

# Passenger Rail & Transit

## Keeping the FRA Happy Environmental Permitting on Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor Projects

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The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in partnership with states across the U.S. and the District of Columbia, is currently laying the foundation for intercity Passenger rail corridors to link Americans with faster and more energy-efficient travel options. The U.S. Department of Transportation is working with states to plan and develop these intercity passenger rail corridors that range from upgrades to existing services to entirely new rail lines exclusively devoted to new higher speed passenger trains. FRA has strategically invested in 5 mega-regions (Seattle-Portland, San Francisco-Los Angeles, Charlotte-Raleigh-DC, Midwest hub, and Northeast Corridor) that hold some 65 percent of our population and that stand to absorb the bulk of future population growth. In issuing its guidance for these types of projects, FRA highlighted the central importance of the environmental review process, required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related laws and regulations, (including Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 49 U.S.C. 303, which protects public parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites) (collectively NEPA), plays in the implementation of the program. Several different approaches are available to accomplish Service NEPA, including Tiered NEPA (Tier 1 environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) followed by Tier 2 EISs, EAs or categorical exclusion determinations (CE)) or non-Tiered NEPA (one EIS or EA covering both service issues and individual project components). This presentation will present an overview of the FRA environmental and permitting requirements for these intercity passenger rail corridor projects and highlight the Washington DC to Richmond, VA, corridor as an example of how these requirements can be met.