

RAILCET INTELLIGENCE REPORT #39

APTA Intercity Passenger Rail Steering Committee

October Meeting Highlights

To: RAILCET Team
From: Ray B. Chambers
Date: October 27, 2025

The Steering Committee was opened by Chairman Chad Edison who provided a summary of the APTA meetings in Minnesota. The highlight was a presentation by new FRA Administrator David Fink. His focus was safety. Fink called the California HSR and Baltimore Maglev projects “boondoggles,” but pledged to press forward with Corridor ID projects. He notes 35% of FRA staff are idle due to the government closure. Progress has been slowed. One goal is to move the more developed projects ahead of the less developed.

Amtrak Board Member Elaine Clegg participated in the Steering Committee and supported Edison’s analysis of where we are. She stated she was quite pleased that CID seems to have dedicated support within the FRA. She concurred there appears to be a change of policy introducing greater flexibility where the more developed projects may be able to skip steps and move ahead of the less developed CID projects. Anna Lynnn Smith of HDR said stakeholders should support this concept. Clegg stated with so many projects on the table (nearly 70) the difficulty will be in sequencing. Exactly where is each project? And how much money is going to be needed to progress each?

Remi Work, the FRA Rail Industry Analyst for Infrastructure Programs, made a report to the Steering Committee. She stated that Administrator Fink supports expanding passenger rail. She said he intends to implement “new branding” which will be called the “National Railroad Partnership” or NRP. This will essentially be a restructured and expanded funding program, with the core being the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail as well as other rail grant programs. The rebranding signals several policies and programmatic shifts toward enterprise as well as rail services competition under the new FRA leadership. This is consistent with the intercity passenger rail reforms being proposed by AIPRO and RAILCET.

APTA’s Art Guzzetti discussed the 200th Anniversary of American Railroad which falls in 2026. The event in 1826 that launched American railroad was the chartering and construction of

the Granite Railway in Quincy, Massachusetts. Chartered on January 21, 1826, the Granite Railway was designed to transport granite from the quarries in Quincy to the wharf on the Neponset River, primarily for the construction of the Bunker Hill Monument. This railway is widely recognized as America's first chartered and operational railroad, marking the functional beginning of the railroad era in the United States. The AAR will be leading the celebration. Multiple events are being planned. The B&O Museum in Baltimore will hold a major celebration on July 4, 2026. I am in discussion with Art Guzzetti APTA suggesting APTA could take a lead in celebrating the first passenger operation which was chartered in 1827.

There were excellent presentations by Joe Black (WSP) and Paul DesRocher (CDOT) on the Colorado Front Range Project and the Colorado Mountain Rail Project. The Front Range (180 miles with a population of 5 million) expects to complete CID Step 2 by the end of this year. The Union Pacific and Burlington Northern are participating in the planning, but there is no formal access agreement at this time.

Mountain Rail is a state led initiative but not a CID project. It is 230 miles using existing UP rights of way. The Union Pacific officially supports the Colorado Mountain Rail Project, having signed a landmark 25-year lease and access agreement with the State of Colorado. The deal enables passenger rail service through the Moffat Tunnel corridor from Denver to mountain communities. Mountain Rail is not a CID project but is following CID guidelines. Both projects have secured a state revenue stream. Both projects are open to operator and services competition.

Next Meeting: Friday, December 5, 2025, 12:00 noon ET.