

Rail-Related Funding Programs

Recent funding initiatives prioritize modernizing freight and passenger networks to reduce emissions, strengthen rural and regional connectivity, eliminate grade crossings, and expand capacity for future growth. With an emphasis on community impact, safety, and project delivery, federal agencies are aligning rail funding with broader goals for a cleaner, safer, and more competitive transportation system. Below is an overview of the funding opportunities related to railroads currently available from the federal government.

Grade Crossing Safety & Improvement Projects

Railroad Crossing Elimination Program (RCE)

The RCE program funds 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 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (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 BIL established the SS4A competitive grant program with \$5 billion in appropriated funds over five years, 2022-2026. The SS4A program funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives through grants to prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries. Almost \$2 billion is still available for future funding rounds.

Rail & Multimodal

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)

Formerly known as TIGER or RAISE, BUILD 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.

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, and also expanded eligibility to include projects that foster rail innovation, reduce emissions, or improve pedestrian safety along railroad tracks.

Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA)

This USDOT-wide program provides funding for highway and freight projects of national or regional significance. USDOT seeks INFRA applications for projects that apply innovative technology, delivery, or financing methods with proven outcomes to deliver projects in a cost-effective manner. INFRA was previously known as the Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies (FASTLANE) Grant Program (FY 2016).

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 supports 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 Program (PIDP)

The PIDP is a discretionary grant program administered by the Maritime Administration (MARAD). It funds efforts by ports and industry stakeholders to improve port and related freight infrastructure to meet the nation's freight transportation needs and ensure our port infrastructure can meet anticipated growth in freight volumes.

Rural Surface Transportation Grant

This program supports highway, bridge, or tunnel 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

Corridor ID 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.

National Railroad Partnership (NRP) Program

Formerly known as the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail, the NRP program provides funding for capital projects that reduce the state of good repair backlog, improve performance, or expand or establish new intercity passenger rail (IPR) service, including privately operated intercity passenger rail service. New priorities for the program include emphasizing grade crossing projects and supporting projects that focus on the American family and ensuring a more seamless travel experience, such as adding mothers' rooms, expanding waiting areas, adding new family restrooms, creating children's play areas, and other projects improving overall travel for families in U.S. intercity passenger rail stations.

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 provides 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.