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News

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U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces $302.6 Million in 'State of Good Repair' Grants

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) today announced the recipients of more than $302 million in grant funds under the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program (Partnership Program) to help repair and rehabilitate railroad infrastructure across the country. The grants will fund 12 projects in nine states.

"This $302.6 million federal investment will upgrade rail infrastructure and enhance safety on the tracks and at railroad crossings in rural and urban communities across America," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The Partnership Program funds capital projects to repair, replace, or rehabilitate publicly- or Amtrak-owned or -controlled railroad assets, to reduce the state of good repair backlog and improve intercity passenger rail performance. Eligible projects include upgrading infrastructure such as track, switches, bridges, passenger stations, and highway-rail grade crossings; and equipment, including passenger cars. The Fiscal Year 2019 Partnership Program selections total approximately $302.6 million of the $396 million made available for grants under the 2019 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

FRA will make the remaining $93.4 million available with a Notice of Funding Opportunity for FY 2020 Partnership Program funds.

"This funding will go a long way in addressing passenger rail capital project needs in communities around the country," said FRA Administrator Ronald L. Batory."

The FY 2019 Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program grant selections are as follows:

California - Coastal Bluff Track Bed Stabilization and Seismic Improvements Project
Up to $11,570,250
San Diego Association of Governments (Lead Applicant)
North County Transit District (Joint Applicant)

Rehabilitates and upgrades a section of North County Transit District-owned track located on sensitive coastal bluffs in Del Mar, CA, to protect against erosion that has disrupted rail service in the corridor multiple times in recent years. The work includes installing new subsurface drainage, concrete ditches, storm drains, and new support piles for seismic stability and slope stabilization. The project provides safety and reliability benefits to all railroads operating over the corridor, including Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner service, North County Transit District's Coaster service, and freight carriers.

California - Four Rural Rail Bridges/ Rehabilitation and Scour Mitigation
Up to $6,750,000
Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA)

Rehabilitates and performs scour mitigation on four existing bridges on the SCRRA-controlled Ventura Subdivision, used by Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner service and Metrolink's Ventura County Line service where the rail line crosses the Arroyo Simi Channel. Originally built in the 1940s and 1950s, the bridges carry 30 daily trains and approximately 1.1 million annual passengers. The project includes removing existing bridge collars and footings and installing riprap and concrete encasement to mitigate bridge pier scour issues. The project provides safety, resiliency, reliability, and trip time benefits for rail passengers and freight services over the corridor.

Connecticut – Walk Bridge Replacement Project (Opportunity Zone)
Up to $29,900,000
Connecticut Department of Transportation (Lead Applicant)
Amtrak (Joint Applicant)

Replaces the existing movable Norwalk (Walk) River Bridge, built in 1896, with two independent two-track vertical lift rail bridges. The project also includes associated improvements to the embankments and retaining walls on the bridge approaches, new catenary structures, and signal system upgrades. The existing bridge is beyond its useful life and is prone to malfunctions, especially when opening or closing. Its replacement will reduce speed restrictions, reduce the risk of service disruptions, and improve resiliency to extreme weather events. The project is identified as a regional priority in the Northeast Corridor Commission's five-year capital plan.

Illinois – Milwaukee North Line Interlocking Improvements
Up to $12,482,600
Commuter Rail Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (Metra)

Rehabilitates and modernizes three interlockings on the Metra-owned Milwaukee North Line in Illinois. The line is used by Amtrak's Hiawatha and Empire Builder services, Metra's Milwaukee

District North service, and two freight railroads. The project will bring signal components into a state-of-good-repair, improve compatibility with Positive Train Control, and replace obsolete components for which replacement parts are no longer available. Signals will be replaced and upgraded at all three interlockings, and at Rondout, a new track connection to Metra's Fox Lake subdivision will be added, increasing capacity and reducing delays. Benefits include improved reliability and fewer delays by maintaining current speeds and avoiding future speed restrictions.

Maryland – Northeast Corridor Track A Winans to Bridge Improvement Project (Opportunity Zone)
Up to $8,000,000
Amtrak (Lead Applicant)
Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Transportation Authority (Joint Applicant)

Rehabilitates and upgrades a five-mile section of the Amtrak-owned Northeast Corridor (NEC) mainline near Baltimore, MD. The project will restore Track A to FRA Class 5 (90 mph) from Class 3 (60 mph) to support higher speeds, improve ride quality, and provide operational flexibility. The project will upgrade Track A from Winans to Bridge interlockings, replacing timber ties with concrete, installing heavier rail, and laying new ballast. These upgrades will enable high-speed operations on all four tracks on this segment. The project will also enable service to be maintained while tracks are taken out of service to allow critical repairs take place in the B&P tunnel. The project is included in the Northeast Corridor Commission's five-year capital plan as a regional priority.

Michigan – Kalamazoo-Dearborn Track and Signal Infrastructure Reliability Improvement Projects (Opportunity Zone)
Up to $6,521,957
Michigan Department of Transportation

Rehabilitates and upgrades signal and track infrastructure on the state-owned Kalamazoo-Dearborn corridor, used by Amtrak's Wolverine and Blue Water services as well as multiple freight operators. The work includes signal and grade crossing component rehabilitation, including replacing switch machines, switch heaters, backup power generators, and 26 gate crossing mechanisms at 18 crossings along the line. Additional work includes replacing 10 turnouts used to move on and off the mainline tracks. The project will improve the corridor's state of good repair, safety, and reliability, reduce passenger train delays, and contribute to enabling 110-mph service in the corridor.

New Jersey – Portal North Bridge Project (Opportunity Zone)
Up to $55,100,000
Amtrak (Lead Applicant)
New Jersey Transit Corporation (Joint Applicant)

Provides funds toward the intercity passenger railroad's cost share for the Portal North Bridge Project, which replaces the existing two-track movable Portal Bridge with a new, 2.44-mile, two-track fixed span crossing the Hackensack River in northern New Jersey. The existing bridge is used by 450 daily trains with more than 200,000 daily passengers between Amtrak's intercity

services and NJ Transit's commuter rail services. The new span will have a 50-foot clearance above the river, eliminating the need for a movable span that interrupts rail operations. This will reduce delays caused by bridge openings needed for waterway traffic, and mechanical failures related to opening or closing the existing bridge. Operating speed will increase from 60 to 90 mph, improving network performance. NJ Transit will also operate longer and higher capacity trains over the new span, increasing peak hour passenger capacity. Amtrak will be able to meet current and projected future intercity passenger demand. The project is identified as a regional priority in the NEC Commission's five-year capital plan.

New Jersey – Reconstruction of Substation 41 (Opportunity Zone)
Up to $36,408,410
New Jersey Transit Corporation (Lead Applicant)
Amtrak (Joint Applicant)

Reconstructs Substation 41, an Amtrak-owned electrical facility in Kearny, NJ, that powers Northeast Corridor main line services in northern New Jersey into Penn Station New York. The proposed reconstruction includes: (1) rebuilding the substation at a higher elevation (15 feet); (2) creating a larger platform; and (3) rerouting or redirecting up to four traction power transmission circuits that feeds the substation. When connected to NJ Transit's independent power generation system, the rebuilt Substation 41 will provide redundant power for the Northeast Corridor in the event of regional blackouts, severe weather, or cyber-attacks.

New York - MTA Penn Station Access - Hell Gate Line Catenary System Replacement (Opportunity Zone)
Up to $30,000,000
NY Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Replaces 210 catenary structures on the Amtrak-owned Hell Gate Line between Penn Station, New York and New Rochelle, NY. The structures were installed in the 1910s, have exceeded their useful life, and are prone to component failures related to age and fatigue. The project is part of the broader Penn Station Access project that would provide one-seat commuter rail passenger service to Penn Station New York (PSNY) for MTA Metro-North Railroad's New Haven Line riders. The Hell Gate Line is used by Amtrak's NEC services and freight, and the project will increase reliability and resilience of the electrical traction system for the current intercity passenger rail services. Replacing the catenary structures will also reduce risks of future structural failures that would cause passenger delays.

New York - MTA Long Island Rail Road – Penn Station Platform Improvements
Up to $17,506,577
NY Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Rehabilitates platforms 7 and 8 at Penn Station New York. The project will also replace and rehabilitate staircase risers, tactile strips, lighting and signage, and remediate lead and asbestos. The project will improve safety by reducing tripping hazards, improving lighting, and updating signage. The project will also provide reliability benefits, ensuring that platforms 7 and 8 remain

open and available for passenger use, avoiding potentially disruptive closures and resulting delays and congestion at Penn Station.

North Carolina – Piedmont Intercity Fleet & Infrastructure Investments Project Phase II
Up to $80,000,000
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Purchases six locomotives and 13 passenger coaches to replace existing state-owned equipment that are 30- and 50-years old, respectively. The project is the second phase of NCDOT's equipment procurement program, building upon a previous Partnership Program award to procure passenger coaches. The equipment will serve Amtrak's Piedmont service between Charlotte and Raleigh, NC. The project will enhance service and support continued growth, including a fourth daily Piedmont round trip planned for 2023. The new fleet will reduce train cancellations and delays, provide consistent and reliable service, improved on-board amenities, as well as meeting all safety and accessibility requirements.

Pennsylvania – Harrisburg Line Capacity Improvements: Upgrade of Track 2 from Glen Interlocking to Thorn Interlocking
Up to $8,337,500
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (Lead Applicant)
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (Joint Applicant)

Rehabilitates and upgrades Track 2 from Glen to Thorn Interlocking in Chester County, PA, on the Amtrak-owned Harrisburg Line between Philadelphia and Harrisburg. The project will upgrade 10 miles of track to FRA Class 3 standards (60 mph) and upgrade the signal system with in-cab bidirectional signals. The corridor services Amtrak's Keystone and Pennsylvanian services, SEPTA's Paoli-Thorndale service, and freight operations. The project will eliminate a choke point, enhancing rail capacity and reliability while also improving operational safety and flexibility.

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