



# Summary of Federal Railroad Administration Provisions

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) mission is to ensure the safe, reliable, and efficient rail transportation of people and goods for a strong America, now and in the future. Unfortunately, the growth of our economy and population is outpacing our level of investment in the nation's surface transportation infrastructure, creating a situation that, if left unresolved, could leave us less competitive and failing to meet the needs of the traveling public. As the investment gap for rail has been even more pronounced in recent decades, FRA is focused on strategically maintaining current rail services and infrastructure, expanding and improving the rail network to accommodate growing travel and freight demand, and providing leadership in national and regional system planning and development.

The **GROW AMERICA Act** supports this mission with predictable, dedicated investments that enhance safety and modernize our rail infrastructure to meet growing market demand, while promoting innovation and ensuring transparency and accountability. The **Act** will invest \$29 billion over six years to improve rail safety and invest in a National High-Performance Rail System, as states and local communities need the certainty of sustained funding to make the transportation investments necessary to improve our infrastructure and support our economic growth. The **Act** also builds on current investments to vastly improve the system in areas ranging from Positive Train Control (PTC) implementation to enhancing flexibility in financing programs that will better enable the rehabilitation of aging infrastructure.

## New Programs

**Establishes New Amtrak Grants:** Over many years, existing capital and operating programs have focused on maintaining the legacy rail system on an annual basis. The **GROW AMERICA Act** will establish the Current Passenger Rail Service grant program to provide a longer-term view toward ensuring existing passenger rail assets and services are maintained in good, working condition. The grants will be oriented around Amtrak's main business lines, including the Northeast Corridor, State Corridors, Long-Distance Routes, and National Assets. (Section 9102)

**Establishes Rail Service Improvement Program:** Ridership on passenger rail is at an all-time high-- last year a record 31.6 million passengers travelled on Amtrak. As the nation's population is set grow by 100 million people by the year 2050, getting to a destination safely and without delay will become all the more critical. The **GROW AMERICA Act** will establish the Rail Service Improvement Program, which will provide competitive grants to drive development of high-performing passenger rail networks. This will include funding for the implementation of PTC— technology designed to stop trains to avert collisions— for commuter railroads, support for the mitigation of adverse impacts associated with rail operations in local communities, upgrades for short-line freight operations, and local and regional planning efforts. (Section 9102)

**Forges New Partnerships through Regional Rail Development Authorities (RRDA):** The nation requires seamless, intermodal transportation networks in order to move people and goods efficiently and effectively—and achieving that goal requires improved transportation-related coordination among federal, state, and local entities. To achieve these goals, the **GROW AMERICA Act** will authorize DOT to establish RRDA in consultation with state governors. RRDA will have the power to

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plan for and undertake regional corridor development activities and be an eligible recipient of certain grants. (Section 9201)

## Changes to Existing Programs

***Enhances the RRIF Program:*** The RRIF program makes financing available to acquire, improve, rehabilitate intermodal or rail equipment or facilities, refinance outstanding debt, or develop or establish new intermodal or railroad facilities. In an effort to make Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) more accessible to regional and short line railroads, the **GROW AMERICA Act** enhances the program by allowing FRA to subsidize some of the costs of these loans to borrowers. (Section 1403)

***Revamps Amtrak Business and Capital Planning:*** In addition to restructuring Amtrak funding around lines of business, the **GROW AMERICA Act** requires Amtrak to engage in annual five-year operating and capital planning to focus on the long-term needs of its business lines. These plans will be developed with close FRA coordination, and will directly inform annual budget requests. Capital asset plans will describe investment priorities and implementation strategies and identify specific projects to address the backlog of state-of-good-repair needs, recapitalization/ongoing maintenance needs, upgrades to support service enhancements, and business initiatives with a defined return on investment. (Section 9103)

***Advances Safety Research:*** Building on previous successes in safety risk reduction and improved safety culture, the **GROW AMERICA Act** authorizes additional funding for research and development projects. The funds will also be used to increase the domestic content of new rail vehicles and allow their safety performance to be tested at FRA's facility. The funds will also expand research programs at universities, which will help address the urgent industry-wide need for qualified railroad professionals. (Section 9105)

***Strengthens National, Regional, and State Plans:*** The **GROW AMERICA Act** further defines and provides requirements for a National Rail Development Plan and Regional Rail Development Plans. These plans are necessary to provide a long-range blueprint for proceeding with passenger and freight rail investments in a market-based, cost-effective manner. In addition, the **Act** revises the state rail plan requirements from previous legislation. (Sections 9301, 9302)

***Implements Positive Train Control:*** To fully implement PTC, the backbone of the next generation of rail safety, the **GROW AMERICA Act** establishes clear milestones for PTC implementation, allows for the discretion to provide extensions beyond the current statutory implementation deadline of December 31, 2015, and assists publicly-funded commuter rail agencies to implement PTC systems, by providing \$3 billion over six years for commuter railroads to support integration. (Section 9402)

***Reforms Hours of Service Rules and Mitigates Noise Emissions:*** To improve the predictability of work schedules for railroad operating employees and prevent operator fatigue, the **GROW AMERICA Act** grants FRA full rulemaking authority to replace outdated hours-of-service laws with scientifically-based regulations. (Section 9403) Further, the **Act** grants FRA the authority to regulate noise emissions, currently a patchwork of incompatible standards, in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency. (Section 9407)