

**Remarks Prepared for FRA Administrator Amit Bose  
International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Workers  
(SMART)  
2022 Leadership Conference  
San Francisco, CA  
Tuesday, August 9, 2022**

Thank you for inviting me.

It's nice join all of you in-person at the first joint SMART Union Annual Leadership Conference. I always appreciate having a chance to meet your members and leaders.

Most of all, it's my honor to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of each member of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Workers Union.

As one of the most diverse unions in North America, SMART members are essential to our multimodal transportation network, and the Federal Railroad Administration fully recognizes your contributions to our freight and passenger rail industries.

The many crafts represented by SMART make America's railroads possible and keep our country and its people and goods moving.

I am mindful of the workplace pressures the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions place on your members.

The context over the past year and a half has been positioning safety in the right direction and undoing the negative actions of the last Administration.

We have reactivated the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee or RSAC, and are closely watching historic proposed railroad company mergers, the most significant in decades-- and national rail labor negotiations.

Yet, throughout this period, railroads have kept operating in part because of dedicated SMART members working on freight and passenger carriers.

FRA shares SMART's commitment to make sure rail operations are safe, for workers, rail passengers, and the public.

The FRA workforce is dedicated to it too, whether by enforcing compliance with regulatory violations or finding solutions to persistent challenges that fall outside the scope of rules.

We are also grateful for SMART Union participation and involvement in the RSAC, and partnership programs like SOFA, FAMES, C<sup>3</sup>RS.

These activities are important because they help us address things that fall outside regulations.

FRA also continues to focus on reducing the frequency and severity of train accidents, employee casualties, employee injuries as well as non-accident releases of hazardous materials, signal system false-proceeds and activation failures, and obviously highway-rail crossing collisions and trespass incidents.

After a pause over several years, FRA is carrying out systemwide audits of the Class I's.

Staff are also reviewing all Emergency Orders and Safety Advisories to identify things that need to be codified.

You need to know that we truly appreciate your insights and keeping us informed of things you see and hear, especially when reporting potentially unsafe conditions.

The FRA employees who perform inspections, audits, and investigations inform me of those concerns.

In addition, labor leaders routinely tell me and other FRA senior managers what issues you care about.

For example, workers tell us about railroads trying to do more with less without regard for the impact on employees.

With respect to staffing, we just issued a long-awaited proposed rule on train crew size.

The NPRM provides a solid justification for the continued presence of two crewmembers, while also permitting flexibility to railroads who can prove that operating in limited conditions with less than two crew can be done safely.

Since we're in the public comment period, I can't go into much more detail, but I know that SMART leadership will weigh in on the proposal in support of its members.

I also welcome SMART members to review the proposal and submit their own views and comments to the docket.

As FRA Administrator, I intend to work with you and a broad, diverse range of stakeholders to tackle issues of mutual importance and identify solutions that make our nation's railroads safer for all.

I want to hear from SMART leaders and members during this important time.

Despite the impasse affecting a new contract and continuing supply chain challenges, I'm still very optimistic about the future of rail. No matter what anyone says, you remain an indispensable part of that future.

As most of you know by now, under President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we've started laying the groundwork for unprecedented investments in passenger and freight rail.

With \$66 billion over the next five years along with \$36 billion in additional authorized funding over the same period, the infrastructure law positions rail to remain a central player in our transportation and economic future.

These dollars will support projects big and small to upgrade, repair or replace critical infrastructure nationwide. Such investments are focused on making things safer, more reliable, resilient, sustainable, and equitable.

Implementation of the infrastructure law does provide some opportunities to enhance worker conditions and labor protections as we make these funds available.

Back in June, FRA awarded nearly \$369 million in Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program funds to 46 projects in more than 30 states.

The next round of CRISI funding—which will be made available later this summer—will provide more than \$1 billion in funding.

That's three times as much money for projects that will make rail even more vital.

In the coming weeks, we will also announce FY21 Fed-State Partnership grant selections that fund needed rail projects championed by states.

Over the next five years, the infrastructure law will provide significantly more money not just for CRISI and the Partnership Program, but also newly created ones like the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program.

Through the Corridor Identification Program and Interstate Compacts grant programs, we will build a pipeline of projects that deliver more and better passenger rail service.

In addition to improving the daily lives of Americans, all the projects being funded by BIL investments are expected to generate thousands of good-paying union jobs.

As we forge ahead with new passenger and freight rail projects, the FRA understands the role SMART members continue to play in advancing a safe, modern, world-class transportation system.

I and my staff will continue to strive to be available to you, and to listen to priorities and your concerns.

We'll act promptly to correct problems within our purview and for matters that don't, lend our voice to bring about workable solutions.

With the unprecedented investments in the President's infrastructure law, I am confident that the future for rail and those contributing to its success is bright.

Thank you again for inviting me.