

**Remarks As Prepared For  
FRA Administrator Amit Bose  
US High-Speed Rail Association (USHSR)  
High-Speed Rail Conference  
Wednesday, May 17, 2023**

Good afternoon.

I appreciate the US High-Speed Rail Association and CEO Andy Kunz for inviting me.

I particularly appreciate this moment, as we are at a major inflection point in terms of America's commitment to advanced rail transportation.

You all in this room are key players in U.S. high speed rail.

Just 18 months ago, President Biden signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – a once-in-a-generation investment in our nation's infrastructure and economic competitiveness.

As part of the President's Investing in America agenda, the Biden-Harris Administration has announced over \$220 billion in infrastructure law funding, advancing over 32,000 projects and driving over \$470 billion in private sector manufacturing and clean energy investments.

As we celebrate our significant progress during "infrastructure week," we have the opportunity to make this an "infrastructure decade."

This is particularly true for rail.

Thanks to an unprecedented \$66 billion in rail funding from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this is our moment to modernize rail infrastructure and invest in transformative rail corridors.

This is our moment to build more and build better, while creating jobs and unlocking exciting new prospects from the bottom up and middle out.

The Federal Railroad Administration is committed to a future that brings world-class passenger rail to many more communities across our country.

And, President Biden, Secretary Buttigieg, and Infrastructure Coordinator Mitch Landrieu have given their full support to this effort.

Major projects and corridor development are underway and meeting significant milestones.

In January, President Biden announced \$292 million in MEGA (National Infrastructure Project Assistance Program) funding to complete a critical early phase of the Hudson Tunnel Project, addressing a major bottleneck on the Northeast Corridor.

A project we restarted after four years of do many 2017-2021.

And, with the help of two Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants, the California High-Speed Rail Authority is advancing the design of the Merced extension and improvements around Wasco. This is in addition to approximately \$3.5 billion in previous federal funding.

FRA made more than \$16 billion in rail funding available last year and announced selections for more than 70 rail projects across the country, with even more selections anticipated across this summer and fall.

At the same time, USDOT grant programs, such as RAISE, INFRA (Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight & Highway Projects), and Reconnecting Communities announced more than \$210 million in rail projects.

Our rail investments made in 2022 are the foundation for future growth, and over the next four years, FRA will continue to invest strategically to:

Bring world-class rail service to regions across the country; and

Grow a safer, cleaner, more equitable rail system.

More than a decade after the Obama Administration made that initial investment under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act under Secretary LaHood, we have a chance to move high-speed rail more forward in America.

Secretary LaHood's commitment and steadfastness were unwavering.

I have no doubt Americans are eager to have high-speed transportation rail as a travel option.

High-speed and higher speed trains are icons of world-class rail and would contribute to a cleaner and more equitable rail system.

America should always lead the way in technology and infrastructure — and that means Americans shouldn't have to travel abroad to experience world-class passenger rail.

We are making unprecedented sums of money available and supporting eligible entities and stakeholders to advance this effort so Americans can ride high-speed rail here.

Notably, FRA made available more than \$4.5 billion in Fed-State Partnership Program funding last December to support future high-speed rail projects across the country and expansion of existing passenger service.

Applications are under review, and while I cannot speak to them specifically, I want to reiterate, FRA aims to invest strategically to grow a safer, cleaner, and more equitable rail system.

High-speed rail aligns with our investment objectives.

I encourage all of you to closely consider FRA's goals when advancing projects and pursuing federal funding.

Safety needs to be central to every aspect of America's rail network, including high-speed rail, which has a strong safety record across the globe, and it will remain at the heart of USDOT actions as well as our project investments.

When it comes to climate, we know rail is already an environmental-friendly and sustainable mode of transportation, especially high-speed rail.

We will look for rail projects that further contribute to a greener future by using electricity to reduce emissions, and those that go even further by using renewable energy like solar, while providing rail travel times competitive with cars and short flights.

We will also look for projects that expand equity by investing in disadvantaged and low-income communities—projects that create local jobs, connect where people live to new job markets and greater economic opportunities, as well as those prioritizing small business contracting and workforce development.

While the Partnership Program presents tremendous opportunities to build, improve, and expand passenger rail, FRA is not taking a top-down approach to identify and advance corridors or projects. We look to communities and stakeholders like you to show us where demand, need, and feasibility are highest.

Launched last year, the first-of-its-kind Corridor Identification and Development Program embodies that philosophy.

This program will guide the development of new and enhanced intercity passenger rail by establishing a pipeline of projects ready for funding – allowing them to be implemented faster and with greater coordination.

As all of you know, establishing corridors and acquiring rights-of-way are the foundation of any successful development or expansion of a rail network. The Corridor ID program creates a new paradigm of developing corridors, working in partnership to develop enhanced service plans. The program will benefit all forms of rail transportation, including high-speed rail.

We need spines and feeders.

Solicitations for the first round of Corridor ID closed on March 27, 2023. FRA will regularly solicit proposals for new corridors to enter the program and will meet participants wherever they are in the project lifecycle.

For interested parties, I want to remind you that Corridor ID solicitations are not a one-time opportunity.

More broadly, I also want to remind you of the importance of familiarizing yourself with FRA's environmental review process as well as project agreements, host railroad agreements, utility coordination and relocation needs, and right of way acquisition that are all crucial to advancing projects.

High-speed rail already is a part of FRA's investment portfolio, and we will continue to build internal capacity, increase engagement, and, where possible, make our processes more efficient to support stakeholders like you and other eligible entities looking to advance projects.

In January, FRA published our Capital Project Guidance to assist project sponsors in developing effective, complete capital projects that meet schedules and budgets.

In developing this guidance, FRA is establishing a framework for project oversight that helps sponsors prepare for funding opportunities and to deliver good projects well.

In March, we took steps to amend our Passenger Equipment Safety Standards to modernize Tier I and Tier III safety appliance requirements.

Tier III passenger trains are permitted to travel up to 125 mph in a shared right-of-way and 220 mph in an exclusive right-of-way without highway-rail grade crossings.

Additionally, the Fed-State NOFO highlighted Buy America when developing projects.

Meeting Buy America requirements and domestic sourcing plans and workforce will be important.

FRA issued a notice to encourage development of high-speed rail projects intended for operations over 160 mph by establishing a streamlined process for reviewing domestic sourcing and workforce plans.

FRA has a Buy America FAQ webpage with more information. We are committed to working with applicants on this topic going forward.

We will also continue to explore additional actions and ways to offer needed support and promote the domestic supply chain and manufacturing capacity.

Big picture, FRA is committed to meeting the President's goal of delivering high-speed intercity passenger rail to the American people, and the Fed-State Partnership Program provides some of the funding needed to help make this a reality.

Progress is being made to make good on high-speed rail, and there is a growing body of evidence that shows the economic benefits of investing in transformative rail projects.

Some time ago, FRA issued a safety rule of particular applicability and record of decision for a Shinkansen system with Texas Central. Texas Central remains possible.

In February, I was in California with the California High-Speed Rail Authority to mark the creation of more than 10,000 construction jobs since the start of construction in the State.

In March, I was in Lexington, North Carolina, as Siemens announced a \$220.2 million investment in a brand-new rail manufacturing facility with over 500 jobs in the State.

A month later, USDOT Under Secretary Carlos Monje joined Leader Schumer for a tour of work underway at the Alstom Plant in Hornell, NY.

I also know Brightline West has overcome significant challenges and is now poised for construction. Recently they signed a labor agreement with operating rail unions; and California and Nevada agreed on wildlife crossings for the project.

These are just a few examples of what is possible when the public and private sector work together, and how rail investments can spur domestic manufacturing, job creation, environmental, and economic progress.

It is no secret: for decades, America has invested trillions in maintaining and expanding highways and air travel, yet rail funding has lagged way behind.

This is no longer the case. We have the predictable, sustained, and robust funding needed for passenger rail projects so many of us have been waiting for and advocating for.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides the funding, tools, and framework to advance 3-5 corridors across the country and help deliver high-speed rail.

Preventable derailments and recent incidents have shined an intensified light on freight rail recently and the need for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century rail network Americans deserve.

As we build out a high-speed rail network, it will be vital to give Americans confidence that these systems will operate safely as well as efficiently. I'm confident we can replicate the exemplary safety record of other high-speed rail systems around the world.

We have a chance to advance an alternative to the congested highways or stressful airports too many Americans are forced to navigate, getting travelers to their destination sooner and in a more relaxed way.

I'm more optimistic than ever about the progress being made, and the Federal Railroad Administration will make billions more in funding available across our grant programs in the coming years.

We remain fully committed to strengthening partnerships to deliver the world-class passenger rail so long overdue in this country.

This effort is not just about reducing travel times—though it will. It's about driving economic growth, creating jobs, contributing to a greener future, and bringing communities together in new ways.

The benefits are many, and so too are the opportunities in front of us.

We are on the cusp of a new expansion of opportunities for rail modernization. High-speed rail will be a critical element of that goal, and the Federal Railroad Administration looks forward to working in partnership with you as we move America forward.

Thank you for your time.

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