

Rail-Related Funding Programs

The \$1.2 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), signed into law in November 2021, reauthorized the nation's surface transportation programs for five years as well as making record public infrastructure investments. This funding also recognized the importance of rail and its role in building a more resilient and sustainable infrastructure network. Below is an overview of the funding opportunities related to railroads and updates stemming from the BIL.

Grade Crossing Safety & Improvement Projects

Grade Crossing Elimination Program*

The newly established Grade Crossing Elimination Program will provide \$5.5 billion over five years, \$600 million annually, to state and local applicants for grade crossing projects that improve the safety and mobility of people and goods. Eligible projects include grade crossing elimination or separation, track relocation, improvement or installation of protective devices, or other means to improve safety. The program also includes a 3% set-aside for planning projects and a 0.25% set-aside for crossing safety and education programs.

Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130 Program)

Provides \$245 million per fiscal year for formula grants for grade crossing projects. Additional reforms from the BIL include: increasing the maximum federal share for projects to 100%; increasing incentive payments for crossing closures from \$7,500 to \$100,000; enabling replacement of functionally obsolete warning devices; and permitting states to utilize funding to reduce trespassing fatalities and injuries.

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)*

The new program supports the DOT's goal of zero deaths and serious injuries on U.S. roadways by funding the development and implementation of safety action plan projects and strategies. It will provide \$5 billion in appropriated funds over the next 5 years to state and local applicants. Roadway intersections with other modes of transportation (e.g., at-grade highway rail crossings) are eligible activities.

Rail & Multimodal

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)

CRISI is for projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of freight and intercity passenger rail service. It's the only federal funding for which short line railroads are directly eligible and it's particularly helpful for them in tackling projects like track rehabilitation, repairing or replacing aging bridges, improving grade crossings, or eliminating bottlenecks. The BIL allocated \$1 billion annually for the program, up from \$360 million in FY21. It also expanded eligibility to include projects that foster rail innovation, reduce emissions, or improve pedestrian safety along railroad tracks.

Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA)

INFRA is designed to fund highway and rail projects of national significance that support jobs and local economies, including Intermodal or freight projects and rail-highway grade crossing separation. The program received \$1.64 billion for FY22-24 under the BIL and the DOT also announced that a new point of evaluation for project proposals will be how they address climate change, environmental justice and racial equity.

National Culvert Removal, Replacement, & Restoration Grant*

The BIL established a culvert removal, replacement and restoration grant program for projects that improve or restore fish passage for certain fish, with priority given to species that are endangered or at risk of becoming endangered, or projects that address fresh-water runoff that impacts certain marine life. The funding, \$800 million annually, is available to states, units of local government, or Indian Tribes.

National Infrastructure Project Assistance (Megaprojects or MEGA)*

The MEGA program will support large, complex projects that are difficult to fund by other means and likely to generate national or regional economic, mobility, or safety benefits. Freight rail projects are eligible. The BIL appropriated \$5 billion for FY22-26.

Port Infrastructure Development

This \$2 billion DOT program funds investment in the modernization and expansion of U.S. ports to remove supply chain bottlenecks, ensure long-term competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability while reducing impacts to the environment and neighboring communities. The BIL expanded the program's eligibilities to include projects that reduce or eliminate port-related pollutants or greenhouse gas emissions, including the purchase of electric vehicle charge or hydrogen refueling infrastructure for locomotives that service a port and related grid upgrades.

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)*

Formerly known as TIGER or BUILD, RAISE is one of the few DOT discretionary programs for which regional and local governments can directly compete for multimodal transportation funding. It will receive \$1.5 billion annually and fund projects judged by their impact on safety, sustainability, quality of life, economic competitiveness, state of good repair, innovation, and partnership between the public and private sectors.

Rural Surface Transportation Grant*

This new program supports highway and bridge projects that increase connectivity, improve safety, and facilitate the movement of goods and people. Within the eligibility of a highway safety improvement projects, it includes the construction and improvement of a railway-highway grade crossing safety feature, such as protective devices or a grade separation. A rural area is defined as one that is outside an urbanized area with a population over 200,000.

Intercity Passenger Rail

Corridor Identification and Development (ID) Program*

The new \$1.8 billion program establishes a pipeline of passenger rail projects ready for funding, with the goal of improved coordination and faster implementation. Eligible projects include new or enhanced intercity passenger rail routes of less than 750 miles, service restoration on a former route, and increased service frequency of a long-distance intercity passenger rail route. While the program only funds pre-construction development and planning, the selection of corridors will reflect the FRA's interest in advancing them to operation. Amtrak, states, regional passenger rail authorities, regional planning organizations, political subdivisions of a state, and Indian Tribes are eligible applicants.

Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail

Formerly known as the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair, this program funds capital projects to repair, replace, or rehabilitate qualified railroad assets to reduce the state of good repair backlog and improve intercity passenger rail performance. The BIL broadened eligibility to include projects that expand or establish new intercity passenger rail routes, improve intercity rail service, or designate NEPA-related activities an eligible use of funds. Appropriates \$7.2 billion per FY, setting aside not more than \$4.8 billion per fiscal year for projects on the NEC.

Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program

This FRA program provides operating assistance grants for initiating, restoring, or enhancing intercity passenger rail transportation to applicants including states or a group of states, public agencies, political subdivisions of a state, or any rail carrier in partnership with another described applicant. The BIL extended the amount of time the program can provide funds to support a route from three to six years.

Transportation Research & Development

Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART)*

SMART will provide competitive grants to states, local governments, and tribes for demonstration projects focused on advanced smart city or community technologies to improve transportation efficiency and safety. Grants may be used on projects related to coordinated automation, connected vehicles, intelligent/sensor-based infrastructure, systems integration, commerce delivery and logistics, drones, and smart grid technologies.

* New Program

