



## Blueprint for Rail in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization

Rail Passengers Association has outlined several proposals to build on the success of the rail programs established over the past surface transportation reauthorization cycles. However, the status quo simply isn't good enough; the next reauthorization must include meaningful reforms to the environmental review and service development process which has led to lengthy delays and cost overruns.

See [RailPassengers.org/Blueprint](https://RailPassengers.org/Blueprint) for a full summary of our reauthorization priorities.

### Sec. 1 - Reauthorize Core Rail Programs

**(A) Reauthorize Existing Rail Programs:** Rail Passengers Association is asking Congress to reauthorize key passenger rail programs—including Amtrak's National Network and Northeast Corridor operations grant, the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program (FSP), and the Corridor Identification (CID) Program—as part of the upcoming Surface Transportation Program.

**(B) Extend Dedicated Funding at Current Levels:** Given the overwhelming demand from States, interstate compacts, regional passenger rail authorities, Amtrak, private sector operators and other eligible entities (including short-line freight railroads), *Rail Passengers* is advocating for the extension of dedicated funding established by the IIJA for all programs listed in Sec. 1(A) of this document at current levels, plussed-up to account for inflation.

**(C) Direct Distribution of Rail Funds to States :** The absence of direct funding has hindered passenger rail development, particularly for rural states and states not located adjacent to the NEC. *Rail Passengers* supports AASHTO's proposal for a funding set-aside from the CRISI Program to provide each state with funding for planning and project delivery for eligible activities under this program.

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

#### **(A) National Long-Distance Rail Service Commission**

Based upon our participation in the FRA's Daily Long-Distance Service Study (LDSS), our Association recommends the formation of a National Long-Distance Rail Service Commission (LDRSC) as part of the USDOT to bring together all the Federal agencies with a role to play in building out this new Network, as well as key stakeholders such as tribes, organizations representing state agencies, local elected and appointed officials, rail labor, relevant Class I representatives, and passenger groups.

If fully realized, the FRA's Long-Distance Service Study (LDSS) represents a long-term infrastructure strategy that will extend the U.S. rail network to 39 million people that don't currently have access to passenger rail, including 7 million people in rural communities.

### **Sec. 3 Planning, Construction, and Procurement Policy Reforms**

**(A) Streamline Environmental Review, Assessments and Planning:** *Rail Passengers* is joining with the USHSR and the Teamsters Rail Conference to support a package of permitting reforms that would speed delivery of rail projects in the U.S., including:

- Limiting agency reviews for Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Environmental Assessments (EA) of passenger rail projects to two years and one year, respectively;
- Stipulating that, that if the lead agency for conducting a 2-year EIS or a 1-year EA fails to complete its review in the statutory timeframe assigned, the application or petition is deemed automatically approved and shall not be subject to judicial review;
- Designating the Surface Transportation Board as the lead agency for all high-speed rail environmental reviews with exclusive jurisdiction over the construction and operation of all U.S. high speed rail projects, as is the case for freight rail lines; and
- Ensuring that the Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) and Office of Public Assistance, Government Affairs, and Compliance (OPAGAC) are sufficiently staffed to efficiently discharge these new responsibilities.

**(B) Creation of a National Equipment Leasing Pool:** Private sector manufacturing companies have responded to increased investment in the U.S. passenger rail system by dramatically expanding their domestic manufacturing footprints. This has supported thousands of direct jobs, and tens of thousands of indirect jobs through the supporting supply chains.

The creation of a **National Equipment Leasing Pool (NEP)** would generate thousands of new manufacturing jobs for Americans, address significant hurdles to the introduction of new services, and eliminate an obstacle to private-sector operators that is currently limiting competition in the U.S. intercity passenger rail operations market.

To support the growth of the domestic rail manufacturing industry, speed introduction of new passenger rail service in America, and incentivize greater private sector competition in the U.S. operations market, Congress should authorize \$7 billion to fund the procurement of an initial pool of intercity passenger rail equipment, to be carried out by a NEP, in consultation with the NGEC, SAIPRC members, interested states and passenger rail authorities, U.S.-based OEMs, Amtrak, private-sector rail operators, and anyone else the Secretary of Transportation shall deem appropriate.

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