

**Remarks Prepared for FRA Administrator Amit Bose
National University Rail Center of Excellence (NURail CoE) Ribbon
Cutting
Urbana-Champaign, IL
Wednesday, May 29, 2024**

Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the Grainger College of Engineering for inviting me and organizing this event.

It is an absolute pleasure to be here alongside Senator Dick Durbin, Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski, Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Omer Osman, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Provost John Coleman, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation Susan Martinis, and, so many esteemed guests who helped make today possible.

On behalf of the Federal Railroad Administration, we are proud to support the National University Rail Center of Excellence.

And, I am thrilled to join this group to officially cut the ribbon on this pioneering effort.

FRA is excited about what this center will mean for rail safety, efficiency, and reliability, and we are eager to see the research and innovation that will move forward through an impressive group of partners.

After decades of underinvestment in rail infrastructure, President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is finally making long overdue federal investments in rail projects nationwide.

The President's infrastructure package included important funding for rail research, innovation, technology, and workforce development—helping to establish the National University Rail Center of Excellence.

I want to recognize Senators Durbin and Duckworth and Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski who supported this historic legislation.

I also want to recognize the strong partnerships—across states and universities—that have been essential to establishing this center and will remain central to advancing its objectives.

Joining RailTEC as part of the NURail Center consortium included the University of Illinois, Chicago; University of Delaware; Tuskegee University; Morgan State University; Kansas State University; Michigan Technological University; Rutgers University; and the University of Texas at Austin.

This collaborative effort embodies the innovative spirit we need to ensure America's freight and passenger rail systems thrive well into the future.

Innovation is a priority for the US Department of Transportation and FRA.

Since this administration took office, we have been pursuing a set of innovation principles to improve safety, create high-quality jobs, achieve equity, and increase opportunity.

Under Biden-Harris Administration, FRA is investing in new innovative technologies, funding workforce development efforts, and partnering with universities.

This includes federal grants like the \$5 million awarded to University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as well as grants through FRA's CRISI Program.

Our agency is supporting efforts at our Transportation Technology Center, advancing important research, and strengthening public-private partnerships to foster innovation.

Under this Administration, FRA established a new Office of Research, Data and Innovation.

I want to thank FRA's Mark Patterson who is in attendance today for leading that office.

We also began a new contract with ENSCO, Inc. at our Transportation Technology Center in Pueblo, Colorado, and thanks to the infrastructure law, there are new opportunities to invest in the 52-square-mile facility.

When it comes to research, whether on rolling stock technology, Positive Train Control systems, rail infrastructure, grade crossing safety, or energy efficiency, we all must continue to embrace collaboration, seeking out the experiences of workers and input from rail labor organizations as well as industry.

We do all this and more in pursuit of growing a safer, cleaner, more equitable rail system.

As Administrator, you have my commitment that FRA will continue to move with urgency to meet this historic moment for rail. We will continue to do all that we can to accelerate innovation, ensuring the possibilities of today become clear signs of progress tomorrow.

Today is a clear sign we are on the right track. I am proud to say progress is underway to establish this center as the pioneering research and innovation hub it will become.

I want to recognize efforts of research, such as the University's Project for Middle Class Renewals, into Project Labor Agreement.

In addition, I am proud that progress is underway just south of Champaign-Urbana where U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg visited last year where federal funding will build an overpass in the Village of Savoy, reducing congestion and delays and improving community safety.

After years of underinvestment, I am proud to say rail progress is underway nationwide, with FRA announced more than \$28 billion in grant awards to nearly 170 rail projects nationwide last year alone.

There are still more investments to be made and thanks to President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law more opportunities to build and shape the safe, modern, and efficient 21st-century rail network we all need and deserve.

I know the National University Rail Center of Excellence will play an important role in this collaborative effort while attracting and inspiring new and diverse generations in rail, engineering, and technology.

I want to again to express my gratitude to all the leaders here today and the institutions who have made this center possible.

Today is another example of the many ways President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is helping to advance rail safety, expand opportunity, and lay the foundation for the modern 21st-century rail network Americans deserve.

Congratulations again on this important milestone.