



EESI

Environmental and
Energy Study Institute

Materials will be available at:

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Like Trains? Then Choo-Choose to Learn About Federal Rail Policy

Briefing Series: The Next Era of Transportation and Infrastructure

Wednesday, May 28th, 2025

About EESI



Nonpartisan Educational Resources for Policymakers

A bipartisan Congressional caucus founded EESI in 1984 to provide nonpartisan information on environmental, energy, and climate policies



Direct Assistance for Equitable and Inclusive Financing Program

In addition to a full portfolio of federal policy work, EESI provides direct assistance to utilities to develop “on-bill financing” programs



Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

We recognize that systemic barriers impede fair environmental, energy, and climate policies and limit the full participation of Black, Indigenous, people of color, and legacy and frontline communities in decision-making



Sustainable Solutions

Our mission is to advance science-based solutions for climate change, energy, and environmental challenges in order to achieve our vision of a sustainable, resilient, and equitable world

Policymaker Education



Briefings and Webcasts

Live, in-person and online public briefings, archived recordings, and written summaries

Climate Change Solutions



Bi-weekly newsletter with everything policymakers and concerned citizens need to know, including a legislation and hearings tracker



Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs

Timely, objective coverage of environmental, clean energy, and climate change topics



Social Media (@EESlonline)

Active engagement on Bluesky, Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and YouTube

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Upcoming Briefings



The Next Era of Transportation and Infrastructure

4

Like Trains? Then Choo-Choose to Learn About Federal Rail Policy

Wednesday, May 28, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Rapid Readout: The Latest on Budget Reconciliation

Friday, June 06, 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm

Shifting Gears: Policies for a More Sustainable Highway System

Friday, June 13, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Beating the Heat: A 2025 Heat Policy Agenda

Tuesday, June 17, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

2025 Congressional Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency EXPO and Policy Forum

Thursday, July 24, 9:00 am - 7:00 pm

Sign up for our *Climate Change Solutions* newsletter here: eesi.org/signup



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What did you think of the briefing?

Please take 2 minutes to let us know at:

www.eesi.org/survey

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Wednesday, May 28th, 2025

Tracks to Opportunity: Passenger Rail as a National Economic Tool

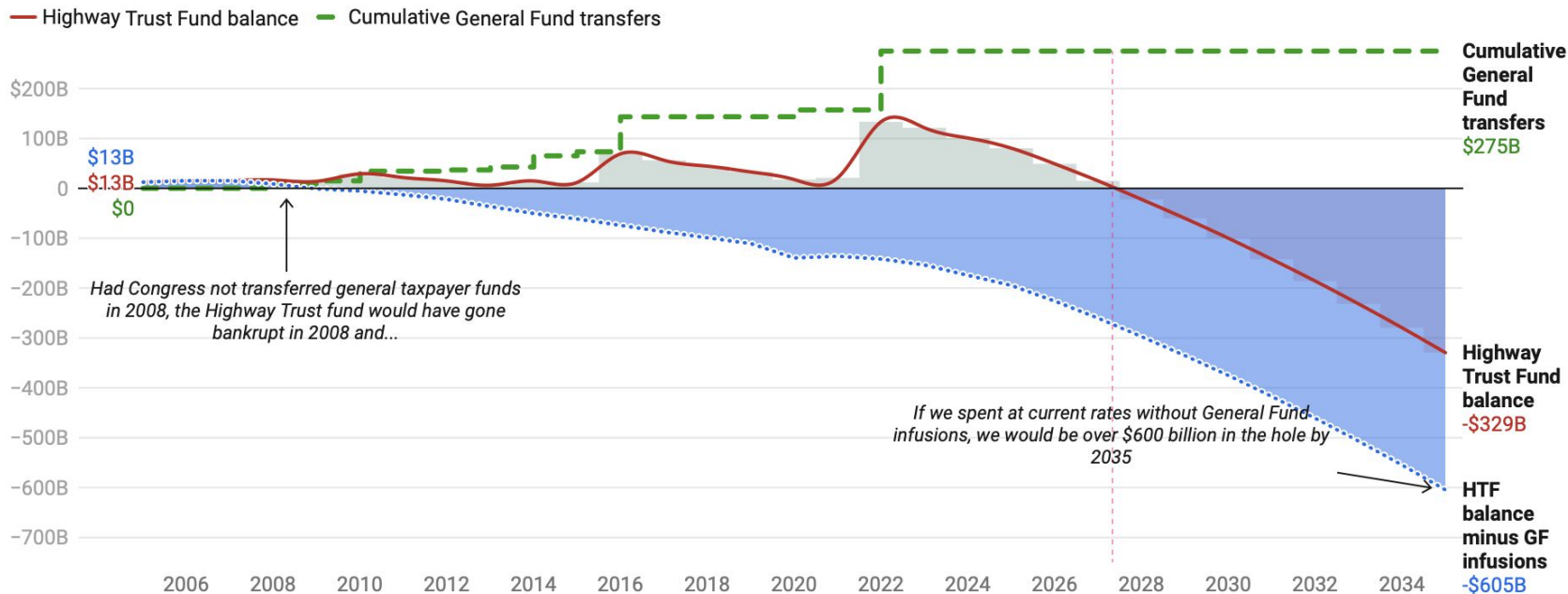
John Robert Smith

May 28, 2025



Transportation
for America

The Highway Trust Fund's trajectory to insolvency



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics (<https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/Transportation-Economic-Trends-Government-Transportor/6bdc-i7mh/>) and Congressional Budget Office (<https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2025-01/51300-2025-01-highwaytrustfund.pdf>)

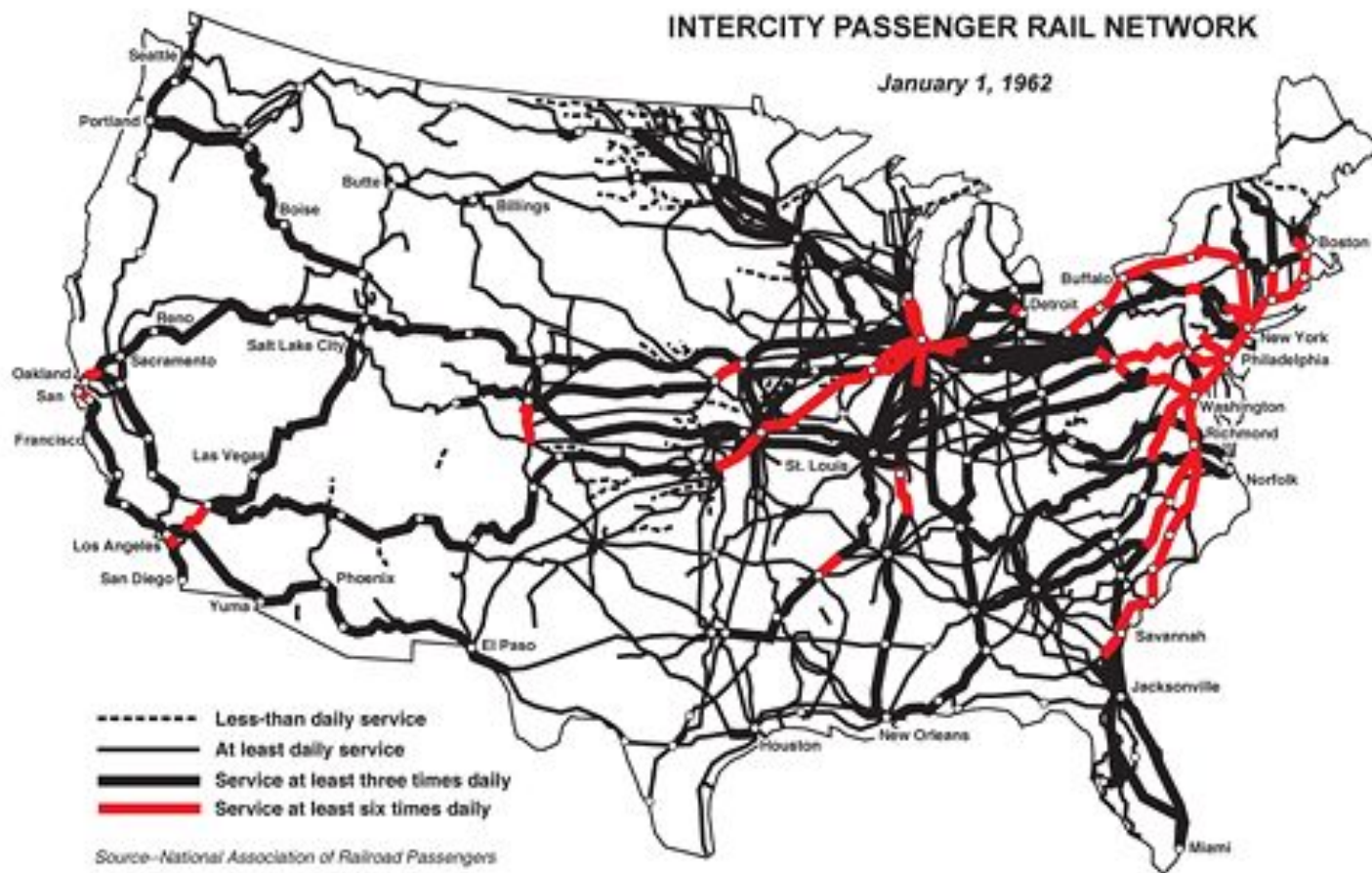
Source: Transportation for America • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper



Transportation
for America

INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL NETWORK

January 1, 1962



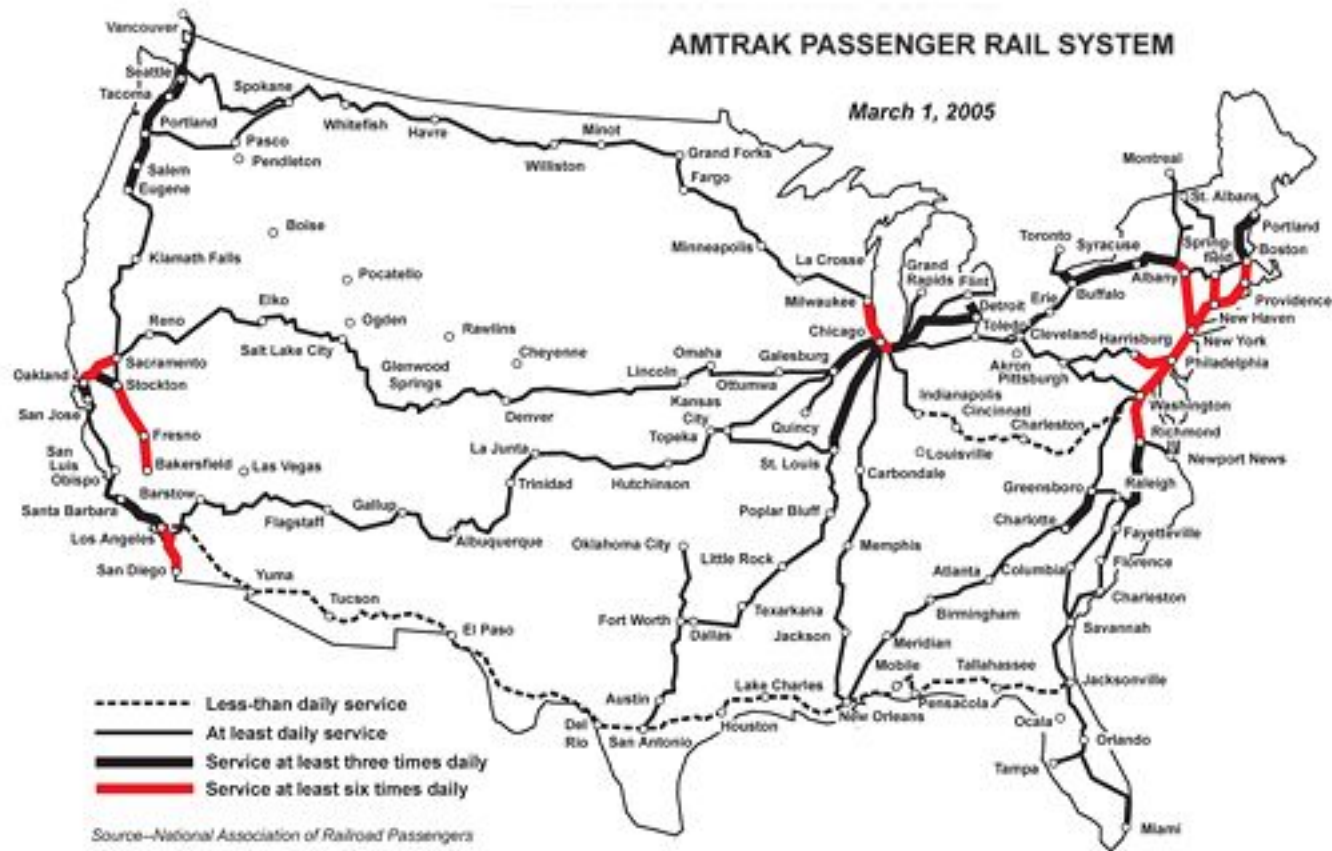
Source—National Association of Railroad Passengers



Transportation
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AMTRAK PASSENGER RAIL SYSTEM

March 1, 2005



Transportation
for America

Meridian's Union Station



Transportation
for America



Transportation
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Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act

- First effort to provide significant funding commitment to Amtrak
- Introduced 2005
- Passed 2008



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Senator Trent Lott (R-MS)

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)

Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN)



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for America

Gulf Coast



FAST Act

- First time transportation reauthorization included Amtrak as well as highways and transit
- Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program (CRISI)
 - Rail infrastructure/equipment
 - Nearly \$6 billion since 2015
- Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grant
 - Covers 6 years of operational support



FAST Act

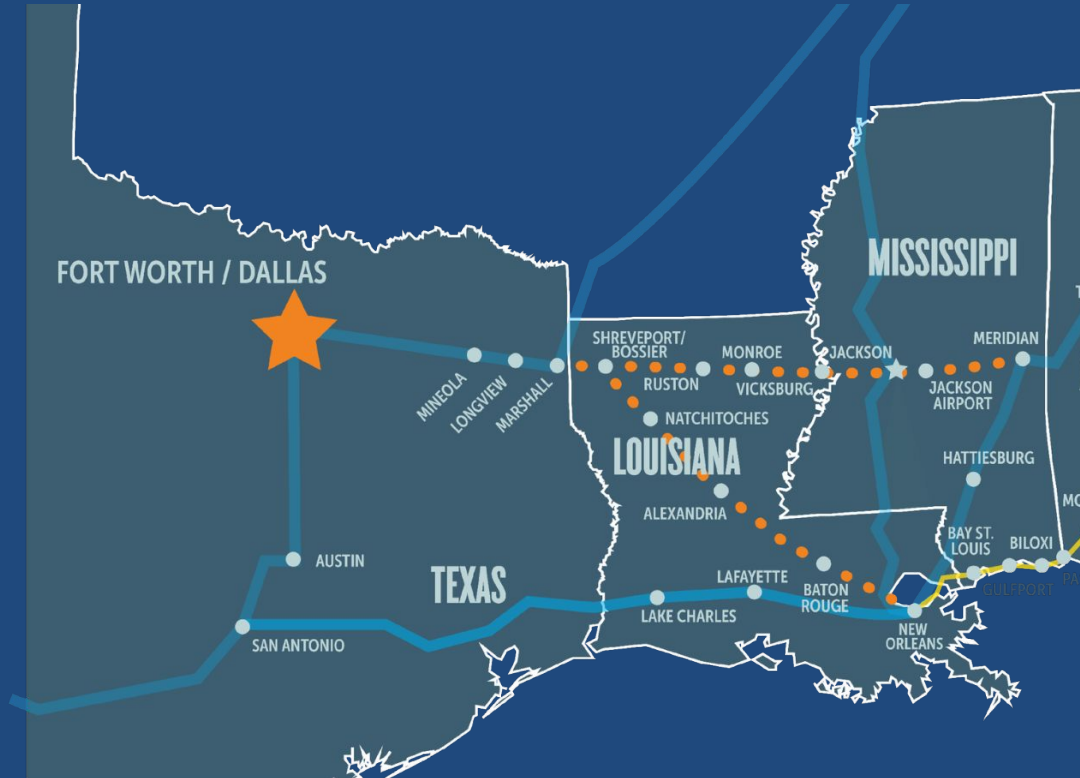
- First time transportation reauthorization included Amtrak as well as highways and transit

Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS)
Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)
Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA)



Transportation
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I-20 Corridor



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IIJA

- Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP)
 - Corridors under 750 miles
 - 69 corridors selected
- Interstate Rail Compacts (IRC) Grant Program
 - Operating support for up to 10 interstate compacts
 - Southern Rail Commission is the model

IIJA

- Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP)
- Interstate Rail Compacts (IRC) Grant Program

Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

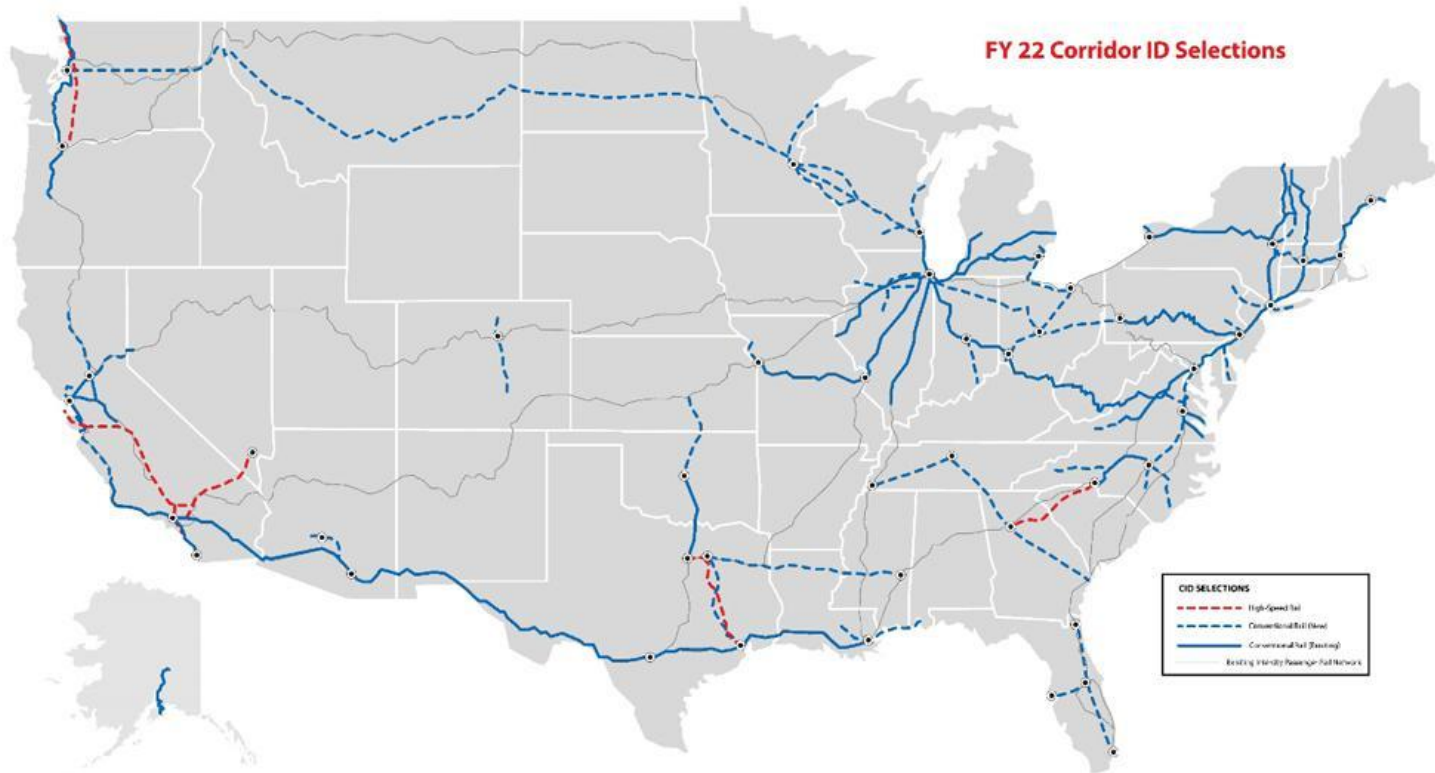
Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS)

Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR)



Transportation
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FY 22 Corridor ID Selections



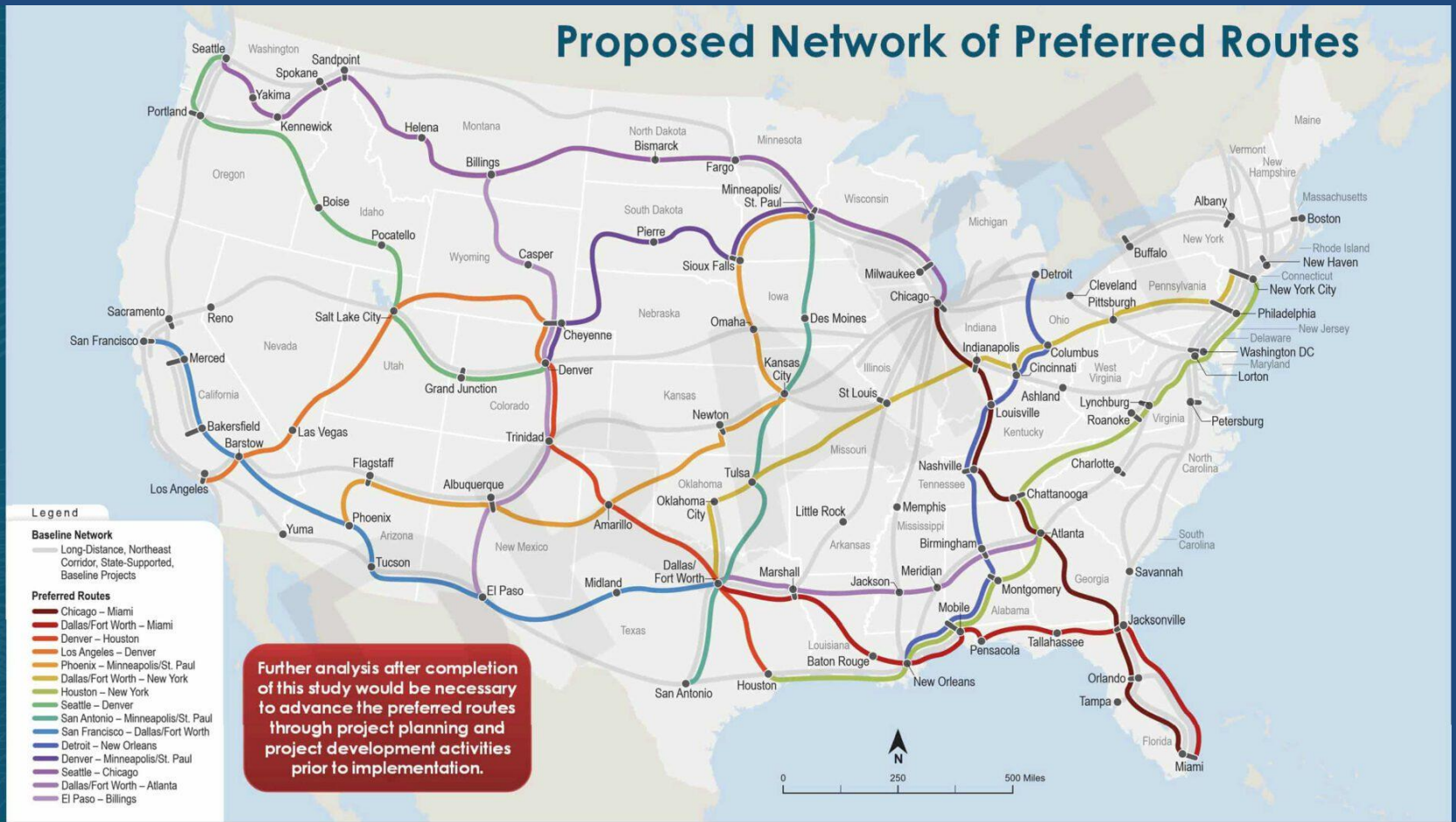
DISCLAIMER: This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of cities, project locations, and routes. Cities shown on the map are added to provide geographic reference and are not intended for any other purpose. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest accuracy of all data on this map, but some errors can occur.

DECEMBER 2022



Transportation
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Proposed Network of Preferred Routes



Denver, CO



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Normal, IL



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for America

Downeaster



Transportation
for America

Empire Builder



Surface Transportation Board

Passenger Rail Advisory Committee

Co-Chair

James Derwinski
Metra

Co-Chair

Henry Posner III
Iowa Interstate Railroad

Secretary

Lori Winfree
North County Transit District

Gregg Baxter
Herzog Enterprises

Shoshana Lew
Colorado Department of Transportation

Liliana Pereira
Steer

Joseph Black
WSP

Patricia Long
Railway Supply Institute

Christopher Perry
Amtrak

James Blair
Amtrak

Jim Mathews
Rail Passengers Association

Greg Regan
AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department

Husein Cumber
Brightline Holdings

Michael McClellan
Norfolk Southern

John Robert Smith
Transportation for America

Andy Daly
CSX Transportation

Robert Padgett
Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority

Carl Warren
North Carolina Railroad Company

Aaron Edelman
Mooney, Green, Saindon, Murphy & Welch

D.J. Stadtler
Virginia Passenger Rail Authority

Jonathan Lamb
Lake Superior Warehousing Co., Inc.

Next Reauthorization

- Incentivize more providers
 - Indemnification and liability
- Open national equipment pool
 - Available to all providers
 - Standardize rail procurement practices
 - Stable federal funding

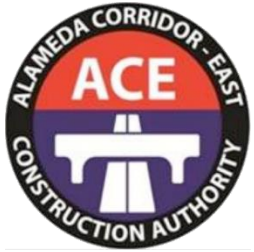


CAGTC

Coalition For America's
Gateways & Trade Corridors

EESI Rail Briefing | May 28, 2025

About CAGTC



Our Principles

- ▶ Raise understanding of freight movement & system investment needs
- ▶ Increase federal funding dedicated to freight infrastructure across all modes
- ▶ Improve policy and planning supporting freight movement



Programs with Rail Eligibility

Funding levels over 5-year period

- ▶ Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Investments (CRISI): \$5 B
- ▶ Rail Crossing Elimination Program (RCE): \$3 B
- ▶ Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP): \$2.25 B
- ▶ Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA): \$8 B
 - ▶ Limited to ~30% non highway investments
- ▶ National Infrastructure Project Assistance (Mega): \$5 B
- ▶ TIGER/ BUILD/ RAISE: \$7.5 B
- ▶ Freight Formula Program: \$7.15 B
 - ▶ Limited to ~30% non highway investments

CAGTC

Coalition For America's
Gateways & Trade Corridors

Discussion

Elaine Nessel

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Coalition for America's Gateways & Trade Corridors

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RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

Passenger Rail Priorities in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization

May 28, 2025

Sean Jeans-Gail | VP of Gov't Affairs
Rail Passengers Association



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

Rail Passengers Association Reauthorization Priorities



Sec. 1 – Reauthorize Core Rail Programs



Sec. 2 – Implementing the Federal Railroad Administration's Amtrak
Daily Long-Distance Service Study



Sec. 3 – Planning, Construction, and Procurement Policy Reforms



Sec.1 – Reauthorize Core Rail Programs

- Passenger rail solves a geometry problem that other modes can't: moving large numbers of people across a space-constrained corridor.
 - **A two-track railroad can move as many people each hour as a 16-lane highway if each person drove solo.**
- To the extent that General Funds continue to be used to backstop the Highway Trust Fund, we believe passenger rail should be a beneficiary of these transfers.
- The IIJA established a workable five-year funding framework, with two-thirds guaranteed advance appropriations and one-third authorized funding subject to annual appropriations.



Sec.1 – Formula Distribution of Rail Funds to States



The absence of formula funds has hindered passenger rail development, particularly for rural states and states not located next to legacy, high-frequency passenger rail service corridors.



Overreliance on discretionary grant programs raises costs of administering rail programs for local governments, while delivering spiky and uncertain ROI.



Introduction of formula funding would allow states to invest local tax dollars with confidence, enabling agencies to build up the administrative capacity to efficiently administer these programs.



Sec.1 – Repeated Rail Planning Cycle



Need for stronger federal role in planning and network planning to ensure that changing conditions are accounted for.



Work with states to incorporate all state-level rail planning efforts into the FRA's regional efforts.



Utilize the output of these planning cycles to expedite movement of projects through the Service Development Plan phase of the CID Program.

Sec. 2 – National Long-Distance Rail Service Commission (LDRSC)

Authorize creation of a LDRSC as a quasi-independent entity within the FRA (similar to the Gulf Coast Working Group) to engage in planning, construction, and procurement activities necessary to introduce phased introduction of service on the 15 routes identified by the LDSS.



Establish a funding source capable of covering LDRSC planning and coordination activities.



Direct the LDRSC to engage with Amtrak, States, groups of States, entities implementing interstate compacts, regional passenger rail authorities, labor, political subdivisions of a State, federally recognized Indian Tribes, relevant Class I and other host railroads, private sector rail operators, and other entities, as determined by the Secretary, to carry out its mission.



Sec. 3 – Streamline Environmental Review, Assessments and Planning

- The FRA's current planning process takes far too long, forming a significant obstacle to the introduction of new service.
 - **As just one example:** the FRA's LDSS assumes four years for project planning and another four years of project development for a single train per day that would, definitionally, operate over currently active freight rail corridors.
- Establish a "shot-clock" for Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments for passenger rail projects, with recourse to a binding enforcement mechanism.
- Current statutes define 22 categories of FRA Categorical Exclusions (CEs) that do not involve significant environmental impacts and are subject to expedited review.

Sec. 3 – Address Rollingstock Bottleneck

- A lack of funding certainty has stunted OEM investment in the U.S., while adding to long delivery times for operators and public agencies looking to purchase new trainsets.
 - Amtrak's procurement for the replacement of the existing Long-Distance fleet isn't scheduled to begin entering revenue service until at least 2033.
 - A locomotive Brightline recently lost in a collision with a fire truck in Florida will take three years to replace.





Sec. 3 – Standardize Project Elements

- States and operators could benefit from a national standards policy for equipment, allowing OEMs to leverage economies of scale.
- Direct the FRA to promulgate comprehensive, performance-based regulations for all passenger rail projects, which will allow innovation within individual projects while removing the barrier of slow, one-off Rules of Particular Applicability.



Thank you!

You can find our full reauthorization blueprint at
RailPassengers.org/Blueprint

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