



Rail Passengers Association Fiscal Year 2026 Legislative Grant Request

Passenger rail programs created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) are already beginning to reshape America’s rail network, with the U.S. Department of Transportation investing nearly \$53 billion across 594 rail projects that will improve rail safety and expand passenger rail travel in 48 states, including 69 planning and development grants for passenger rail corridors across 44 states.

Congressional Oversight: *Rail Passengers* remains committed to working with Congress to ensure there is meaningful oversight on these newly expanded passenger rail programs and on Amtrak operations. **It is imperative that these funds are used to support programs in the manner laid out by Congress, and that State partners who have allocated local sources of funding to secure grant agreements are able to move forward with construction on these projects.** Delays in the obligation of funds for previously approved grants will cost local taxpayers through extended project construction timelines and increased costs for labor and materials. We believe strong Congressional oversight can help ensure that these rail projects move as quickly as the law allows through planning, review, design, and construction.

Support Operations and Administrative Capacity: IIJA funding can only be used for certain purposes and cannot replace Amtrak's annual appropriations. Providing sufficient FY26 funding is necessary to allow Amtrak to meet record levels of demand for rail service (find out more about ridership trends at RailPassengers.org/Ridership); perform annual maintenance and carry out core functions to avoid long-term deterioration of assets and services; and make targeted, high-priority investments for future expansion. ***Rail Passengers* is asking Congress to fully fund rail programs at the authorized levels established by the IIJA.**

	FY25 Enacted	FY26 IIJA Authorized
Amtrak	\$2,427 ML	\$4,400 ML
<i>Northeast Corridor</i>	\$1,141 ML	\$1,400 ML
<i>National Network</i>	\$1,286 ML	\$3,000 ML
Federal Railroad Administration	\$268 ML	\$279 ML
Federal-State Partnership for ICPR	\$0 ML	\$1,500 ML
CRISI Grants	\$100 ML	\$1,000 ML
Railroad Crossing Elimination Grants	\$0	\$500 ML
Restoration & Enhancement Grants	\$0	\$50 ML

Improve Amtrak Transparency and Oversight

Rail Passengers supports the Amtrak Transparency and [Accountability for Passengers and Taxpayers Act \(H.R.188\)](#) which will improve Amtrak increase transparency for taxpayers by requiring Amtrak’s Board of Directors to comply with the Government in the Sunshine Act, with key exceptions for contract negotiations, collective bargaining agreements, and matters involving the employment status of individual employees.

Holding Freight Railroads Accountable

On-Time Performance and Fairness for Passengers: Amtrak passengers have long been a “canary in the coal mine” for U.S. rail operations, with increasing freight-caused delays to Amtrak trains serving as a leading indicator of the decline in reliability and fluidity across our nation’s rail network. We’re asking Congress to apply pressure to host railroads to fulfill their statutory duty to dispatch Amtrak trains in a timely manner.

- In 2023, **15 of the 15 Amtrak long-distance routes operating over freight rail tracks did not meet the minimum threshold of acceptable service** established by the Federal Railroad Administration Metrics & Standards ($\geq 80\%$ Customer On-Time Performance).
- **State corridor trains are impacted too.** For instance, more than a third of passengers on the *Cascades*, operating between Seattle and Eugene, arrived late in 2023 due primarily to Host Railroad delays.
- **These delays have real costs.** Amtrak’s Inspector General estimated that if Amtrak trains were able to operate reliably without freight train interference, Amtrak could realize annual savings of \$41.9 million, and one-time savings of \$336 million by reducing equipment replacement needs. This money—provided by America’s passengers and taxpayers—could be invested in providing better service across the country.

Blueprint for Success in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization

Rail Passengers has outlined several proposals to build on the success of the rail programs established over the past surface transportation reauthorization cycles. However, the status quo simply isn’t good enough; the next reauthorization must include meaningful reforms to the environmental review and service development process which has led to lengthy delays and cost overruns. See RailPassengers.org/Blueprint for a full summary of our reauthorization priorities.

Sec. 1 - Reauthorize Core Rail Programs: Reauthorize the Amtrak National Network and Northeast Corridor Operations, Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program, Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program, Corridor Identification (CID) Program, Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grant Program, Next-Generation Equipment Committee (NGEC), Northeast Corridor Commission (NECC), and the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) at current levels. Our Association also supports the establishment of **Formula Distribution of Rail Funds to States** to increase State-level capacity and lower costs.

Sec. 2 - Implementing the Federal Railroad Administration’s Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study: If fully realized, the FRA’s Long-Distance Service Study (LDSS) represents a long-term infrastructure strategy that will extend the U.S. rail network to 39 million people that don’t currently have access to passenger rail, including 7 million people in rural communities. The LDSS represents a multi-decade effort similar to the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, and Congress should establish a **Long-Distance Service Working Group** capable of implementing this vision, building on the expertise and working relationships established during this study.

Sec. 3 Planning, Construction, and Procurement Policy Reforms: Congress should introduce a “shot clock” for Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments for intercity passenger rail projects. We also support the creation of a **National Equipment Pool**, federal standardization of project elements, mandating formalized cost transparency, and authorizing advance acquisition of railroad right-of-way.

For more details, visit RailPassengers.org/Leg.Resources

