of the <i>Crescent</i>) New Orleans - Orlando, FL (restoring former Amtrak service) |
| Maine | Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) | <i>Downeaster</i> between Brunswick, ME and Boston, MA and extensions to Rockland, ME |
| Massachusetts | MassDOT | Boston, MA to Albany, NY via Springfield, MA (Boston, MA to New York, NY via Springfield, MA and New Haven, CT |

| State | Agency | Expressed Interest in Corridors |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Missouri | Missouri DOT | Kansas City - St Louis; extend Chicago – Quincy to Hannibal, MO; Kansas City – Springfield/Branson; Kansas City to St Joseph |
| Nevada | Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities | Los Angeles to Salt Lake City through Las Vegas Tucson to Reno through Las Vegas and Phoenix Los Angeles to Las Vegas Las Vegas to Salt Lake City Las Vegas to Phoenix Las Vegas to Reno Las Vegas to Los Angeles |
| New York | City of Jamestown, NY | Niagara Falls and Buffalo, NY to Jamestown, NY; Binghamton, NY to Jamestown, NY; Erie, PA to Jamestown, NY. |
| New York | New York State DOT | Empire Corridor <i>Maple Leaf</i> <i>Adirondack</i> <i>Ethan Allen</i> |
| North Carolina | North Carolina DOT; Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) | Washington, D.C. - Charlotte, NC (Southeast Corridor) |
| North Dakota | North Dakota Department of Transportation Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority | restore Chicago to Seattle service via southern North Dakota and Montana along the corridor of the <i>North Coast Hiawatha</i> through Fargo, Bismarck and Dickinson, ND. |
| Ohio | Coalition of Ohio Municipalities | Cincinnati – Dayton – Columbus – Cleveland (3C+D) |
| Ohio | Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) | Cincinnati-Dayton-Columbus-Cleveland (3C+D), including a connector to John Glenn International Airport (CMH) Chicago-Columbus-Pittsburgh Columbus-Toledo-Detroit Columbus-Lancaster-Logan-Athens Columbus-Chillicothe-Portsmouth Corridor Zanesville and Western Scenic Railroad - Mt. Perry Railroad Expansion |

| State | Agency | Expressed Interest in Corridors |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Ohio | Northeast Ohio Area wide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) – Cleveland area MPO | Cleveland-Sandusky-Toledo-Chicago corridor Cleveland-Buffalo-Rochester-NYC corridor Cleveland-Pittsburgh-Philadelphia-NYC corridor Cleveland-Washington, D.C. corridor Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit corridor |
| Ohio | Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) | Cleveland-Toledo-Chicago corridor Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit corridor Columbus-Toledo-Detroit corridor |
| Pennsylvania | Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority (PNRRA) and Penn DOT | Lackawanna Cut-Off: Scranton – New York City |
| Pennsylvania | Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA) | Reading – Philadelphia |
| Texas | Lone Star Rail District | Austin - San Antonio – New Braunfels |
| Texas | North Central Texas Council of Governments | Dallas – Ft. Worth HSR |
| Texas | Texas DOT | Dallas - Houston San Antonio to the Rio Grande Valley. Dallas - Meridian, MS |
| Utah | Utah DOT; Idaho DOT (IDT) and Nevada DOT | <i>Desert Wind</i> : Salt Lake City - Las Vegas, Nevada. Intermountain Corridor: Salt Lake City - Boise, ID |
| Vermont | Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) | Extend <i>Ethan Allen</i> to Montreal, QE Extend <i>Vermont</i> to Burlington, VT Burlington - Bennington - Albany |
| Virginia | Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation | Washington, D.C. to Bristol, VA planned expansion to the New River Valley region from Roanoke slated to begin operations in 2026, and future expansion through Bristol, VA. |
| Washington | Washington State DOT & Oregon DOT | Portland – Seattle – Vancouver UHSGT |
| Wisconsin | Chippewa-St.Croix Rail Commission | Twin Cities - Milwaukee |
| Wisconsin | City of Green Bay | Green Bay - Milwaukee |
| Wisconsin | City of Madison, WI | <i>Hiawatha</i> extended from Milwaukee - Madison |

HSR OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

THREE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT GETTING CLOSER TO KICKOFF

Contributed by: Wendy Wenner

Building a high-speed network is not as simple as putting faster trains on existing rails. High-speed trains require a considerable amount of infrastructure to be built and maintained to precise standards-- but, there are tremendous benefits generated after overcoming logistical and political challenges. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law", will provide unprecedented Federal funding for rail improvement projects in America.

Over the next five years, it will transform and expand both existing and new programs which are planned to enhance our nation's rail network. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes \$102 billion in total rail funding, including \$66 billion from advanced appropriations, and \$36 billion in authorized funding.

Brightline West and Texas Central are being developed by the private sector while the California high-speed rail project is publicly owned and funded. Brightline West, a symbol of America's first HSR system, connects Las Vegas and Southern California. A landmark agreement in 2023 establishes a firm commitment with several craft rail unions for the use of highly-skilled union labor in critical jobs required to operate and maintain this historic project. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the High-Speed Rail Labor Coalition is comprised of 13 rail unions representing more than 160,000 freight, regional, commuter, and passenger railroad workers in the United States.

The following outline shows significant milestones on three current U.S. projects under construction or in late stage development.

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT: LOS ANGELES TO SAN FRANCISCO

1996 - The state legislature creates the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

2002 - Senate Bill was passed that authorized a \$9.95 billion bond measure to finance the HSR system.

2008 - California voters approve a \$9.95 billion bond measure to construct high-speed rail from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The High-Speed Rail Authority promises travel time under 3 hours, a construction cost of about \$33 billion, and trains

operating by 2030.

2009 - \$8 billion in federal funds was made available nationwide as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

2015 - Construction of California high-speed rail project begins in Fresno.

2018 - The California state auditor faults the High-Speed Rail Authority for cost overruns, delays and poor project management.

2022 - Construction is underway along 119 miles in



California's Central Valley. The latest cost estimate to complete the full project is up to \$113 billion. The projected opening of the Central Valley to Silicon Valley segment is 2031.

BRIGHTLINE WEST: LAS VEGAS TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

2009 - The Federal Railroad Administration completes a draft environmental impact statement for a plan to build a high-speed rail line along the I-15 corridor from Las Vegas to Victorville, California, about 90 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, proposed by privately held DesertXpress.

2013 - Rebranded as XpressWest, the company applies to the FRA for a \$5.5 billion loan toward the anticipated \$6.9 billion cost of construction.

2016 - A deal between XpressWest and China Railway International to build the line is called off.

2018 - Brightline, which operates a train from Miami to West Palm Beach, Florida, acquires the XpressWest project.

2022 - Brightline reports it expects to begin construction in 2023 on the 200-mph line, now branded Brightline West, with a goal of starting service in 2026.

TEXAS CENTRAL: DALLAS TO HOUSTON

The South Central region is anchored by four of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the U.S.: Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin.

2014 - Texas Central begins work on an environmental impact statement.

2015 - It raises its first round of capital from Texas investors.

2019 - It signs a design-build contract with Salini Impregilo and Lane Construction Corporation.

2021 - Construction start delayed by a lawsuit over the company's use of eminent domain begins.

2022 - Texas Supreme Court rules in favor of Texas Central, confirming its right to acquire land under eminent domain.

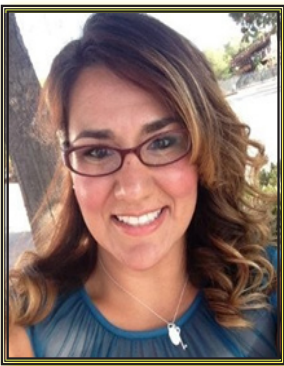
“

We need to see these dollars of investment growing the economy, creating more jobs and getting people excited about their tax dollars going into public transportation.”

-Nuria Fernandez, Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

YOU SHOULD GET TO KNOW US



ERICA CASILLAS

LIGHT RAIL POWER SUPERVISOR

"Public transit extends the accessibility of passenger rail by providing connections to multiple origins and destinations from multi-modal stations. San Jose is blessed with the Diridon Station permitting VTA customers to connect with Amtrak long-distance trains, Capitol Corridor, Altamont Corridor Express (ACE), and Caltrain commuter trains. I am delighted at how the Diridon Station provides these seamless connections among a variety of rail services."

SANTA CLARA VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (VTA)



WINSOME BOWEN

PRINCIPAL

"High-speed passenger rail service is no longer just an aspirational dream. For decades we have documented, planned and explored pathways to delivery of a nationwide high-speed passenger rail network. We've seen successful delivery in other countries, while domestically we've lagged behind. Today, high-speed passenger rail is on the cusp of tangible delivery, as an overdue, relevant response to our urgent need for equitable, access to essential health and human services, jobs and educational opportunities - access that may finally be realized by connecting rural and historically disadvantaged America with neighboring regions."

INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT



SADIE GRAHAM

DIRECTOR, LINK21

"Our Link21 team is looking at the Northern California passenger rail network as a whole. We are analyzing service needs and opportunities across a geography served by multiple agencies. There is a shared appetite for a more integrated transit network that might include a unified payment system and coordinated schedules. We are working collaboratively to benefit these agencies and the communities they serve to identify how people could be better serviced by rail."

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT (BART)

AUSTRALIA NETWORK

MAPPING HIGH-SPEED RAIL ROUTES

Contributed by: Ray Chan, Rail Express



Federal Parliament has passed the High-Speed Rail Authority Bill 2022, an important first step in the government's commitment to establish the High Speed Rail Authority that will guide the development of a high-speed rail network in Australia.

A high-speed rail network along the east coast of Australia will be a transformational project that has the ability to touch the lives of all Australians.

Infrastructure and Transport minister Catherine King said now, after a delay of nearly 10 years when nothing was done to promote high-speed rail in Australia, that vision is becoming a reality.

"The authority will provide independent and impartial advice on the policy and standards of high speed rail; and plan, identify and secure corridors. It will also oversee the construction and operation of the high-speed rail network, and coordinate with state and territory governments, industry, business and communities to enhance Australia's long-term rail investment," she said.

"The authority will build on previous work, including the comprehensive study, commissioned under former Infrastructure Minister and now Prime Minister Anthony

Albanese, that found high speed rail was not only viable, but would return over \$2 for every \$1 of investment.

"A high-speed rail network could allow passengers to travel between major cities and significant regional cities at speeds exceeding 250km/h.

"The passage of the Bill delivers the Australian Government's election commitment to establish the Authority, which will get to work on the \$500 million downpayment for the planning to secure corridors and commence early works for the Sydney to Newcastle section of the high-speed rail network.

"This commitment will see work progress in this fast-growing region of the east coast."

King said that while the authority worked closely with the New South Wales Government on this section, it will continue to advance plans for other sections of the high-speed rail network, which will eventually connect Brisbane to Melbourne, with stops in Canberra, Sydney and regional centers.

The authority will be overseen by a board which will include experts from the rail and infrastructure sectors.

Faster rail will continue to be advanced under the Authority, with the functions of the National Faster Rail Agency being undertaken within the authority and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

"High speed rail will revolutionize interstate travel on the east coast, providing a fast alternative for people to move between cities and regional centers, promoting sustainable settlement patterns and creating broad economic benefits, King said.

HOW TO PROVIDE MORE TRAIN SAFETY AND CONTROL

BOOSTING SAFETY MEASURES

Contributed by: Karen E. Philbrick

In its inaugural run from Seattle to Portland, Amtrak 501 derailed on Dec. 18, 2017. Several train cars crashed over an overpass and landed on the interstate near DuPont, Washington. Over 50 passengers and crew members were injured, as well as eight individuals in highway vehicles. Many of the injured required hospitalization, and three died.

Analysis showed five crew members had been on board—with some reporting feeling unprepared for the new route—and, according to the National Transportation Safety Board, the crash prevention technology known as Positive Train Control (PTC) had not been activated.

PTC is an unprecedented technology strategically designed to address human error and make rail safer. Through communication and processor-based train control technology, PTC systems can reliably prevent train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, incursions into active work zones and movements through switches in the wrong position.

For example, when PTC is activated, an engineer would receive a visual notification if the train needs a speed reduction to safely enter an approaching

track curve. If the engineer does not respond appropriately by adjusting speed, the PTC could “take control” of the train and stop it to prevent derailment.

By way of background, Congress passed the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 after a Metrolink commuter train and a Union Pacific freight train collided head on, killing 25 people near the Chatsworth neighborhood of Los Angeles. This law mandated PTC systems be fully implemented by Dec. 31, 2015—later extended to 2018—on Class I railroad main lines that transport certain hazardous materials and any main lines with regularly scheduled rail passenger service.

While PTC cannot prevent every accident, it has been shown to be effective. The report analyzing the Amtrak 501 accident explained that had PTC been fully implemented and operational, the engineer would have been warned of the danger, and that, if he had not responded by appropriately adjusting speed, the PTC system would have stopped the train—and the accident would have been prevented.

But what of other safety measures?

In 2021, a federal court ruled the former presidential administration violated the law when it tried to override state regulations dictating how many crew members are needed to safely operate a train. Three states and two national unions challenged the previous ruling, citing safety concerns when it comes to operating a train with only one crew member. As a result of the latest ruling, states may once again adopt and enforce laws requiring a minimum number of crew members onboard.

While safety concerns are of utmost importance, the data does not reflect investment in multiple crew members. Some Class I railroads—and, at times, Amtrak—have operated for many years with just one crew member in the cab. Thousands of commuter and passenger trains do the same every day—with safety records comparable to two-person operated trains.

With a significant shortage of skilled workers, would the talent of dedicated crew members be better spent on other pressing safety measures? Indeed, railroad deaths totaled 893 in 2021, a 20 percent increase from 2020 and the highest since 2007. But of all rail-related fatalities and injuries, 94 percent occur at railroad crossings or due to

trespassing, not on board trains.

Looking back at the Amtrak 501 case, the investigation determined the probable cause of the derailment was lack of training and PTC activation, not crew numbers. The report stated the responsible transit authority failed to provide “an effective mitigation for the hazardous curve without Positive Train Control in place” and “adequate training” on the territory and on the newer equipment for the train’s engineer.

Thus, looking at the data, the real efforts to improve safety must come from adequate support and inclusive training for transportation professionals, as well as aggressively maintaining, modernizing and investing in infrastructure and equipment.

In the end, we recognize that PTC, crew size requirements and investment in training cannot prevent every crash, but combining scientifically-proven safety measures and investing in rail infrastructure and workers is a critical step in the right direction.



VIRGINIANS FOR HSR

2022 VIRTUAL TRANSPORTATION TOWN HALL SERIES

Contributed by: David Wilcock

Virginians for High-Speed Rail (VHSR), a 501 (C) (3) not-for-profit coalition, focuses on educating and advocating for the need for fast, frequent, and reliable rail service connecting Virginia. As part of their education and advocacy mission, VHSR has hosted a virtual Transportation Town Hall Series since 2020. The series has included a number of interesting topics including the expansion of passenger rail across the Southeast, the critical rail crossing of the Potomac River, and the future of passenger rail in Virginia. In the Fall of 2022, there were two particularly interesting virtual town halls that focused on a detailed overview of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the transformation of passenger rail across Virginia. There is a brief summary of these two programs including links to the presentation below. Check them both out if you would like to learn more about the BIL or how passenger rail is set for a major transformation across Virginia.

If you'd like to learn more about VHSR, go to their website at: [HOME | VHSR](#)

[Investing in America's Future featuring Jennifer Mitchell \(FRA\) – October 2022](#)

Jennifer Mitchell, Deputy Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, provided a detailed walk through all the various rail related programs included in the BIL. She discussed the purposes of the programs, funding levels, application deadlines and some of the

nuances associated with the programs. You can check out her approximately 50 minute presentation on the VHSR's YouTube Channel:

[INVESTING IN AMERICA'S RAIL FUTURE - YOUTUBE](#)

Transforming (Intercity & Commuter) Rail Across Virginia featuring DJ Stadtler (VPRA) and Rich Dalton (VRE) – November 2022

DJ Stadtler, Executive Director of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and Rich Dalton, CEO of Virginia Railway Express provided an excellent overview of the Transforming Rail in Virginia Program which is focused on expanding and enhancing passenger rail across Virginia. DJ Stadler provides an overview on the creation of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) in 2020 and an extensive discussion of the infrastructure projects supporting the transformation of passenger rail in the Richmond VA to Washington DC corridor. There is discussion of the Western Rail Agreement with Norfolk Southern and many of the other programs that are supporting this historic change in passenger rail service. Rich Dalton offers a comprehensive overview of VRE operations, their capital program, and plans for the future. Be sure to check out their approximately 60 minute presentation on VHSR's YouTube Channel:

[TRANSFORMING INTERCITY & COMMUTER RAIL ACROSS VIRGINIA](#)

WASHINGTON WIRE

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Contributed by: Harrison M. Wadsworth IV, Vice President, Government Relations, AECOM

This year's legislative conference comes at a pivotal time for American intercity and high-speed rail policy. There has been a flurry of rail-related activity in Washington over the past few months, with more coming between now and this summer.

On December 2nd, President Biden signed a bipartisan bill to prevent an imminent rail strike and put in place a multi-year contract for most railroad workers. On December 29th, the President signed a bipartisan bill to provide appropriations for federal programs for the remainder of 2023. As detailed below, this bill funds the programs authorized by the bipartisan infrastructure law (BIL/IIJA). Do you notice a theme? While partisan arguments may generate headlines, bipartisan compromise generates real results for our industry and the passengers we serve. Fortunately, there remains strong bipartisan support for fully funding IIJA-authorized programs that were not covered by advanced appropriations in the bill itself. Despite calls from some to significantly reduce funding for all domestic spending programs, I remain confident that the Congress will ultimately enact something close to IIJA-authorized funding levels for FY 2024 rail programs.

APPROPRIATIONS AND FUNDING

The FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Bill provided more money for passenger rail than ever before – a testament to the truly transformative nature of the IIJA. Altogether, the bill provided the Federal Railroad Administration with 5.8x more funding than it received in 2021. The bill even included a shoutout to long-distance intercity rail service, as it included language stating that the Congress “does not support proposals that will inevitably lead to long-term or permanent service cuts or segmentation of Amtrak’s long-distance routes, which will lead to less service for rural communities.”

The President’s FY 2024 Budget proposal released this past week, recommends \$18.0 billion in total budgetary resources for FRA, which is \$4.8 billion in newly proposed budget authority on top of the \$13.2 billion in advance appropriations provided through the IIJA. The \$4.8 billion in budget authority includes \$3.1 billion for Amtrak and \$1.4 billion for FRA’s discretionary rail grants. In all, the President’s proposal is almost \$2 billion below the total authorized for rail programs, reflecting the challenge the industry faces to capture the full promise of the IIJA rail programs. The President’s proposal is the first step in negotiating final numbers.

Negotiations on funding levels for FY 2024 will be different than last year. The new Republican majority in the House is prioritizing reductions in domestic spending. For instance, the conservative Republican Study Committee recently released a menu of options for reducing spending, which includes everything from overall caps on funding, to reverting to FY 2022 funding levels, to rescissions of previously appropriated funds. There are efforts to tie spending reductions to a lifting of the debt ceiling this summer. This is all part of a negotiation, as the Senate and White House remain in Democratic control. Both the President and the Democratic leaders in the Senate have made it clear that they will not support reductions in federal rail spending. Nevertheless, your advocacy this week matters immensely.



HIGH-SPEED RAIL DEVELOPMENT

Last year, Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg told Congress he wants IIJA funds to support the demonstration of high-speed rail in two or three geographies. Applications were recently due for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program, for which intercity passenger rail projects are eligible. There are certainly at least three geographies to choose from. It has been widely reported in the industry that both the California High-Speed Rail Authority and Brightline West are seeking funds from the program. If the FRA awards funds to both projects, it will be possible to get high-speed trains up and running between Las Vegas and Southern California, along with Merced and Bakersfield. This will lay the building blocks for an eventual West Coast super-megaregion connection across Northern California, Southern California, and Nevada. In the Southeast, Senator Ossoff of Georgia secured funds in the FY 2023 appropriations bill to study the feasibility of an Atlanta – Savannah high-speed rail connection. Meanwhile, in the Northeast, Amtrak continues to rapidly accelerate work on dozens of projects to improve Northeast Corridor rail infrastructure so that trains can run faster and with more frequency.

The greatest challenge to building support in Congress for high-speed rail is the lack of an operational system in the USA. A bipartisan consensus is emerging in Congress that 20th century, paperwork oriented NEPA processes are one of the root causes of project delays. Digitalization has improved the way we design, build, and operate rail systems, and it's time for digital tools to improve the way we engage regulatory agencies and communities to get projects permitted. The FY 2023 appropriations bill included a provision directing DOT to publish best practice guidance on using digital platforms to optimize the NEPA process. This is a step in the right direction that our industry must embrace if we are to see the results of IIJA and other rail investments.

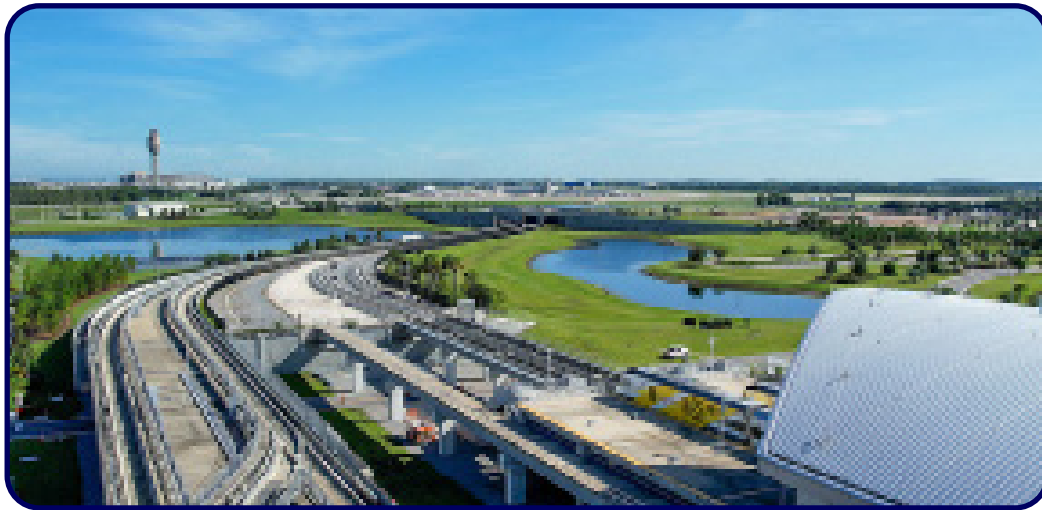
HOW YOU CAN HELP

As this process unfolds, it is important to focus on project execution at home and to pay attention to the dealmakers in Washington. While the loudest voices often get the most attention, during your Capitol Hill visits, be sure to follow what the Republican Senators who voted for the IIJA say about rail funding. During all your meetings, be sure to share news, upcoming milestones, and results from projects in their states. Invite your leaders to come see your systems. Do not be shy about sharing how continued, predictable funding is essential to project completion. No one wants a half-built or canceled project.

BRIGHTLINE

TESTING REACHES MILESTONE

Contributed by: Ken Sislak, AECOM



Brightline began service in 2018 between Miami and West Palm Beach, with an intermediate stop in Fort Lauderdale. Service was fast, frequent and comfortable. Ridership was growing until the pandemic hit. Brightline shutdown operations for 19 months beginning March 2020 and resuming service in November 2021. Since resuming service, Brightline has provided hourly service with 16 round trips per day between Miami and West Palm Beach. Ridership came roaring back upon reopening. Brightline president Patrick Goddard recently told a Railway Age interviewer that “year-to-date, our ridership and revenue is at about 150 to 170 percent above what it was before COVID hit. We look at that as a positive indicator and considering that other transit agencies are still at around 80 percent of their pre-pandemic ridership, we feel like we’re headed in the right direction. Ridership keeps growing, and our marketing is increasingly effective.”

During the service suspension, Brightline planners

reviewed every aspect of the service. One item that came out of this review was “Brightline plus.” This service provides private auto and shuttle bus first-mile – last-mile service for passengers within a five-mile radius of a station. This service helps Brightline advertise, “Go Car-Free. Carefree.” If you live within the five-mile radius of the station, the railroad can arrange your transportation from door to train and back again upon return. The private auto fleet consists of all-electric Tesla cars for individual riders, while the shuttle service is composed of traditional multi-passenger vans.

Brightline has been busy building in-fill stations to broaden its market access. Two additional stations opened in south Florida last December. The new stations are located at Boca Raton and Aventura. Boca Raton is between Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Aventura lies between Miami and Fort Lauderdale. These added stations will provide six stations in south Florida improving accessibility to residents, where the population is six million people. Miami Today reports



the two new stations contributed 27 percent of Brightline's total ridership in January. According to Brightline's monthly ridership and revenue report, the new stations handled 42,391 of the 157,137 total riders. The ridership report called those numbers "encouraging" and said Brightline believes "the new stations will contribute substantial incremental annual passengers and revenue upon stabilization."

Brightline continued construction on the line to Orlando during the pandemic. The Orlando segment is on track to open in the second quarter of 2023. The train station at Orlando International Airport (MCO) is 90% complete. MCO is the 14th-busiest airport in the U.S. and served over 48 million people departing or arriving in 2022. Brightline service to and from the airport will likely further boost ridership among both domestic and international travelers. The Brightline Orlando line is undergoing high-speed testing now. Once Brightline service to MCO begins, the train will travel at 125 mph. It is estimated that it will take just about 2 hours to travel to West Palm Beach from Orlando.

In addition to the Orlando line and station facilities, Brightline's Orlando footprint includes a rail maintenance facility that is 135,805 square feet, a 9,542-square-foot train washing facility, and 7.75 miles of maintenance and storage track, all on a 62-acre site. The locomotive shop features drop pits and a 30-ton overhead crane, and the facility can support heavy repair on both locomotives and cars.

Brightline promises to connect Tampa to its Florida rail system for even more intrastate accessibility.



2023 *Conferences*

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

March 12-14, 2023
Washington, DC

HIGH-SPEED RAIL SEMINAR

March 15-16, 2023
Washington, DC

LEGAL AFFAIRS SEMINAR

April 2-4, 2023
Portland, OR

MOBILITY CONFERENCE

April 23-25, 2023
Minneapolis, MN

RAIL CONFERENCE

June 11-14, 2023
Pittsburgh, PA

TRANSIT CEO'S SEMINAR

May 19-21, 2023
Houston, TX

PASSENGER RAIL ENGINEERING EDUCATION

July 11-13, 2023
Washington, DC