America’s Rail System

Class I Freight Railroads:
Safe, Efficient, & Green Freight Movement

Short Line Rail:
Freight Rail’s First and Last Mile

Commuter Rail:
Taking America to Work

Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail:
Connecting the Nation

High Speed Rail:
The Future of Intercity Passenger Transportation
Class I Freight Railroads: Safe, Efficient, & Green Freight Movement

- 7 Class I Railroads, operating
- 140,000 Miles of Track
- 154,000 Workers Employed
- 1.5 trillion+ ton-miles shipped annually
- Over $12 billion in capital expenditures in 2011

America’s freight railroads operate the safest, most affordable, efficient and environmentally sound rail system in the world. Freight railroads have played a transformational role in America’s development, revolutionizing transportation and triggering this country’s economic development for more than 175 years. Today, freight railroads operate over a network of more than 140,000 miles and serve nearly every industrial, wholesale, retail and resource-based sector of the U.S. economy. Every rail job supports another 4.5 jobs somewhere else. Freight rail carries 43 percent of intercity freight – more than any other mode of transportation – and hauls one-third of the country’s exports. Moving freight by rail takes trucks off the road and produces great public benefits such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and easing highway congestion. All Class I freight railroads are privately owned and operate on infrastructure they have built, maintained and grown almost entirely with private capital. Since 1980, freight railroads have invested $480 billion maintaining and modernizing America’s rail system. Major freight railroads plan to spend a record $12 billion in private capital in 2011.

How the Network Works
Class I railroads own, maintain, operate and pay for their own infrastructure.

Outside of the Northeast Corridor, Class I-owned track hosts much of Amtrak’s intercity passenger rail operation and in some circumstances also hosts commuter rail operations.
Short Line Rail: *Freight Rail’s First and Last Mile*

- 572 Short Lines, operating
- 51,584 Miles of Track
- 19,422 Workers Employed
- 12.1 Million Carloads Shipped Annually
- Short lines operate at least 25% of the rail network in 30 states

Today’s short line freight railroad industry (Class II and III railroads) is largely the product of deregulation launched by the 1980 Staggers Act. The United States Congress believed that it was better to enable local entrepreneurs to save light density branch lines than it was to continue down the same regulatory path and force those lines to be abandoned.

Short lines have grown from 8,000 miles of track in 1980 to more than 50,000 miles today. The importance of short lines lies not only in their size and total market share, but in who and where they serve. For large areas of the country and particularly for small town rural America, short line rail service is the only connection to the national railroad network. For the small businesses and farmers in those areas, the ability to take a 25-car train 75 miles to the nearest Class I interchange is just as important as the Class I’s ability to attach that block of traffic to a 100-car unit train and move it across the country.

**How the Network Works**

Class II and III railroads own, maintain, and operate their own infrastructure. Short line railroads act as the feeder and distribution system for the national freight rail network.

Short lines also occasionally host intercity passenger rail and commuter rail operations.
Commuter Rail: *Taking America to Work*

- 28 commuter rail agencies
- 30,000 employees
- 472 million trips per year
- 37 million passenger miles every week day
- 31 mph vehicle average

Commuter rail provides high-speed congestion free travel from distant suburbs to the business areas of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas. There are over 6,600 commuter rail vehicles spread across the nation’s 28 commuter rail agencies. Commuter railroads invest over $2.7 billion annually in capital upgrades, with the largest portions going towards fixed guideway renewal and rolling stock procurement.

A single commuter switching his or her commute to public transportation can reduce a household’s carbon emissions by 10%, or up to 30% if he or she eliminates a second car. When compared to other household actions that limit CO₂, taking public transportation can be 10 times more effective in reducing this harmful greenhouse gas.

Riding public transportation such as commuter rail enables a commuter to save over $9,000 annually. As gas prices remain high and the U.S. economy remains fragile, these savings are crucial to middle class households. For almost two million commuters every week day, commuter rail is how America gets to work.
Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail: Connecting the Nation

- 305 trains every day, operating
- 21,100 route miles
- 50% of daily trains exceed 90mph
- 29 million riders per year
- Ridership up 36% since 2000

Intercity passenger rail service in the U.S. is primarily provided by Amtrak, a corporation established by Congress in 1970 to take over passenger rail services that private railroad companies were previously required to operate. Today, Amtrak runs 305 weekday trains over 21,100 route-miles, mostly in collaboration with other railroads - 70% of train-miles run on other railroads, while Amtrak owns 363 miles of the 457 mile Northeast Corridor (NEC) and 97 miles of track in Michigan. Amtrak serves 46 states and 3 Canadian provinces, carrying nearly 29 million riders in 2010. Amtrak recovers 76% of its operating costs out of ticket revenue, with the remainder coming from the Federal government and fifteen states that provide operating and capital support for Amtrak corridor service. Amtrak passengers use 21% fewer BTUs per mile than traveling by car, and 17% fewer BTUs per mile less than those traveling by air on average.

Amtrak’s State partners include California, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Amtrak’s Passenger Rail Network: Amtrak Owned (Green), Amtrak Long Distance Service (Blue), Amtrak State-Supported Corridor Service (Orange)

How the Network Works
Amtrak owns, maintains, and operates its own infrastructure in the Northeast Corridor, where it operates the country’s premier intercity passenger rail service. The NEC also hosts extensive commuter rail operations and some freight rail service.

Outside of the NEC, Amtrak mostly operates over freight rail infrastructure.
High Speed Rail: The Future of Intercity Passenger Transportation

- 35 States currently participating in the HSIPR Program
- HSR in the Northeast Corridor has 65% of the air/rail market
- Demand from States for HSIPR investment has far outstripped supply of federal funds

Global investment in HSR is booming – China, Japan, Spain, France, Germany, Italy and South Korea all operate more HSR than the US, and globally over 6,000 miles of HSR are under construction and 10,000 more are in planning stages. HSR has been identified by developed and developing countries all over the world as a cost, space, and energy efficient way to move people quickly between urban centers.

In the United States, intercity passenger rail has proven to be an effective and attractive option for travelers when available. President Obama’s vision for passenger rails calls for connecting 80% of Americans to an efficient and advanced passenger rail network, bringing increased balance to the country’s transportation system.

How the Network Works
The proposed HSR lines in CA and the Desert Xpress Corridor (Southern California to Las Vegas) are planned as world-class grade-separated dedicated track HSR systems.

The improved passenger rail services in the Pacific NW, the Midwest, the Southeast, and New England will share track and/or right-of-way with freight rail services.

Amtrak owns the NEC and currently operates the country’s only HSR service.
The United Transportation Union, the Transportation Communications International Union, the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, and other major railroad unions represent well over 200,000 skilled employees.

The average wage and benefit package of a unionized railroad employee is significantly above the national average, and the railroads are hiring!

Skilled and dedicated railroad labor has helped make rail transportation the safest form of surface transportation in the United States.

America’s freight and passenger railroads have some of the most productive and dedicated employees in the world.

Railroad employment means more than just “jobs” - they are careers that support middle-class families. Many railroad employees work 40 years or more for a single employer.

Jobs in the railroad industry provide excellent wage and benefit packages. They do so because of the high skills involved and because more than 90% of the industry is organized. For more than 100 years, railroad workers have bargained with their employers through their unions to secure good wages and fringe benefits. These wage and benefit packages, and the corresponding increases in productivity, have helped railroads secure and retain an excellent workforce dedicated to their profession.

As the railroad industry is the largest unsupervised factory floor in America, a skilled, loyal and dedicated workforce is essential to safety and customer-service oriented operations. Railroad labor unions provide the cohesive environment to make this possible.
The Railroad Supply Industry: Building American Infrastructure

- North America’s 6 major freight car manufacturers and 250 major component parts manufacturers represent a $20 billion/year industry, supporting 150,000 American workers.

- Of the 1.4 million freight cars that exist today, over half of these are privately owned. This number includes virtually all railroad tank cars.

- Suppliers have built and delivered 491,488 freight cars from 2000 to 2010 and 7,788 new locomotives from 2000 to 2009.

Freight and passenger railroads rely on suppliers and contractors to provide equipment, supplies, services and the research and development required to help improve railroad safety and productivity. The nation’s rail supply companies are involved in the manufacturing of products and provision of services in the freight car, locomotive, maintenance-of-way, construction, communications, signaling, intercity passenger rail and rail transit industries. Freight car manufacturers work in coordination with the railroads on freight car design standards, while tank car manufacturers are at the forefront of the latest research to improve tank car safety. Additionally, suppliers will build the intercity passenger rail cars necessary to meet the demand of increased passenger rail travel in the United States. Suppliers are also involved in the design and manufacturing of highway-rail grade crossing technology, positive train control technology and additional rail safety technologies.