

**Remarks As Prepared For
FRA Administrator Amit Bose
AASHTO Council on Rail Transportation
2023 Winter Meeting
Wednesday, February 1, 2023**

Good morning.

It's great to be back at AASHTO CORT.

I want to thank former CORT Chair Commissioner Giulietti for inviting me.

I want to thank him for his service, and I hope he is enjoying some well-earned time off after his service to the public and his work advancing rail.

I am glad to join you again because you all in this room will create our rail future – a future of world-class passenger rail.

I also want to thank the many FRA staff presenting on a variety of important topics later today.

I will touch on several of these topics this morning as I recap all that has occurred at FRA this past year and preview what is coming in 2023.

As I have said multiple times in multiple communities across the country, this is an exciting time for rail with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg stated that message passionately and unequivocally in Baltimore and New York while celebrating progress of the Baltimore and Potomac Tunnel and Gateway Hudson Yards projects.

During the first year of the infrastructure law, FRA made more than \$16 billion in rail funding available, and we utilized funding we already had to advance more than 70 rail projects across the country:

Projects like the Raleigh to Richmond Corridor, which will lead to new intercity passenger rail service;

Projects essential to the movement of people and goods, as well as our national economy, like the work FRA will fund to replace rail bridges over 100 years old in Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York;

Projects that will modernize and revitalize historic structures like Chicago Union Station, ensuring assets vital to rail's growth in America, will meet future demands;

And several projects along shortline railroads, such as the Great Lakes Corridor Improvement in Michigan, which will enhance essential first and last mile of freight service in our country.

Additionally, we saw meaningful progress on some of the nation's most significant passenger rail projects:

Yesterday, President Biden announced \$292 million in MEGA funding to complete a critical early phase of the Hudson Tunnel Project;

FRA also completed an environmental review of the Sawtooth Bridges project in New Jersey and continues to support advancing design work, most recently through the award of a \$45 million Fiscal Year 2021 Fed-State Partnership grant to fund the completion of final design;

And, with the help of a \$25 million RAISE grant, the California High-Speed Rail Authority is advancing the design work of the Merced to Madera segment of its project.

On the topic of USDOT grant programs, such as RAISE, INFRA, and Reconnecting Communities, I was grateful to see over \$210 million in funding from these programs going to rail infrastructure projects last year.

Overall, the 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 other regions across the country;

Grow a safer, cleaner, more equitable rail system;

Modernize the Northeast Corridor.

Along the NEC, nearly \$9 billion in Fed-State Program funding is available right now to bring much-needed investment to the busiest passenger rail corridor in America.

In November, FRA released the first NEC Project Inventory, prioritizing major bridges and tunnels along the corridor for replacement and providing a roadmap for infrastructure law funding to replace these assets—all of which are more than 100 years old.

In year one of the infrastructure law, FRA obligated an unprecedented \$4.3 billion to Amtrak to, among other things, increase ADA accessibility at Amtrak stations and make fleet upgrades to deliver a better travel experience for Amtrak riders.

These investments come at a time when Amtrak ridership numbers are strong and, after a pandemic dip, a clear sign Americans are returning to travel by rail.

In the second half of Fiscal Year 2022, overall Amtrak ridership reached nearly 85 percent of pre-COVID levels.

NEC, State Supported, and long-distance ridership grew 110 percent, 85 percent, and 56 percent, respectively, compared to Fiscal Year 2021 ridership.

Amtrak provided 22.9 million customer trips, including 7 million first trips by new customers.

Additionally, the number of Americans utilizing the NEC continues to grow, approaching pre-pandemic levels, with ridership alone more than doubling in the last 12 months to 9.2 million passengers annually.

I'm optimistic Amtrak will build on these increases this year, and I'm particularly optimistic about opportunities in the infrastructure law to expand passenger rail across the country.

Last year, FRA launched a first-of-its-kind program to assist in this effort: the Corridor Identification and Development Program.

This program is now soliciting proposals for intercity passenger rail corridors, with the NOFO remaining open until March 20, 2023.

FRA's Peter Schwartz and Wynne Davis will talk about how this program will guide the development of new and enhanced intercity passenger rail services and opportunities available in greater detail this morning.

FRA has and will seek input from States as we advance this program.

Through the recently launched Long-Distance Amtrak Service Study, FRA is also examining the potential, and possible restoration and expansion, of long-distance services. This study is a huge pivot from earlier efforts focused instead on service reduction. We're excited to publish the study's results by November 2023.

On the topic of nationwide opportunities, I want to be the first to share with you exciting and important news regarding the nearly \$2.3 billion in Fed-State funding FRA announced in December to support the expansion of existing passenger service and future high-speed rail projects across the country.

Later this week, the *Federal Register* will publish an update to the existing Fiscal Year 2022 Fed-State National NOFO, announcing FRA is adding up to an additional \$2.2 billion to the existing NOFO.

The amended NOFO will now total more than \$4.5 billion in available funding for projects not located on the Northeast Corridor.

We've also extended the period for submitting applicants to April 21, 2023.

As I mentioned earlier, big picture, FRA aims to grow a safer, cleaner, more equitable rail system.

In June, we made more than \$573 million available through Railroad Crossing Elimination Program to make communities safer, reduce wait times at crossings, and increase the mobility of people and goods.

Not to mention, to connect communities cut off from each other and essentials due to railroad crossings.

With the infrastructure law, both the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program and CRISI Program provide opportunities to fund new innovative technologies, partner with universities, and develop the workforce we need today and in the future to grow America's rail system.

With this growth, FRA moved with urgency last year—and we continue to—to grow as well. Some of you may have seen my comments about growing State rail capacity. Not only States but also FRA has to grow.

FRA is increasing internal capacity, stakeholder engagement, and technical support to maximize the opportunities created by the President's infrastructure package.

Professional opportunities are posted on USA Jobs, which we will continue to share through FRA's LinkedIn.

FRA will soon announce hiring opportunities for two Small Business Specialists in the newly created Office of Research, Data, and Innovation, as well.

These roles will fill a critical need in FRA and the railroad industry by creating an environment for maximum participation of small, minority, and women-owned businesses in contracting opportunities available through FRA financial assistance programs.

Please continue to watch for these vacancy announcements and others.

When it comes to stakeholder engagement and technical support, FRA delivered 21 outreach events to more than 3,500 stakeholders and grantees last year.

These include listening and information sessions on infrastructure law programs, NOFO webinars, and webinars on aspects of the application process like environmental review, developing a benefit-cost analysis, and the post-selection process.

Last month, FRA also published Capital Project Guidance to provide grant applicants and recipients more insight into how FRA intends to manage capital projects, specifically focusing on projects exceeding \$500 million in total project cost and \$100 million in Federal assistance.

Our goal for this guidance is 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.

This year, we will continue to explore ways to offer needed support and promote capacity building at the State level.

For the open Federal-State Partnership Program NOFOs, FRA has and will host multiple outreach events, including webinars and information sessions for applicants.

A Corridor ID program outreach event will follow in spring 2023.

As funding continues to become available through the infrastructure law, there will likely be projects funded through a combination of Amtrak funding, discretionary FRA funding, and FTA formula and/or CIG funding.

This is why FRA and FTA have formed a working group that will allow us to work together on complex, jointly funded projects and megaprojects requiring creativity.

Knowing there will be instances when multiple agencies have overlapping and sometimes conflicting procedures and requirements, we hope this group will foster collaboration and help deliver important projects more efficiently.

These are just a few ways FRA is changing and building capacity to meet this moment.

And, we want State DOTs to do all they can to develop robust rail programs and technical capacity of your own as more Federal dollars become available.

As I've said, I 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.

Partnership and collaboration with Amtrak, local stakeholders, and the nation's largest railroads are also helpful.

There are many ways you can work together to advance project planning, and I encourage States to pursue partnerships and collaboration with Amtrak, local stakeholders, and the nation's largest railroads.

FRA is very much ready to assist you, and we're not slowing down in year two of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

2023 will include project selections and more funding opportunities made possible by the infrastructure law.

Railroad Crossing Elimination applications are being reviewed now. While I cannot speak about specific applications, all indications suggest this new program is significantly oversubscribed—reaffirming the importance of this topic in local communities.

Later this year, we will also announce CRISI and Fed-State selections.

New Notice of Funding Opportunities through the Interstate Compacts Program and Restoration and Enhancement Program are planned for the first half of this year.

As President Biden said in Baltimore on Monday, "...this is just the beginning — beginning — of having a 21st century rail system that's been so long overdue in this country."

In total, FRA will make billions more in funding available across our grant programs and to Amtrak this year to further this effort and to advance projects that create jobs, grow the economy, and make a real difference in your communities and States.

Thank you again for inviting me, and from all of us on the FRA team, we look forward to working together.

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