

**Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)**

**Plan for Increasing the Public Availability
of Information about Agency Operations**

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Executive Summary

This plan responds to a March 20, 2015 memorandum from the Department of Transportation (DOT) General Counsel and Chief Information Officer that requires each Operating Administration (OA) to develop a specific action plan for making “in demand” information publicly available on an ongoing basis.

The Deputy Chief Information Officer/ Director of Information Technology was appointed as the Executive Champion for the development of Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA)’s action plan. He convened a cross-functional team of program owners and program support personnel that represent the wide array of missions and functions performed within FRA.

The FRA already maintains a variety of web-based data available to the public, including 40 years of historical safety data, interactive maps of railways, and thousands of searchable documents, to provide the public with effective and practical means for monitoring and assessing the status and performance of the national railways. The FRA seeks to further increase the availability of departmental data through the release of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request logs, further release of Congressional reports and testimony, and more, in order to improve the accountability and transparency of the Department to employees, Congress, and the public.

1.0 Understanding Data in Demand

1.1 Review of Existing Practices

The following are several examples of current data releases that have made FRA more efficient and/or demonstrated responsiveness to a demonstrated need for information.

The FRA’s eLibrary (<https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Find>) provides a wealth of Agency documentation, containing over 5,000 documents searchable by date, subject, and type. These publicly available documents include historical documentation from 1967 through 2015, including:

- Standards;
- Plans;
- Policies;
- Manuals;
- Fact sheets;
- Press releases;
- Reference materials;
- And other reports.

This set of documentation is easily filtered for improved access, as it contains well-managed metadata to improve the ease of use. This dataset is a highlight of the FRA’s current efforts to provide the public with data to ensure accessibility and accountability.

The Rail Network Development webpage includes a map created using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) (<http://fragis.fra.dot.gov/GISFRASafety/>) which allows users to view and print precise maps of passenger rail, freight stations, grade crossings, and more in an interactive

interface. This provides transparency to the public regarding the location and network of the railways across the U.S.

The FRA's Office of Safety Analysis publishes data and statistics on national railroad safety (<http://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/OfficeofSafety/Default.aspx>), making it easily accessible to the public to view, evaluate, and assess 40 years of historical data, including train miles, employee hours worked, yard switching miles, number of passengers transported, and total passenger miles travelled. This page also includes reports on highway and rail crossings, Employee on Duty safety reports, and accident reports. Data, queries, and reports are updated multiple times per year, and updates are tracked and reported in the 'what's new' section of the website, clearly indicating to the user how the data is maintained. This page is a valuable asset to the public, private, and non-profit sector, as it serves as the only dataset of its caliber on national railways.

FRA also publishes both open and closed waiver requests from companies seeking waivers to President Obama's 2009 'Buy America' initiative on its Buy America webpage (<https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0185>). This initiative encourages companies to buy from domestic suppliers. By publishing both open and closed waiver requests, and enabling the public to leave comments through a simple web-based form, the FRA bolsters transparency, and encourages public discourse.

1.2 Improving Current Practices

FRA offices identifies information/data in demand for posting by regularly reviewing (a) web analytics for its various web pages, (b) FOIA logs, (c) public, press, and congressional inquiries to Public Affairs, Governmental Affairs, and program offices, and (d) any other input from stakeholders.

The FRA will continue to expand the availability of Agency data through several initiatives outlined below, including increasing availability of Congressional reports and testimony, FOIA request logs, and further development of the FOIA electronic reading room. Other options for expanded transparency will be explored, including publishing further information on grants funding, and enforcement reports.

To ensure the continued relevance of public information made available on the FRA website, FRA's Open Data Working Group will meet at least monthly to keep this information current and to review the progress on the new initiatives below.

The FRA's Open Data Working Group will assign each of the current and new initiatives to a subcommittee of no fewer than two (2) and no more than five (5) committee members. Subcommittees will each provide the Working Group with a status report at the monthly meetings.

2.0 Meeting Mandatory Posting Requirements

2.1 Congressional Reports

FRA publishes Congressional reports using the eLibrary, including reports from as far back as 1973. FRA will continue to identify Congressional reports to be posted within the eLibrary. The reports will also be linked from the Legislative & Regulations home page within one (1) month of finalizing, and will be available by subject matter.

2.2 Congressional Testimony

FRA also publishes testimony using the eLibrary, where over 70 transcripts are currently housed and readily accessible to the public. The testimony in the eLibrary is provided not only from the FRA Administrator, but also from the FRA Chief Safety Officer and other FRA officials. Other ‘significant’ testimony is published by the DOT’s Office of the Secretary (OST) at <http://testimony.ost.dot.gov/>. The FRA Open Data Working Group will review the process for publishing testimony, and will continue to identify testimony to be published.

2.3 Freedom of Information Act Request Logs

FRA makes it easy for the public to make a request under FOIA through a dedicated FOIA Requester Service Center. FRA will post a log of its FOIA requests on (at least) an annual basis. The FOIA logs will be posted in FRA’s Electronic Reading Room under Frequently Requested Records (<https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0388>). FRA’s log of FOIA requests received in Fiscal Year 2015 will be posted by **June 30, 2016**.

2.4 Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room

FRA’s process for ensuring that statutorily-mandated FOIA Electronic Reading Room records are current, using four categories including “frequently requested records”, as outlined in 5 U.S.C. § 552, includes:

1. Producing a total inventory of historical FOIA Requests starting from FY2016
2. Selecting a pilot set of requests and responses
3. Scrubbing PII from the selected set of requests and responses
4. Publishing the scrubbed set to FRA’s website

3.0 Considering Additional Items for Posting

3.1 Budget Information

The FRA currently posts its yearly budget estimates, highlights, and performance plans, Annual Performance Reports, Agency Financial Reports, and Strategic Plans on its budget office site, at <http://www.transportation.gov/mission/budget/dot-budget-and-performance-documents>. This link, as well as specific links to the FY 2015 budget estimates, FY 2016 budget estimates, and 2016 budget highlights will be posted on FRA’s Open Data Webpage, for improved ease of access to the public. Additionally, as the Budget Office works to comply with the new DATA Act requirements, the team will work with the Open Data Working Group to assess if further information can be or should be incorporated in this effort.

3.2 Annual Enforcement Reports

FRA posts its annual enforcement reports in its eLibrary. These reports provide valuable data on FRA's inspection and enforcement actions. Statistics offered include the number of inspection reports, defects, and recommended violations taken against industry, railroads, and subsets Class I, Class II, and Class III railroads, as well as the individual Class I freight railroads and Amtrak. Violation information is aggregated by discipline and Violation Type. The reports also provide the dollar value of penalties assessed and settlement amounts for individual railroads.

These reports are available through a number of options: (1) searching for "Annual Enforcement Report" in the eLibrary, (2) selecting the *Annual Enforcement Report* check box under *Enforcement & Litigation* in the *Document Type* sub-menu, or (3) by directly going to the following URL: (https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Find#p1_z5_1EA).

The team will look into the possibility of elaborating on these reports, including releasing aggregated fatality information, accident reports, and other information on a more frequent basis.

4.0 Protecting Sensitive Information from Release

FRA follows the DOT Privacy Risk Management Order 1351.18, and the DOT Departmental Data Release Policy Order 1352.34 to comply with the Privacy Act, Trade Secrets Act, and other Federal legislation to prevent private, privileged, or other sensitive data from being posted on its website. FRA applies a policy of openness when considering that information to post, balancing this against the requirement to protect privacy, confidentiality and national security.

All other information posted to the web is currently reviewed by the office of Public Affairs. As more data is identified to be published, this office will work closely with FRA's IT Security and Privacy office to ensure effective and efficient processing for Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and of Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI).

5.0 New Initiatives

Following is a description of a new information and/or data release that will make FRA more efficient, results in a new disclosure or significantly improves current disclosure, and is responsive to a demonstrated need for the information.

The FRA occasionally assigns a task force to key program projects, initiatives, or special actions that require research, technical evaluation, investigations, forecasting, or other analysis. The task forces' objectives are to provide information or recommendations to enable top management to make important decisions. The task force action items, progress, and outcomes would be useful resources for the public to have when seeking special actions being initiated. This information will be posted on the FRA website as they become available throughout the year.

6.0 Conclusion

The Federal Railroad Administration is dedicated to the principles of transparency, accountability, and reliability. As an Agency, FRA continually strives to ensure the public is informed on its performance in order to ensure efficient and effective programming. The Agency

is leading the way in some areas of transparency, including using cutting-edge technology such as Geographic Information Systems to enable the public to view precise and interactive maps of the railways, and by managing and publishing 40 years' worth of safety data to enable Congress, academics, and the general public to easily assess Agency performance and efficiency.

As we continue to pursue the ideals of complete transparency and accountability, the Agency will work to systematically review each programming area to identify data that may prove valuable to the community.