

Amtrak and Midwest Partners Celebrate Federal Grants to Improve and Expand Passenger Rail in the Chicago Hub

CHICAGO – Amtrak and its Midwest partners have been awarded more than \$101 million to improve existing routes and advance plans to expand Amtrak service as part of CHIP, the Chicago Hub Improvement Program.

“At Amtrak, we are working with our partners to maximize Chicago's role as the central hub of Amtrak's National Network and position intercity passenger rail as an engine for improved mobility and economic growth,” said [Amtrak Board Chair Tony Coscia](#). “These grant awards propel us on that mission.”

Multiple grants [announced today](#) will go directly to Amtrak; others will support existing and potential partners, under the USDOT's Federal State Partnership (“Fed-State”) and Corridor Identification and Development (“Corridor ID”) programs.

“Amtrak ridership is soaring, and these grants will allow us to further invest in Chicago Union Station and improve our services across the Midwest that radiate from Chicago,” said [Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner](#). “CHIP will help transform intercity passenger rail in the region by expanding capacity, increasing reliability, and creating better access to our trains. We and our partners thank Administrator Bose and Secretary Buttigieg for their support and look forward to more investment in the future for this top-priority program for the nation.”

The Fed-State program provides funding for capital projects across the National Network that reduce the state of good repair backlog, improve performance, or expand or establish new intercity passenger rail service. Amtrak received two grants for Chicago Union Station totaling up to \$93.6 million.

These Fed-State grants will help improve the customer experience in Chicago for Amtrak and Metra commuter rail customers – a key CHIP goal -- by funding renovation and expansion of the station platforms, improving passenger access and capacity, bringing the platforms into compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards, and improving ventilation systems and air quality. This work also includes repurposing platforms designed for mail handling that have been unused since 2005, enabling their use for passengers and supporting long-term rail service expansion across the Midwest.

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The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) awarded up to \$500,000 in grant funding to all four Corridor ID applications Amtrak submitted, including one to study an increase in [Cardinal](#) train service to daily between Chicago and New York City. This route currently operates three-days-weekly via Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and the states of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana.

Corridor ID funding could support development of a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting related service development plans.

“Of the 69 corridors selected for the inaugural round of the Corridor ID program, at least 16 could result in new and enhanced service to and from Chicago,” said Amtrak VP Jeannie Kwon, who is leading CHIP. “More investments are critically needed to meet mobility needs both now and to support future service here in the Midwest.

“In terms of impact, no program is more important to expanding the future of services in the Midwest and improving reliability for Amtrak’s Long Distance trains that originate in Chicago,” Kwon added. “We are working with host railroads and other stakeholders to build partnership, consensus and support for future grant applications.”

This comprehensive intercity passenger rail planning and development program led by the FRA was created by the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) to help guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the United States and create a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for implementation.

As America’s Railroad, Amtrak is uniquely positioned to support the proposed expansion of intercity passenger rail across the many corridors identified by the FRA. This includes more than 52 years of experience connecting communities across America, as well as strong teams dedicated to Strategy, Planning & Accessibility, Capital Delivery and Service Delivery & Operations, with employees located across the United States.

“At the heart of the Midwest, Illinois sits in the center of our nation – serving as a major transportation hub for passengers and businesses alike, said [Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker](#). “Thanks to my administration’s landmark Rebuild Illinois capital plan, we’ve been hard at work to modernize our state’s railways and train stations – and now, with a federal investment of nearly \$94 million, Illinois is well on its way to creating the most robust, accessible, and connected railroad system in the country. I’m grateful to IDOT, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Biden Administration for coming together to help us realize our vision of a brighter future.”

“Chicago, often referred to as the crossroads of America, holds a unique position in the converging point for railroads that cross our nation. This significant federal investment is a strategic move to ensure our city remains not just a crossroads, but a thriving nexus that efficiently connects people, goods, and ideas, said [Illinois U.S. Senator Dick Durbin](#). It’s an acknowledgement that Union Station must adapt and innovate to cater to the evolving needs of our residents and the broader American landscape. I’m proud to have helped bring local officials, the State, Amtrak, and other stakeholders together to ensure there was a unified push for this project and look forward to keeping the heart of America’s rail network beating strong into the future.”

“Chicago is a national epicenter of passenger, commuter and freight rail, but with that comes congestion, bottlenecks and delays. Improvements to Chicago’s Union Station are critically important for improving rail service and reliability for folks in Chicago and throughout Illinois, but also for preventing delays and increasing safety for the more than 30 million riders across all the rail services that pass through Union Station each year, said [Illinois U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth](#). This announcement is a great start in working toward these improvements, but I’ll keep working to ensure we bring more funding into the Chicago Hub Improvement Program because this critical project isn’t just beneficial for Chicago and Illinois, it’s also a win for the Midwest and a win for our entire country.”

“Chicago’s Union Station is the centerpiece of passenger rail service in the Midwest, connecting people and places throughout our region. The project funding announced today under the Chicago Hub Improvement Program takes a major step in modernizing Union Station for a safer and more efficient future of passenger rail travel,” said [Illinois U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley](#). “As Ranking Member of the subcommittee that funds our nation’s railways, I’ll continue to work with my colleagues at the federal, state, and local levels to make Chicago’s rail service the envy of the nation.”

“I’m thrilled to welcome these historic investments in passenger rail to Illinois. By prioritizing investments in state of the art transportation infrastructure, the Biden-Harris administration is putting American families first, said [Illinois U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly](#). Our economy, our climate, and our entire communities will thrive with increased access to passenger rail.

“The FRA has a long history of investing in Chicago’s rail hub, including multiple grants to improve Chicago Union Station,” said [FRA Administrator Amit Bose](#). “Corridor planning activities announced today through FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program also stand to benefit Chicago and the Midwest, such as efforts to develop a series of projects to address key

bottlenecks and improve access and performance of the existing Midwest corridor network. FRA looks forward to working with state and regional leaders as well as Amtrak to advance these efforts and projects to ensure this vital rail hub is positioned for the future.”

More Reactions:

[Indiana U.S. Rep. André Carson](#): “I have long advocated for better intercity passenger rail in the Midwest through my work in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Rail Subcommittee. Today’s announcement is a monumental step forward to make Indianapolis better-connected than ever before. Daily service for the *Cardinal* route will make a positive difference for all the communities served, especially Indianapolis, the Crossroads of America – and it’s a change I’ve called for a number of years. These rail improvements, increases in service frequency, and a new proposed Corridor will provide smooth pathways for travel from Chicago to Indianapolis to Louisville. Amtrak opens the door for new people to visit, work, and enjoy all Indianapolis has to offer. The Midwest’s future is not complete without a strong passenger rail system, and I’ll keep working to provide strong and consistent funding to Amtrak.”

[Indiana Department of Transportation Director Mike Smith](#): “This is a first step toward expanding passenger rail in Indiana,” said INDOT Commissioner Mike Smith. “Receiving this funding allows us to gather essential information to make more informed decisions going forward.”

[Michigan U.S. Senator Gary Peters](#): “By investing in development of new and improved passenger rail service, we have an opportunity to transform how Michiganders travel across our state and region,” said Senator Peters. “I advocated for each of these MDOT projects because this funding will make rail transportation a more available and reliable option for travelers while spurring economic development.”

[Michigan U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow](#): “This investment will improve the reliability of our passenger trains so that people can count on more convenient schedules and trains that run on time. This is another investment in our state’s infrastructure that is long overdue that was made possible by our passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.”

[Michigan Department of Transportation Director Bradley Wieferich](#): “These grants will help the Michigan Department of Transportation develop and update the service development plans for the Amtrak *Pere Marquette*, *Blue Water*, and *Wolverine* routes and collaborate with the Ohio Rail Development Commission on the Detroit-Toledo-Cleveland corridor. We appreciate the work of our federal partners in Congress and the Federal Rail Administration in providing funds to help us identify areas in these rail corridors where we can make investments to improve reliability and reduce bottlenecks.”

[Minnesota Department of Transportation Commissioner Nancy Daubenger](#): “The Minnesota Department of Transportation is pleased to be recipients of these federal grants in order to move forward with significant passenger rail routes in our state. The proposed routes include the *North Coast Hiawatha*, *Northern Lights Express*, and the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago passenger train. Each of these will provide safe, accessible transportation options for Minnesotans. We are excited to continue working with our partners to get each of these fully operational.”

[Wisconsin U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin](#): “Passenger rail helps people get to work and school safely, boosts tourism and recreation, and grows our local economies, and I am proud to deliver funding to help expand it in Wisconsin. I voted for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to move our

economy forward and get Wisconsinites where they need to go efficiently and safely, and I am excited to see these plans for passenger rail move forward.”

[Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary Craig Thompson](#): “The long range WisDOT rail plan was the result of listening to the public, and community leaders and many others have asked for passenger trains to reach more of our communities. “We will work closely with all our stakeholders to explore this possibility and we will also continue to look at other proposed improvements that are aligned with our long-range plans.”

About Amtrak[®]

For more than 52 years, Amtrak has connected America and modernized train travel. Offering a safe, environmentally efficient way to reach more than 500 destinations across 46 states and parts of Canada, Amtrak provides travelers with an experience that sets a new standard. Book travel, check train status, access your eTicket and more through the [Amtrak app](#). Learn more at [Amtrak.com](#) and connect with us on [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About Amtrak’s Historic Infrastructure Investments

Amtrak is leading a new era of passenger rail, investing in modern trains, enhanced stations, new tunnels and bridges, and other critical infrastructure upgrades. We’re enhancing the customer experience across the country, improving safety and reliability, driving economic development, reducing trip times, expanding capacity, advancing accessibility and promoting a more sustainable future.

Traditionally known as a passenger rail operator, today Amtrak is also a major construction company executing the largest capital program in Amtrak’s history. With over \$50 billion of capital investments in planning and development, these historic investments are made possible by the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) enacted in 2021.

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