

PASSENGER RAIL PRIORITIES PROGRAM (PRPP) FACT SHEET

In January 2023, the MPOAC Freight & Rail Committee (FRC) adopted a framework establishing a program for identifying MPO passenger rail priorities. Like the successful Freight Priorities Program, the PRPP follows an annual cycle that calls for projects, verifies eligibility, and promotes MPO priorities for FDOT consideration as part of an annual list of projects.

This factsheet provides guidance for a successful application.



What do we mean by Passenger Rail?

49 U.S. Code § 24102 defines intercity rail passenger transportation as rail passenger transportation, except commuter rail passenger transportation. The PRPP recognizes short and long-distance passenger rail:

Short-Distance Intercity Passenger Rail – intercity passenger trains serving cities under 750 miles apart.

Long-Distance Intercity Passenger Rail – intercity passenger trains serving large cities greater than 750 miles apart.



What funding is available to plan, build, and operate?

Florida Rail Enterprise (FRE) – a State-legislated program within FDOT, coordinates how Florida develops and operates publicly funded passenger rail systems. FRE has about \$60 million annually in state funds to support operations, maintenance, and planning of rail systems. FDOT Districts hold an annual call for projects requesting FRE funding support.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) – oversees federal discretionary grants to fund corridor development, service plans, and capital projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of passenger rail systems. Funding follows federal allocation to competitive grants based on spending authorizations like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA).

Amtrak – receives federally appropriated funds administered annually by FRA to support capital projects, maintenance activities, debt service payments, and operating expenses on the national network. IIJA advanced \$50 million in annual funding for competitive Restoration and Enhancement Grants to initiate, restore, or enhance intercity passenger rail transportation.

Submitting priorities to the PRPP organizes MPO-led planning efforts and serves as a unified pipeline of potential priority projects for FDOT to consider when advancing intercity passenger rail systems in Florida.



Completing the Application

The Pilot PRPP is a Microsoft Word-based application. Input from the Pilot and training workshop will inform the development of a future web-based application.

The Application has two sections: General Project Information and Project Screening.

General Project Information – Builds a profile for the project, including contact information, project type, estimated costs, location, whether it was previously identified as part of a plan or study, and if it relates to an existing FDOT-identified passenger rail corridor.

Project Screening – Determines project eligibility into the annual PRPP list and categorizes submitted priorities by project type, project elements, requested actions, and how they relate to the goals of the Florida State Rail Plan.



How do we know if our Project is eligible?

Passenger rail priorities can be generated organically from existing plans or studies or are the result of Board-driven discussions on how to improve travel options within an MPO's planning area. There are five criteria for determining eligibility when submitting to the PRPP:

- Documented** in an Existing Transportation Plan or Study*
- Connects** at least two major metropolitan areas
- Has Support** from Railroad Owners & Operators
- Includes** Total Project Cost and Funding Request
- Identifies** Operations & Maintenance Financial Support

*Submissions for a planning study or service plan are also eligible project types.



Upcoming Training Opportunities

Training is available to field questions and solicit feedback for the PRPP. A virtual workshop will be held on November 7, 2023. Email ntorres@whitehousegroup.com to register.