



# Rail Passengers Association Fiscal Year 2024 Legislative Grant Request

The passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) has introduced a new era for America’s rail passengers, launching several important new passenger rail programs and providing guaranteed multi-year federal funding to upgrade and expand the national passenger rail network.

*Rail Passengers* is committed to working with Congress to ensure there is meaningful oversight on these newly expanded passenger rail programs and on Amtrak operations. There will be significant challenges to efficiently ramping up capital investment programs—for the Federal Railroad Administration, for Amtrak, and for States—including workforce shortages, supply chain challenges and domestic manufacturing constraints.

BIL funding can only be used for certain purposes and was never meant to replace Amtrak’s annual appropriations. Providing sufficient FY24 funding is necessary to allow Amtrak to operate trains and restore full service (find out more about ridership trends at [RailPassengers.org/Ridership](https://RailPassengers.org/Ridership)), perform annual maintenance and carry out core functions to avoid long-term deterioration of assets and services, and make targeted, high-priority investments for future expansion. ***Rail Passengers* is asking Congress to fully fund rail programs at the authorized levels established by the BIL.**

	FY23 Enacted	FY24 IIJA Authorized
<b>Amtrak</b>	\$2,453 ML	\$3,650 ML
<i>Northeast Corridor</i>	\$1,260 ML	\$1,200 ML
<i>National Network</i>	\$1,193 ML	\$2,450 ML
<b>Federal Railroad Administration</b>	\$251 ML	\$263 ML
<b>Federal-State Partnership for ICPR</b>	\$100 ML	\$1,500 ML
<b>CRISI Grants</b>	\$535 ML	\$1,000 ML
<b>Railroad Crossing Elimination Grants</b>	\$0	\$500 ML
<b>Restoration &amp; Enhancement Grants</b>	\$0	\$50 ML

## Improve Amtrak Transparency and Oversight

*Rail Passengers* supports legislative initiatives which will improve Amtrak responsiveness to passengers and increase transparency for taxpayers:

- Require Amtrak’s Board of Directors to comply with standard open meeting requirements;
- Expand Amtrak’s Board of Directors annual meeting requirements to include meetings with representatives of state-supported services;

- Require Amtrak’s Board of Directors to publicly disclose any bonus payment made to an Amtrak officer in a year which Amtrak receives federal grants;
- Require Amtrak to disclose certain vendor agreements utilized to provide intercity rail service to state-sponsors or the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) upon request.

**Address Amtrak Board of Directors Vacancies:** There are currently two vacancies and six expired seats on Amtrak’s Board of Directors. We ask that Congress work with the White House to advance a slate of Directors that—as required by Congress in the BIL—provides balanced regional representation, speaking for both rural and urban passengers.

## Holding Freight Railroads Accountable

**Railway Safety Act of 2023:** *Rail Passengers* supports the bipartisan push to Railway Safety Act improve freight rail safety by capping train lengths for certain cargo, mandating two-person crews, increasing financial penalties for violations, and improving oversight and reporting.

**On-Time Performance and Fairness for Passengers:** Amtrak passengers have long been a “canary in the coal mine” for U.S. rail operations, with increasing freight-caused delays to Amtrak trains serving as a leading indicator of the decline in reliability and fluidity on our nation’s rail network.

- **Freight train interference remains the number one cause of Amtrak delays**, with freight railroads causing 900,000 minutes of delay to passengers in 2021—equivalent to traveling to the moon and back 100 times!
- In 2021, **14 of the 15 Amtrak long-distance routes operating over freight rail tracks did not meet the minimum threshold of acceptable service** established by the Federal Railroad Administration Metrics & Standards (≥80% Customer On-Time Performance).
- **State corridor trains are impacted too.** One third of passengers on the *Cascades*, which operates between Seattle, WA and Eugene, OR, arrived late in 2021 due to Host Railroad delays.
- **These delays have real costs.** Amtrak’s Inspector General has estimated that if Amtrak trains were able to operate reliably without freight train interference, Amtrak could realize annual savings of \$41.9 million, and one-time savings of \$336 million by reducing equipment replacement needs. This money—provided by America’s passengers and taxpayers—could be invested in providing better Amtrak service across the country.
- **The Surface Transportation Board is currently investigating substandard service by host railroad Union Pacific (UP) on Amtrak’s *Sunset Limited* route** for consistently failing to meet the FRA’s Metrics & Standards benchmarks. Customer On-Time Performance has dropped to 4.6 percent on the route, which serves residents of Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

**How Can We Improve On-Time Performance?** *Rail Passengers* is asking Members of Congress to apply pressure to Host Railroads for making their constituents late.

1. Freight railroads **must** fulfill their legal obligation to give priority dispatching to Amtrak trains.
2. Support the Rail Passenger Fairness Act to ensure passengers aren't stranded by the freight railroads.

**For more information, please visit [RailPassengers.org/Leg.Resources](https://RailPassengers.org/Leg.Resources)**