

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20590

*RE: The U.S. Office of Management and Budget and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
“Guidance on Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans Requested by Implementing The  
President’s ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ Workforce Optimization Initiative”*

Dear Secretary Duffy:

The undersigned 22 organizations are writing to you today in response to the memorandum issued by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to agency heads on February 26th. We’re dismayed to hear that one of the agencies being targeted for cuts is the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Several rail projects of national significance—many of which have already initiated construction or pre-construction activities—have been caught up in administrative and bureaucratic delays resulting from previous personnel cuts, compounded by department-wide reviews of previously approved rail grants. More cuts to FRA personnel will further delay work on passenger and freight rail projects, threatening the 2025 construction season at a time of increased economic fragility in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

The memorandum in question asserts that “tax dollars are being siphoned off to fund unproductive and unnecessary programs that benefit radical interest groups while hurting hard working American citizens.” This statement does not apply to personnel growth within the FRA, which has initiated hirings in direct response to a Congressional mandate to administer an influx of new rail funding—\$66 billion in advanced appropriations for discretionary rail grant programs, with another \$13 billion in rail funding provided through the annual Congressional appropriations process (*Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025*).

It is our understanding that the DOT is considering cuts that would return FRA staffing to pre-2021 levels; this would hamstring the administration of several critical programs, including the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program (FSP), Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program, Corridor Identification (CID) Program, Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grant Program, and the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program.

Rail money from the IIJA is already being put to work today, investing nearly \$53 billion across 594 projects that will improve rail safety and expand passenger rail travel in 48 states. Construction companies are laying track, boring tunnels, and building bridges. Equipment manufacturers have invested billions of private sector capital to upgrade their U.S. facilities to produce state-of-the-art rail cars. Companies up and down the supply chain are busy producing ties, ballast, signaling equipment, and forging and welding steel into bridge trusses and new rail. The IIJA is employing hard-working Americans and bringing prosperity to towns and cities across the country.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lucia Mutikani, “US weekly jobless claims post largest gain in five months”, *Reuters*, February 27, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/us-weekly-jobless-claims-rise-more-than-expected-2025-02-27/>.

The states, state-level agencies, and railroads need an efficient and responsive federal partner to ensure these projects are successful. We encourage you to preserve mission-critical personnel to avoid further delays in the administration of these passenger and freight projects.

Sincerely,

Rail Passengers Association  
Environmental Law & Policy Center  
Virginians for High Speed Rail  
Virginia Transit Association  
Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers  
New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers  
Texas Rail Advocates  
Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail  
Empire State Passengers Association  
High Speed Rail Alliance  
All Aboard Ohio  
Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association  
West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition  
All Aboard Wisconsin  
Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers  
Rail Passengers Association of California and Nevada  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
TrainRiders Northeast  
Missourians for Responsible Transportation  
Railtowns.org  
Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway Company  
All Aboard Arizona