



RailNation:DC 2021

September 2021

Rail Passengers applauds the work Congress has done on a bipartisan infrastructure bill. We look forward to working with elected officials to pass the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to rebuild America’s passenger train network.

1. Pass the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: *The Rail Passengers Association* urges Congress to **pass the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.**

While the IIJA is not perfect, it includes historic funding for passenger rail, with \$66 billion in guaranteed funding and another \$36 billion in authorized funding over the five-year span of the bill.

The IIJA also includes several key policy reforms to Amtrak that will make it more accountable to the public, including:

- **Amtrak’s Mission and Goals:** Amend Amtrak’s mission and goals to emphasize its role in providing service to rural communities and maximize the benefits of Federal investment (as opposed to minimizing costs).
- **Amtrak’s Board of Directors:** Revise composition of Amtrak’s Board of Directors to better ensure geographic representation across the Amtrak; requires annual engagement with the disability community, Amtrak employees and the general public.
- **Increasing Oversight of Intercity Services:** Require Amtrak to include information regarding any change or plans to change a route, frequency of service, or station stops in its annual Congressional reports.
- **Improved Oversight of Amtrak Spending:** Require Amtrak to provide a much greater level of detail on its spending in annual reports to Congress.
- **Daily Long-Distance Service Study:** Direct USDOT to study restoration of daily intercity rail passenger service along any discontinued Amtrak long-distance routes or three-times per week services.

Our country cannot afford to lose momentum on this historic infrastructure bill at the final moment.

2. Fund High-Speed Rail in the Budget Reconciliation: Unfortunately, the IIJA failed to address one key transportation sector: high-speed rail. Fortunately, the Budget Reconciliation provides an opportunity to address this oversight. *Rail Passengers* supports the House Transportation & Infrastructure title that **provide \$10 billion in dedicated high-speed rail funding in the Budget Reconciliation.**



High-speed rail provides a transformative solution to U.S. climate, pollution, and congestion challenges:

- Powered by electricity, high-speed trains can run on renewable energy.
- High-speed trains can move huge numbers of people efficiently; a proposed single high-speed rail line in California matching the capacity of six highway lanes, 91 airport gates and two new runways.
- Compared with highways, high-speed rail lines are a bargain. A study by the Washington State Department of Transportation found a high-speed rail line between Eugene, Oregon, and Vancouver, Canada, would cost \$42 billion while generating \$355 billion in economic benefits. By contrast, widening Interstate-5 between the cities by a single lane in each direction would cost \$108 billion while doing nothing to relieve congestion.
- High-speed rail hasn't been built in the U.S. for one simple reason: you get what you pay for. Since 1949, Congress has invested over \$2 trillion in highways and over \$777 billion in aviation. Meanwhile, Congress has provided roughly \$100 billion toward passenger rail, with just \$8 billion dedicated solely to high-speed rail development.

If we don't act to provide funding for high-speed rail now, the window may close for yet another generation.

3. Help Advance Local Projects: Upon final passage of the IIJA, *Rail Passengers* is committed to working with Congressional offices to ensure that underserved communities benefit from these new funding opportunities.

Rail Passengers has compiled a list of intercity passenger rail projects that could quickly money: RailPassengers.org/Projects.

IIJA introduces several new intercity passenger rail grant programs that emphasize new projection selection criteria, including:

- Anticipated positive economic and employment impacts, including development in areas near passenger stations;
- Benefits to rural communities;
- Whether the proposed project serves historically unconnected or under connected communities; and
- The effects on safety, greenhouse gas emissions, and resilience.

Given the fierce competition for limited funds, we're interested in coordinating with your office to ensure our communities are well positioned to submit competitive grant requests to future Notice of Funding Opportunities issued through the USDOT.