

RRD Workshop Session Booklet

FRA

RAIL

PROGRAM DELIVERY WORKSHOP

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U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Railroad
Administration

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview: The 2024 Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Rail Program Delivery Workshop—taking place at the Washington Marriott at Metro Center—is an opportunity to meet FRA staff and join more than 200 external FRA partners. The Workshop will allow FRA to foster workforce development and collaboration, continue to build a learning culture within today’s rail industry, and support FRA’s Office of Railroad Development’s mission of “Partnering to Advance Effective Rail Investments.” Sessions will highlight new initiatives and updates to FRA processes, provide access to technical assistance and resources, and explore notable practices in project delivery.

This booklet outlines the Workshop sessions, which align with three core categories:

- Preparing For Grant Application Success,
- Technology And Tools, and
- Project Development And Delivery.

There are two additional Engagement Sessions:

- a fireside chat on “Establishing the US Department of Transportation Project Delivery Center of Excellence,” and
- office hours with FRA Regional Sponsor Outreach and Project Delivery staff.

Background: FRA seeks to enable the safe, reliable, and efficient movement of people and goods for a strong America, now and in the future. It is one of ten agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) concerned with intermodal transportation. In 2021, President Joseph R. Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58), also known as the “Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)” — a generational investment in America’s intermodal transportation system of which freight and intercity passenger rail are an integral part and an engine of our economy.

- This funding greatly expanded existing FRA programs and created new programs to enhance our nation’s rail network. BIL includes \$102 billion in total rail funding, including \$66 billion from advanced appropriations and \$36 billion in authorized funding.

FRA’s Office of Railroad Development is responsible for working with stakeholders to develop cohesive goals and policies for maintaining and improving the U.S. freight and passenger rail networks, as well as for managing a portfolio of grant investments that contribute to achieving these goals. Primary roles include:

- evaluating and monitoring federal grants to ensure successful project development and delivery;
- establishing parameters and methodologies for conducting national, regional, and state rail planning activities;
- overseeing implementation of environmental laws and regulations and advising on environmental policy; and
- providing technical assistance and guidance materials to current and future grantees or loan recipients.

LETTER FROM THE FRA ADMINISTRATOR

On behalf of FRA, welcome to the 2024 Rail Program Delivery Workshop! Over the past few years, we have delivered incredible milestones in the development of the national rail network. This workshop is an opportunity to build upon this progress and leverage partnerships, relationships, resources, and lessons learned to capitalize on future opportunities. President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has allowed FRA to invest an unprecedented level of funding into supporting corridors, and rail projects big and small. It is my hope that the workshop and engagement sessions will foster the knowledge and partnerships that will allow you to maximize the benefits of the infrastructure package for your communities.

During the workshop sessions, you will hear from FRA about project delivery and grant applications, and how to utilize the technical expertise that FRA has to offer. Key topics under discussion include: mastering grant agreements and requirements, best practice engagement approaches with stakeholders and host railroads, and FRA web tools for investment planning. These topics are all crucial for the effective delivery of corridors and rail projects. In addition, FRA will provide details on new requirements under the infrastructure law, as well as recently established development programs and opportunities.

We at FRA want to be a resource for you, and as our agency makes available billions more in rail funding over the coming months and years, we are committed to continuing our support for your rail development efforts. Beyond this workshop, FRA is always available to provide technical assistance, whether it is through our webinars, grant application debriefings, or direct stakeholder engagement. I also look forward to strengthening our partnerships as we pursue our mutual goal of delivering safe and efficient rail transportation for the American people.

As you familiarize yourselves with application processes and program requirements, I also encourage you to take a hard look at the capacity of your organizations, just as FRA did, to plan and implement rail projects and take steps to increase the expertise on hand to deliver projects in your states and localities. Your partnership will be key to building the modern, world-class passenger rail system that will serve the needs of our citizens, and I hope this workshop will better equip you for the enormous opportunities ahead.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Amit Bose". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Amit Bose
Administrator

PREPARING FOR GRANT APPLICATION SUCCESS

FRA Buy America and Related Requirements

REGULAR SESSION¹

Overview: This session will address the domestic preference requirements applicable to FRA's grant programs, including statutory requirements (FRA Buy America) and the new requirement for construction materials established in the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA). The waiver process will also be discussed, including how to request a waiver, due diligence, and timelines.

Format: Presentation and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: Buy America requirements aid and encourage the domestic rail market. This session will familiarize participants with the different Buy America requirements applicable to FRA's grant programs, including the policy, regulatory, and statutory domestic preference requirements. Panelists will include representatives from FRA's Offices of Railroad Development and Chief Counsel.

- BABA established a domestic content procurement preference, requiring that all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in covered infrastructure projects are produced in the United States.

Panelists will also discuss the waiver process and provide best practices for seeking and obtaining a waiver. Attendees will leave with a better understanding of the statutory and regulatory requirements related to FRA's Buy America implementation.

Contact: FRABuyAmerica@dot.gov; [Buy America | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Fundamentals of a Benefit Cost Analysis

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will cover the typical components of the benefit cost analysis (BCA) portion of a grant application, addressing best practices and available resources. Potential grant applicants will learn how to provide the best evidence possible to support benefits generated by their project. In addition, FRA staff will gain a better understanding of how to conduct BCA reviews.

Format: Presentation and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Junior 2 (Tues), Junior 3 (Weds)

Summary: Many Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) require a formal BCA component, and this session will help potential grant applicants know where to start when preparing a BCA. Attendees will learn how to ensure that the likely benefits of a potential project are adequately captured and supported with the best data available.

¹ Multiple Regular Sessions will occur concurrently. Attendees can choose between several offerings.

- Creating and examining a BCA for grant applications represents a significant time and monetary investment to both applicants and reviewers.

Best practices can help to reduce time and expense for applicants—potentially making grant funding more accessible to smaller organizations—and can enable applicants to best position themselves to be awarded grant funding. The information addressed in this session can also make the grant review process more equitable by reinforcing consistent evaluation practices.

Contact: FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov; [Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Grant Pre-Application Process, New Requirements, and Tips for Competitive Grant Applications

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will focus on two core elements: the pre-application process and tips for successfully developing and submitting grant applications. Presenters will review FRA’s rollout of new pre-application materials as well as lessons learned from previous grant cycles. Topics will focus on grant application best practices, eligibility determination, timelines, and how applicants can best prepare for future funding opportunities.

Format: Roundtable Discussion and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: A majority of FRA’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law discretionary funding programs—including Railroad Crossing Elimination and Restoration and Enhancement—will have open application periods during the workshop. Billions of dollars remain available for award.

- This session will enhance attendees’ knowledge of FRA’s funding programs, as well as provide insight into the evaluation process to better educate stakeholders.

Attendees will leave with a better understanding of how to prepare for future funding opportunities. Attendees will also have an opportunity to meet FRA Program managers.

Contact: fra-nofo-support@dot.gov; [Discretionary Grant Programs | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Introduction to Terms and Conditions for Discretionary Grants

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will provide grant applicants and recipients with an overview of the standard Terms and Conditions for FRA discretionary grant agreements. Attendees will learn how to apply for FRA discretionary grants more effectively, including tools to improve the quality of grant applications.

Format: Presentation | **Location:** Junior 1

Summary: FRA updated its Terms and Conditions for discretionary grants in December 2023, and panelists will educate attendees about the latest grant requirements, including new requirements stemming from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

- This session will help applicants be more informed when applying for FRA discretionary grants, which can improve the quality of grant applications.

Attendees will learn how to prepare applications that best address the FRA grant agreement Terms and Conditions. This session will also bolster the ability of FRA staff and grant applicants/recipients to communicate between grant selection and obligation, ideally leading to a faster obligation timeline.

Contact: FRA-grants@dot.gov; [Attachment 1: General Terms and Conditions \(dot.gov\)](#)

Understanding NEPA and Other Federal Environmental Review Requirements

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will provide an overview of the procedural requirements of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations. As NEPA is a decision-making process that functions as an “umbrella” law, the session will also briefly highlight other federal environmental requirements that are generally considered and/or addressed under NEPA. These requirements may include the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, the Clean Water Act, and others.

Format: Presentation and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Junior 3

Summary: Because compliance with NEPA is required before grant funding can be obligated, ensuring the efficiency and accuracy of data is key to timely compliance and program delivery. This session will provide information on the environmental review process by introducing procedural requirements and essential components that FRA’s Environmental Protection Specialists (EPSs) need to ensure compliance.

- The workshop will explore the nature of timely and meaningful communication, highlight other federal environmental requirements that are generally considered and/or addressed under NEPA, and identify crucial information needed for optimal environmental compliance.

This session will advance technical knowledge among internal and external stakeholders and encourage ways to strengthen collaboration.

Contact: FRAEnvironment@dot.gov; [Environment | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS

Emerging Technologies for Project Success

INTERACTIVE SESSION²

Overview: This session will highlight publicly available FRA tools that help advance rail projects. Attendees can interact with the demonstrations and ask questions about the functionality of the various technologies.

Format: Interactive Session | **Location:** Junior 1-3

Summary: Demonstrations will include:

- [Locomotive Emissions Comparison Tool \(LECT\)](#), an easy-to-use, voluntary calculator for FRA grantees seeking to purchase or rehabilitate dirty locomotives to cleaner units. The tool outputs the delta in emissions by comparing the old and new locomotive emissions standards based on annual fuel consumption.
- [Justice40 Rail Explorer Tool](#), which enables users to explore the location of existing and future rail infrastructure (grade crossings, rail yards, and rail corridors) in the context of how communities are experiencing burden and consider how transportation investments may benefit those areas.
- [GradeDec.NET](#), a highway-rail grade crossing (HRGC) investment analysis tool that provides grade crossing investment decision support. GradeDec.NET offers a complete set of standard benefit-cost metrics for a rail corridor, a region, or an individual grade crossing.

Rail Application Assistance Database

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will preview the Rail Application Assistance Database (RAAD) and share anticipated changes set to launch in 2025 to FRA's discretionary grant application process.

Format: Presentation and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Junior 1 (Tues), Junior 2 (Weds)

Summary: The RAAD Case Management System will help modernize and streamline FRA's discretionary grant process, including by standardizing requirements for NOFOs across programs. Panelists will compare the current and new application processes and introduce upcoming resources. Attendees will learn how the RAAD will make FRA's pre-award process more standardized, streamlined, and efficient for applicants. Information will be shared on the opportunity for public comment on RAAD in the Federal Register.

Contact: fra-nofo-support@dot.gov; [Discretionary Grant Programs | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

² Interactive Sessions are informal engagement sessions with an "office hours" style format.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

Advancing Projects Involving Multiple USDOT Modes

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will familiarize attendees with how to navigate projects involving FRA and other USDOT modes, including during the project development and implementation stages. Panelists will include FRA specialists involved in planning, environmental review, realty, law, and project management, and they will offer a comprehensive look at established procedures and best practices for engaging with FRA on projects involving multiple USDOT modes.

Format: Roundtable Discussion | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: FRA frequently coordinates with other USDOT modes, most notably the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), on projects and programs to advance project planning and delivery. Panelists will address topics including:

- Corridor ID program planning and coordination,
- Coordination with multiple USDOT modes during project development (including related to NEPA and real property acquisition), and
- FRA and FTA harmonization on subjects such as the Uniform Act and Project Oversight and Engineering.

Attendees will gain insight on what to consider at each lifecycle stage of a multimodal project, including determining applicable requirements, coordinating activities, and identifying the lead agency for NEPA and project implementation.

Contact: FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov; [Multimodal-Funded Projects | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Building Partnerships with Host Railroads

PLENARY SESSION³

Overview: This session will showcase outreach efforts and partnerships between freight railroads and intercity passenger rail service sponsors participating in FRA programs, including state departments of transportation (DOTs) and rail authorities. Attendees will learn about best practices to fostering a successful partnership between freight railroads and project sponsors, with an emphasis on the shared goal of improved and expanded passenger rail.

Format: Roundtable Discussion with FRA Partners | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

³ Plenary Sessions are intended for all FRA Workshop participants. No other sessions will occur at these times.

Summary: There is a critical need for improved and expanded passenger rail services due to increased highway congestion, growing demand for sustainable transportation options, and the push to reduce carbon emissions. Bolstering collaboration between freight railroads, state DOTs, rail authorities, and other passenger rail service sponsors can help meet this demand. In addition, improved coordination between these entities is likely to enhance the efficiency, reliability, and reach of passenger rail services.

- This session will showcase FRA’s multipronged engagement approaches, best practices, and lessons learned from railroads and their project partners executing passenger rail projects.

Attendees will leave with a better sense of how to strengthen and enhance strategic partnerships, which are key to developing the nation’s rail infrastructure. Lessons learned during this session will help expand and improve passenger rail services in partnership with freight railroads.

Contact: FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov; [Rail Network Development | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Case Studies in Project Delivery

PLENARY SESSION

Overview: This session is an FRA-moderated roundtable about project delivery through an examination of case studies. Covering diverse projects of varying size, scope, and location, a panel of project sponsors will highlight examples of successful project delivery at key decision points and notable practices to overcome challenges during a project’s lifecycle. The project sponsor panelists will discuss working with FRA and best practices for using FRA’s project delivery framework.

Format: Roundtable Discussion with FRA Project Sponsors | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: Collaboration and communication are key to ensuring a successful partnership between FRA and project sponsors. This session will address how to ensure project success, navigate challenges, understand project lifecycle stages, and other relevant topics.

- Recurrent themes will include relationship building, time management, and creating a culture of collaboration.

Attendees will gain insight on real-world examples of successful project delivery shared by project sponsors. The lessons learned in this session will advance FRA’s mission of partnering to advance effective rail investments.

Contact: FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov

Corridor Identification and Development Program

PLENARY SESSION

Overview: This session will provide a brief overview of FRA's Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program, followed by guidance on how to create a Service Development Plan (SDP) for proposed corridor improvements. This session will also address the process of transitioning between the various Corridor ID program steps and provide policy updates on the development of the SDP scope, project schedule, and budget under Step 1 of the program.

Format: Presentation, Panel Discussion, Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: The Corridor ID Program is a comprehensive intercity passenger rail planning and development program that will help guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the country and create a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for implementation. This session will provide corridor sponsors with guidance on developing an SDP.

- Panelists will discuss new policy developments related to expanding the scope, schedule and budget under Step 1 of the program, as well as the readiness criteria for progressing from Step 2 to Step 3.

Attendees will leave with a better understanding of the Corridor ID Program and practical tips for navigating the program's three steps.

Contact: paxraildev@dot.gov; [Corridor Identification and Development Program | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Engineering Task Force Workshop Session

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will allow participants to preview and shape the future of improved engineering stewardship and oversight at FRA. Panelists will highlight the recent efforts and activities of the FRA Railroad Development Engineering Task Force (ETF), as well as facilitate an audience Q&A aimed at sharing insights and feedback.

Format: Presentation and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Junior 1

Summary: In the spring of 2024, FRA's Office of Railroad Development (RRD) launched the ETF to evaluate current engineering review and oversight practices and to identify ways to optimize staff resources for engineering activities. The ETF is currently exploring potential business process improvements, which reflect its initial research on challenges with moving FRA awards through the project lifecycle.

- This session will introduce the ETF, address its initial observations, and facilitate a dialogue between RRD staff and partners on potential improvements to the engineering aspects of project delivery.

This session will explore ways to collaborate on addressing the unique engineering challenges of rapidly growing railroad award programs. Attendees can help influence strategies to better manage risk, improve project quality, and streamline project delivery.

Contact: FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov

Implementation of Railroad Capital Guidance

REGULAR SESSION

Overview: This session will provide stakeholders with a deeper understanding of the components of FRA’s Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects; this session complements the “Project Readiness: What to Expect When You Are Expecting (an FRA Grant)” session. By understanding the requirements of the Guidance, project sponsors will be better prepared to partner with FRA to advance effective rail investments.

Format: Presentation and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: FRA’s Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects was published in January 2023 to assist project sponsors in developing and managing effective capital projects. During this session, panelists will explain how FRA funding recipients can use the Guidance to demonstrate project readiness, advance towards project development and delivery, and improve management of railroad capital projects.

- This session will outline the importance of key definitions, project lifecycle stages, project management tools, and best practices.

Attendees will leave with a better understanding of FRA project lifecycle stages and requirements, as well as new insights on applying the Guidance and using the tools outlined to develop and implement railroad capital projects.

Contact: FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov; [FRA Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

NEPA and Section 106 Efficiencies in Project Delivery

PLENARY SESSION

Overview: This session will focus on an overview of tools developed by FRA to expedite approval processes for the procedural requirements associated with complying with both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106). Attendees will learn about constraints, timing,

programmatic tools, and streamlining opportunities for each of the NEPA and Section 106 processes and how to better anticipate facilitating compliance.

Format: Presentation and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: This session will address information collection and its timing, data analysis, programmatic tools, and environmental streamlining opportunities. Panelists will address critical components of both the NEPA and Section 106 processes and how to better facilitate compliance.

- This session supplements “Understanding NEPA and Other Federal Environmental Review Requirements.”

Attendees will leave with increased technical knowledge, which can help facilitate better communication and foster a greater understanding of how to minimize environmental delays.

Contact: FRAEnvironment@dot.gov; [Environment | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Project Readiness: What to Expect When You Are Expecting (an FRA Grant)

PLENARY SESSION

Overview: This session will outline FRA’s post-selection processes, requirements for grant obligation, and recipient expectations. This session complements the Implementation of Railroad Capital Guidance session. Representatives from FRA’s Rail Project Delivery offices will identify and share best practices for project delivery implementation and discuss recommended approaches to achieve project readiness.

Format: Roundtable Discussion and Moderated Q&A | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Summary: FRA is increasing its focus on project readiness as part of the grant application review and selection process. Project readiness has a direct impact on the successful partnership between FRA and the selected recipients in effectively advancing rail projects across the country.

- Panelists will discuss how applicants can align funding requests with FRA’s project lifecycle stages and describe activities and requirements within the grant lifecycle.

Attendees will learn about general prerequisites to grant obligation and post-selection requirements to advance project delivery. This session will also provide guidance on best practices for ensuring that projects are ready for the respective project lifecycle stage for which applicants are seeking federal funding.

Contact: FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov

ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

Establishing the US Department of Transportation Project Delivery Center of Excellence

FIRESIDE CHAT⁴

Overview: This session will explore USDOT’s Project Delivery Center of Excellence through an engaging one-on-one conversation. The Center supports and educates recipients of federal funds—including transportation infrastructure project managers in state, Tribal, local, regional, and territorial governments—in delivering transportation infrastructure projects more efficiently and effectively from concept to completion.

Format: Fireside Chat | **Location:** Grand Ballroom

Featured Guest: Cynthia Maloney is the director of the Project Delivery Center of Excellence. She is also the chief of the Systems Safety and Engineering Division in the Infrastructure Systems and Technology Technical Center at the USDOT Volpe Center. Maloney has more than 25 years of experience in managing large and complex sponsored programs and overseeing the work of multidisciplinary teams.

Featured Host: Michael W. Lestingi is FRA’s Executive Director. As FRA’s Senior Career Official, he is a key advisor to FRA’s Administrator, leads the career staff in the Office of the Administrator, and provides executive leadership and strategic planning agencywide. Lestingi has held senior positions related to railroad policy development and railroad safety.

Contact: [Welcome to the U.S. DOT Project Delivery Center of Excellence | Volpe National Transportation Systems Center](#)

Customer Service Office Hours with FRA Regional Sponsor Outreach and Project Delivery Staff

INTERACTIVE SESSION

Overview: This session will kick off the FRA Office of Regional Outreach and Project Delivery Team’s “Customer Service Office Hours” series. Attendees can interact with the FRA staff members and ask questions.

Format: Interactive Session | **Location:** Grand E

Summary: The “Customer Service Office Hours” series offers participants an opportunity to chat with FRA staff about funding programs, eligible applicants, eligible projects, preparing applications for funding, and more. Stop by, visit with staff, and learn about opportunities and best practices in successful project delivery.

Contact: FRAFRO@dot.gov

⁴ Fireside Chat sessions will consist of a conversation between a featured guest and a host.