



RAIL PASSENGERS
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Passenger Rail Priorities in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization

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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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