

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Notice of Funding Opportunity for Positive Train Control Systems Grants under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT)

ACTION: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO or notice)

SUMMARY: This NOFO details the application procedures and requirements to obtain grant funding for eligible positive train control (PTC) system projects under 49 U.S.C. 24407(c)(1) of the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program. The funding in this NOFO is provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, Division L, Title I, Pub. L. 115-141 (2018 Appropriation). The opportunity described in this notice is made available under Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 20.325, “Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements.”

DATES: Applications under this solicitation are due no later than 5:00 p.m. EDT, [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. Applications for funding or supplemental material in support of such an application received after 5:00 p.m. EDT on [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER] will not be considered for funding. Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. See Section D of this notice for additional information on the application process.

ADDRESSES: Applications must be submitted via www.Grants.gov. Only applicants who comply with all submission requirements described in this notice and submit applications through www.Grants.gov will be eligible for award. For any supporting application materials that an applicant is unable to submit via www.Grants.gov (such as oversized engineering drawings), an applicant may submit an original and two (2) copies to Ms. Amy Houser, Office of Program Delivery, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W36-412, Washington, DC 20590. However, due to delays caused by enhanced screening of mail delivered via the U.S. Postal Service, applicants are advised to use other means of conveyance (such as courier service) to assure timely receipt of materials before the application deadline.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information in this notice, please contact Ms. Amy Houser, Office of Program Delivery, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W36-412, Washington, DC 20590; email: amy.houser@dot.gov; phone: 202-493-0303.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Notice to applicants: FRA recommends that applicants read this notice in its entirety prior to preparing application materials. A list providing the definitions of key terms used throughout the NOFO is in Section A(2) below. These key terms are capitalized throughout the NOFO. There are several administrative prerequisites and specific eligibility requirements described herein that applicants must comply with to submit an application. Additionally, applicants should note that the required Project Narrative component of the application package may not exceed 25 pages in length.

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A. Program Description

1. Overview

The purpose of this notice is to solicit applications for competitive PTC system project funding authorized under Section 11301 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Public Law 114-94 (2015); 49 U.S.C. 24407 and funded in the 2018 Appropriation. Together with the FAST Act, the 2018 Appropriation provides funding made available under this NOFO to fund the deployment of PTC system technology for Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation, freight rail transportation and/or Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation. Projects selected under this NOFO for Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation may be transferred to the Federal Transit Administration for grant administration. Projects selected for Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation and freight rail transportation will be administered by the FRA.

A railroad must fully implement a PTC system on all required route miles by December 31, 2018, unless a railroad qualifies for and obtains FRA approval of an alternative schedule (i.e., a deadline no later than December 31, 2020) under the Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015 (PTCEI Act). The PTCEI

Act authorizes, and requires, FRA to approve a railroad's alternative schedule only if the railroad demonstrates in a written notification that it has met all statutory criteria for an alternative schedule, including that it has: (1) installed, by December 31, 2018, all PTC system hardware consistent with the governing PTC Implementation Plan (PTCIP); (2) acquired, by December 31, 2018, all spectrum necessary to implement its PTC system consistent with the governing PTCIP, and (3) made sufficient progress on employee training, revenue service demonstration, and other criteria as specified under 49 U.S.C. 20157(a)(3)(B)(i)–(vii).

2. Definitions of Key Terms

a. “Benefit-Cost Analysis” (“BCA” or “Cost-Benefit Analysis”) is a systematic, data driven, and transparent analysis comparing monetized project benefits and costs, using a no-build baseline and properly discounted present values, including concise documentation of the assumptions and methodology used to produce the analysis; a description of the baseline, data sources used to project outcomes, and values of key input parameters; basis of modeling including spreadsheets, technical memos, etc.; and presentation of the calculations in sufficient detail and transparency to allow the analysis to be reproduced and sensitivity of results evaluated by FRA. Please refer to the Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs prior to preparing a BCA at <https://www.transportation.gov/office-policy/transportation-policy/benefit-cost-analysis-guidance>. In addition, please also refer to the BCA FAQs on FRA's website for some rail specific examples of how to apply the BCA Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs to CRISI applications.

- b. “Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation” means short-haul rail passenger transportation in metropolitan and suburban areas usually having reduced fare, multiple ride, and commuter tickets and morning and evening peak period operations. See 49 U.S.C. 24102(3).
- c. “Construction” means the production of fixed works and structures or substantial alterations to such structures or land and associated costs.
- d. “Final Design” (“FD”) means design activities following Preliminary Engineering, and at a minimum, includes the preparation of final Construction plans, detailed specifications, and estimates sufficiently detailed to inform project stakeholders (designers, reviewers, contractors, suppliers, etc.) of the actions required to advance the project from design through completion of Construction.
- e. “Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation” means rail passenger transportation, except Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation. See 49 U.S.C. 24401(3). In this notice, “Intercity Passenger Rail Service” and “Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation” are equivalent terms to “Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation.”
- f. “National Environmental Policy Act” (“NEPA”) is a Federal law that requires Federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of a proposed action in consultation with appropriate federal, state, and local authorities, and with the public. The NEPA class of action depends on the nature of the proposed action, its complexity, and the potential impacts. For purposes of this NOFO, NEPA also includes all related Federal laws and regulations including Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. (See FRA's Environmental Procedures at: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/details/L02561>.)

- g. “Positive Train Control system” (“PTC system”) is defined by 49 CFR 270.5 to mean a system designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, incursions into established work zone limits, and the movement of a train through a switch left in the wrong position, as described in 49 CFR part 236, subpart I.
- h. “Preliminary Engineering” (“PE”) means engineering design to: (1) define a project, including identification of all environmental impacts, design of all critical project elements at a level sufficient to assure reliable cost estimates and schedules, (2) complete project management and financial plans, and (3) identify procurement requirements and strategies. The PE development process starts with specific project design alternatives that allow for the assessment of a range of rail improvements, specific alignments, and project designs—to be used concurrent with NEPA and related analyses. PE occurs prior to FD and Construction.
- i. “Rail Carrier” means a person providing common carrier railroad transportation for compensation, but does not include street, suburban, or interurban electric railways not operated as part of the general system of rail transportation. See 49 U.S.C. 10102(5).
- j. “Rural Project” means a project in which all or the majority of the project (determined by the geographic location or locations where the majority of the project funds will be spent) is located in a Rural Area.
- k. “Rural Area” is defined in 49 U.S.C. 24407(g)(2) to mean any area not in an urbanized area as defined by the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau defines

“Urbanized Area” (“UA”) as an area with a population of 50,000 or more people.¹

Updated lists of UAs as defined by the Census Bureau are available on the Census Bureau website at

http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC_RefMap/ua/.

B. Federal Award Information

1. Available Award Amount

The total funding available for awards under this NOFO is \$250,000,000 for eligible PTC system projects under 49 U.S.C. 24407(c)(1). Under 49 U.S.C. 24407(g), at least \$62,500,000 of the PTC funds are available for Rural Projects. The balance of the CRISI Program funding provided under the 2018 Appropriation for eligible intercity passenger and freight railroad projects will be made available under a separate NOFO.

2. Award Size

There are no predetermined minimum or maximum dollar thresholds for awards. FRA anticipates making multiple awards with the available funding. FRA may not be able to award grants to all eligible applications, nor even to all applications that meet or exceed the stated evaluation criteria (see Section E, Application Review Information). Projects may require more funding than is available. FRA encourages applicants to propose projects or components of projects that have operational independence that can be completed and implemented with the level of funding available together with other sources.

FRA strongly encourages applicants to identify and include other state, local, public, or private funding or financing to support the proposed project.

¹ See 74 FR 53030, 53043 (August 24, 2011) available at <https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/fedreg/fedregv76n164.pdf>

3. Award Type

FRA will make awards for projects selected under this notice through grant agreements and/or cooperative agreements. Grant agreements are used when FRA does not expect to have substantial Federal involvement in carrying out the funded activity. Cooperative agreements allow for substantial Federal involvement in carrying out the agreed upon investment, including technical assistance, review of interim work products, and increased program oversight. The funding provided under these cooperative agreements will be made available to grantees on a reimbursable basis. Applicants must certify that their expenditures are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and necessary to the approved project before seeking reimbursement from FRA. Additionally, the grantee is expected to expend matching funds at the required percentage alongside Federal funds throughout the life of the project. See an example of standard terms and conditions for FRA grant awards at: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L19057>.

4. Concurrent Applications

As DOT and FRA are concurrently soliciting applications for transportation infrastructure projects for several financial assistance programs, applicants may submit applications requesting funding for a particular project to one or more of these programs. In the application for PTC system project funding, applicants must indicate the other programs to which they submitted or plan to submit an application for funding the entire project or certain project components, as well as highlight new or revised information in the PTC system project application that differs from the application(s) for other federal financial assistance programs.

C. Eligibility Information

This section of the notice explains applicant eligibility, cost sharing and matching requirements, project eligibility, and project component operational independence. Applications that do not meet the requirements in this section will be ineligible for funding. Instructions for submitting eligibility information to FRA are detailed in Section D of this NOFO.

1. Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible applicants:

- a. A State;
- b. A group of States;
- c. An Interstate Compact;
- d. A public agency or publicly chartered authority established by one or more States;²
- e. A political subdivision of a State;
- f. Amtrak or another Rail Carrier that provides Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation (as defined in 49 U.S.C. 24102);
- g. A Class II railroad or Class III railroad (as those terms are defined in 49 U.S.C. 20102);
- h. Any Rail Carrier or rail equipment manufacturer in partnership with at least one of the entities described in paragraph (a) through (e);
- i. The Transportation Research Board together with any entity with which it contracts in the development of rail-related research, including cooperative research programs;
- j. A University transportation center engaged in rail-related research; or

² See Section D(2)(a)(iv) for supporting documentation required to demonstrate eligibility under this eligibility category.

- k. A non-profit labor organization representing a class or craft of employees of Rail Carriers or Rail Carrier contractors.

Applications must identify an eligible applicant as the lead applicant. The lead applicant serves as the primary point of contact for the application, and if selected, as the recipient of the PTC system grant award. Eligible applicants may reference entities that are not eligible applicants in an application as a project partner.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

The Federal share of total costs for projects funded under this notice will not exceed 80 percent, though FRA will provide selection preference to applications where the proposed Federal share of total project costs is 50 percent or less. The estimated total cost of a project must be based on the best available information, including engineering studies, studies of economic feasibility, environmental analyses, and information on the expected use of equipment and/or facilities. Additionally, in preparing estimates of total project costs, applicants should refer to FRA's cost estimate guidance documentation, "Capital Cost Estimating: Guidance for Project Sponsors," which is available at:

<https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0926>.

The minimum 20 percent non-Federal match may be comprised of public sector (e.g., state or local) and/or private sector funding. FRA will not consider any Federal financial assistance, nor any non-Federal funds already expended (or otherwise encumbered) that do not comply with 2 C.F.R. 200.458 toward the matching requirement. FRA is limiting the first 20 percent of the non-Federal match to cash contributions only. FRA will not accept "in-kind" contributions for the first 20 percent in matching funds. Eligible in-kind contributions may be accepted for any non-Federal matching beyond the

first 20 percent. In-kind contributions, including the donation of services, materials, and equipment, may be credited as a project cost, in a uniform manner consistent with 2 CFR 200.306.

Amtrak or another Rail Carrier may use ticket and other non-Federal revenues generated from its operations and other sources as matching funds. Applicants must identify the source(s) of its matching and other funds, and must clearly and distinctly reflect these funds as part of the total project cost.

Before applying, applicants should carefully review the principles for cost sharing or matching in 2 CFR 200.306. See Section D(2)(a)(iii) for required application information on non-Federal match and Section E for further discussion of FRA's consideration of matching funds in the review and selection process. FRA will approve pre-award costs for reimbursement and matching contributions consistent with 2 CFR 200.458, as applicable. See Section D(6).

3. Other

a. Project Eligibility

Projects eligible for funding under this NOFO must be used to deploy PTC systems technology for Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation, freight rail transportation, and/or Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation. Eligible projects include: back office systems; wayside, communications and onboard hardware equipment; software; equipment installation; spectrum; any component, testing and training for the implementation of PTC systems; and interoperability. Maintenance and operating expenses incurred after a PTC system is placed in revenue service are ineligible. Applicants considering more comprehensive projects that include both PTC elements and

other passenger/freight improvements are directed to request only the PTC element under this NOFO or submit applications for the more comprehensive project under the subsequent NOFO, which FRA will soon be issuing for the remainder of the 2018 CRISI funding.

Applicants are not limited in the number of projects for which they seek funding.

Applicants must complete all necessary Planning, PE and NEPA requirements for projects funded under this NOFO. Projects for FD must: resolve remaining uncertainties or risks associated with changes to design scope; address procurement processes; and update and refine plans for financing the project or program to reflect accurately the expected year-of-expenditure costs and cash flow projections. Applicants selected for funding under this NOFO must demonstrate the following to FRA's satisfaction:

- i. PE is completed for the proposed project, resulting in project designs that are reasonably expected to conform to all regulatory, safety, security, and other design requirements, including those under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
 - ii. NEPA is completed for the proposed project;
 - iii. Signed agreements with key project partners, including infrastructure-owning entities; and
 - iv. A project management plan is in-place for managing the implementation of the proposed project, including the management and mitigation of project risks.
- b. Project Component Operational Independence

If an applicant requests funding for a project that is a component or set of components of a larger project, the project component(s) must be attainable with the

award amount, together with other funds as necessary, obtain operational independence, and must comply with all eligibility requirements described in Section C.

In addition, the component(s) must be capable of independent analysis and decision making, as determined by FRA, under NEPA (i.e., have independent utility, connect logical termini, if applicable, and not restrict the consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable rail projects.)

c. Rural Project

FRA will consider a project to be in a Rural Area if all or the majority of the project (determined by geographic location(s) where the majority of the project funds will be spent) is located in a Rural Area. However, in the event FRA elects to fund a component of the project, then FRA will reexamine whether the project is in a Rural Area.

D. Application and Submission Information

Required documents for the application are outlined in the following paragraphs. Applicants must complete and submit all components of the application. See Section D(2) for the application checklist. FRA welcomes the submission of additional relevant supporting documentation, such as planning, engineering and design documentation, and letters of support from partnering organizations that will not count against the Project Narrative 25-page limit.

1. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants must submit all application materials for PTC system projects in their entirety through www.Grants.gov no later than 5:00 p.m. EDT, on [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. FRA

reserves the right to modify this deadline. General information for submitting applications through Grants.gov can be found at: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0270>.

For any supporting application materials that an applicant cannot submit via Grants.gov, such as oversized engineering drawings, an applicant may submit an original and two (2) copies to Ms. Amy Houser, Office of Program Delivery, Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W36-412, Washington, DC 20590. However, due to delays caused by enhanced screening of mail delivered via the U.S. Postal Service, FRA advises applicants to use other means of conveyance (such as courier service) to assure timely receipt of materials before the application deadline. Additionally, if documents can be obtained online, providing instructions to FRA on how to access files on a referenced website may also be sufficient.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

FRA strongly advises applicants to read this section carefully. Applicants must submit all required information and components of the application package to be considered for funding. Additionally, applicants selected to receive funding must generally satisfy the grant readiness checklist requirements on <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0268> as a precondition to FRA issuing a grant award, as well as the requirements in 49 U.S.C. 24405 explained in part at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/page/P0185>. If a project is selected for PTC systems in Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation under 49 U.S.C. 24407(c)(1) and such funds are transferred in the Secretary's discretion, applicants will be required to comply with chapter 53 of Title 49 of the United States Code.

Required documents for an application package are outlined in the checklist below.

- i. Project Narrative (see D.2.a)
- ii. Statement of Work (see D.2.b.i)
- iii. Benefit-Cost Analysis (see D.2. b.ii)
- iv. SF424 – Application for Federal Assistance
- v. Either: SF 424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction projects or SF 424C – Budget Information for Construction
- vi. Either: SF 424B – Assurances for Non-Construction projects or SF 424D – Assurances for Construction
- vii. FRA’s Additional Assurances and Certifications
- viii. SF LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

a. Project Narrative

This section describes the minimum content required in the Project Narrative of the grant application. The Project Narrative must follow the basic outline below to address the program requirements and assist evaluators in locating relevant information.

I. Cover Page	See D.2.a.i
II. Project Summary	See D.2.a.ii
III. Project Funding	See D.2.a.iii
IV. Applicant Eligibility	See D.2.a.iv
V. Project Eligibility	See D.2.a.v
VI. Detailed Project Description	See D.2.a.vi
VII. Project Location	See D.2.a.vii

VIII. Evaluation and Selection Criteria	See D.2.a.viii
IX. Project Implementation and Management	See D.2.a.ix
X. PTC Readiness	See D.2.a.x
XI. Environmental Readiness	See D.2.a.xi

The above content must be provided in a narrative statement submitted by the applicant. The Project Narrative may not exceed 25 pages in length (excluding cover pages, table of contents, and supporting documentation). FRA will not review or consider for award applications with Project Narratives exceeding the 25-page limitation. If possible, applicants should submit supporting documents via website links rather than hard copies. If supporting documents are submitted, applicants must clearly identify the page number(s) of the relevant portion in the Project Narrative supporting documentation. The Project Narrative must adhere to the following outline.

- i. Cover Page: Include a cover page that lists the following elements in a table:

Project Title	
Lead applicant	
Was a Federal grant application previously submitted for this project?	Yes/no
If yes, state the name of the Federal grant program and title of the project in the previous application.	Federal Grant Program:
	Project Title:
Is this a Rural Project? What percentage of the project cost is based in a Rural Area?	Yes/no Percentage of total project cost:
City(ies), State(s) where the project is located	
Urbanized Area where the project is located	
Population of Urbanized Area	

- ii. Project Summary: Provide a brief 4–6 sentence summary of the proposed project and what the project will entail. Include challenges the proposed project aims to address, and summarize the intended outcomes and anticipated benefits that will result from the proposed project.
- iii. Project Funding: Indicate in table format the amount of Federal funding requested, the proposed non-Federal match, identifying contributions from the private sector if applicable, and total project cost. Describe the non-Federal funding arrangement. Include funding commitment letters outlining funding agreements, as attachments or in an appendix. Identify any specific project components that the applicant proposes for partial project funding. If all or a majority of a project is located in a Rural Area, identify the Rural Area(s) and estimated percentage of project costs that will be spent in the Rural Area. Identify any previously incurred costs, as well as other sources of Federal funds committed to the project and any pending Federal requests. Also, note if the requested Federal funding under this NOFO or other programs must be obligated or spent by a certain date due to dependencies or relationships with other Federal or non-Federal funding sources, related projects, law, or other factors. If applicable, provide the type and estimated value of any proposed in-kind contributions, and demonstrate how the in-kind contributions meet the requirements in 2 CFR 200.306.

Example Project Funding Table:

Task #	Task Name/Project Component	Cost	Percentage of Total Cost
1			
2			
Total Project Cost			
Federal Funds Received from Previous Grant			
Federal Funding Request			
Non-Federal Funding/Match		Cash: In-Kind:	
Portion of Non-Federal Funding from the Private Sector			
Portion of Total Project Costs Spent in a Rural Area			
Pending Federal Funding Requests			

- iv. Applicant Eligibility: Explain how the applicant meets the applicant eligibility criteria outlined in Section C of this notice, including references to creation or enabling legislation for public agencies and publicly chartered authorities established by one or more States.
- v. Project Eligibility: Explain how the project meets the project eligibility criteria.
- vi. Detailed Project Description: Include a detailed project description that expands upon the brief project summary. This detailed description should provide, at a minimum, background on the challenges the project aims to address; the expected users and beneficiaries of the project, including all railroad operators; the specific components and elements of the project;

and any other information the applicant deems necessary to justify the proposed project. If applicable, explain how the project will benefit communities in Rural Areas. Applicants must also:

- (A) Document submission of a revised Positive Train Control Implementation Plan (PTCIP) to FRA as required by 49 U.S.C. 20157(a);
- (B) Document that it is a tenant on one or more host railroads that submitted a revised PTCIP to FRA as required by 49 U.S.C. 20157(a), which states the tenant railroad is equipping its rolling stock with a PTC system and provides all other information required under 49 CFR 236.1011 regarding the tenant railroad; or
- (C) Document why the applicant is not required to submit a revised PTCIP as required by 49 U.S.C. 20157(a), and whether the proposed project will assist in the deployment (i.e., installation and/or full implementation) of a PTC system required under 49 U.S.C. 20157.

For all projects, applicants must provide information about proposed performance measures, as discussed in Section F(3)(c) and required in 2 CFR 200.301 and 49 U.S.C. 24407(f).

- vii. Project Location: Include geospatial data for the project, as well as a map of the project's location. On the map, include the Rural Area boundaries, if applicable, in which the project will take place.
- viii. Evaluation and Selection Criteria: Include a thorough discussion of how the proposed project meets all the evaluation criteria and selection criteria,

as outlined in Section E of this notice. If an application does not sufficiently address the evaluation and selection criteria, it is unlikely to be a competitive application.

- ix. Project Implementation and Management: Describe proposed project implementation and project management arrangements. Include descriptions of the expected arrangements for project contracting, contract oversight, change-order management, risk management, and conformance to Federal requirements for project progress reporting (see <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0274>). Describe past experience in managing and overseeing similar projects.
- x. PTC Readiness: If the railroad is subject to the statutory PTC mandate or if the railroad is a tenant railroad that operates on PTC-equipped territory and must equip its locomotives and other controlling rolling stock under 49 CFR 236.1006(a), provide a brief summary about the railroad's current progress toward fully implementing a PTC system under 49 CFR part 236, subpart I. For such railroads and for any other railroad, provide information about the railroad's progress towards completing all hardware installation required for implementation of a PTC system, testing the PTC system (including field testing and revenue service demonstration), training personnel under 49 CFR 236.1041–236.1049, conducting interoperability testing with any other railroads that operate on the same main line, and operating an FRA-certified PTC system in revenue service. In addition, and if applicable, applicants may refer to their most recent

Quarterly PTC Progress Report (FRA Form F 6180.165) to provide additional details.

- xi. Environmental Readiness: If the NEPA process is complete, an applicant should indicate the date of completion, and provide a website link or other reference to the documents demonstrating compliance with NEPA, which might include a final CE, Finding of No Significant Impact, or Record of Decision. If the NEPA process is not yet underway or is underway, but is not complete, the application should detail the type of NEPA review underway, where the project is in the process, and indicate the anticipated date of completion of all NEPA and related milestones. If the last agency action with respect to NEPA documents occurred more than three years before the application date, the applicant should describe why the project has been delayed and include a proposed approach for verifying, and if necessary, updating this information in accordance with applicable NEPA requirements. Additional information regarding FRA's environmental processes and requirements are located at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L05286>.

b. Additional Application Elements

Applicants must submit:

- i. A Statement of Work (SOW) addressing the scope, schedule, and budget for the proposed project if it were selected for award. The SOW must contain sufficient detail so FRA, and the applicant, can understand the expected outcomes of the proposed work to be performed and monitor

progress toward completing project tasks and deliverables during a prospective grant's period of performance. Applicants must use FRA's standard SOW template to be considered for award. The SOW template is located at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L18661>. When preparing the budget as part of the SOW, the total cost of a project must be based on the best available information as indicated in cited references that include engineering studies, studies of economic feasibility, environmental analyses, and information on the expected use of equipment or facilities.

- ii. A Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA), as an appendix to the Project Narrative for each project submitted by an applicant. The BCA must demonstrate in economic terms the merits of investing in the proposed project. The project narrative should summarize the project's benefits.

Benefits may apply to existing and new rail users, as well as users of other modes of transportation. In some cases, benefits may be applied to populations in the general vicinity of the project area. Improvements to shared-use rail corridors may benefit all users involved. All benefits claimed for the project must be clearly tied to the expected outcomes of the project. Please refer to the Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs prior to preparing a BCA at <https://www.transportation.gov/office-policy/transportation-policy/benefit-cost-analysis-guidance>. In addition, please also refer to the BCA FAQs on FRA's website for some rail specific examples of how to apply the

Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs to CRISI applications.

- iii. SF 424 – Application for Federal Assistance;
- iv. SF 424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction or SF 424C – Budget Information for Construction;
- v. SF 424B – Assurances for Non-Construction or SF 424D – Assurances for Construction;
- vi. FRA’s Additional Assurances and Certifications; and
- vii. SF LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.

Forms needed for the electronic application process are at www.Grants.gov.

c. Post-Selection Requirements

See subsection F(2) of this notice for post-selection requirements.

3. Unique Entity Identifier, System for Award Management (SAM), and Submission Instructions

To apply for funding through Grants.gov, applicants must be properly registered. Complete instructions on how to register and submit an application can be found at www.Grants.gov. Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it can take up to several weeks for first-time registrants to receive confirmation and a user password. FRA recommends that applicants start the registration process as early as possible to prevent delays that may preclude submitting an application package by the application deadline. Applications will not be accepted after the due date. Delayed registration is not an acceptable justification for an application extension.

FRA may not make a grant award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and SAM requirements. (Please note that if a Dun & Bradstreet DUNS number must be obtained or renewed, this may take a significant amount of time to complete.) Late applications that are the result of a failure to register or comply with Grants.gov applicant requirements in a timely manner will not be considered. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the submission deadline, the application will not be considered. To submit an application through Grants.gov, applicants must:

a. Obtain a DUNS number.

A DUNS number is required for Grants.gov registration. The Office of Management and Budget requires that all businesses and nonprofit applicants for Federal funds include a DUNS number in their applications for a new award or renewal of an existing award. A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for the government in identifying and keeping track of entities receiving Federal funds. The identifier is used for tracking purposes and to validate address and point of contact information for Federal assistance applicants, recipients, and sub-recipients. The DUNS number will be used throughout the grant life cycle. Obtaining a DUNS number is a free, one-time activity. Applicants may obtain a DUNS number by calling 1-866-705-5711 or by applying online at <http://www.dnb.com/us>.

b. Register with the SAM at www.SAM.gov.

All applicants for Federal financial assistance must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. An applicant must be registered in SAM to successfully register in Grants.gov. The SAM database is the repository for standard information about Federal

financial assistance applicants, recipients, and sub recipients. Organizations that have previously submitted applications via Grants.gov are already registered with SAM, as it is a requirement for Grants.gov registration. Please note, however, that applicants must update or renew their SAM registration at least once per year to maintain an active status. Therefore, it is critical to check registration status well in advance of the application deadline. If an applicant is selected for an award, the applicant must maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the period of the award. Information about SAM registration procedures is available at www.sam.gov.

c. Create a Grants.gov username and password.

Applicants must complete an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) profile on www.Grants.gov and create a username and password. Applicants must use the organization's DUNS number to complete this step. Additional information about the registration process is available at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.

d. Acquire Authorization for your AOR from the E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC).

The E-Biz POC at the applicant's organization must respond to the registration email from Grants.gov and login at www.Grants.gov to authorize the applicant as the AOR. Please note there can be more than one AOR for an organization.

e. Submit an Application Addressing All Requirements Outlined in this NOFO.

If an applicant experiences difficulties at any point during this process, please call the Grants.gov Customer Center Hotline at 1-800-518-4726, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (closed on Federal holidays). For information and instructions on each of these

processes, please see instructions at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

Note: Please use generally accepted formats such as .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx and .ppt, when uploading attachments. While applicants may embed picture files, such as .jpg, .gif, and .bmp, in document files, applicants should not submit attachments in these formats. Additionally, the following formats will not be accepted: .com, .bat, .exe, .vbs, .cfg, .dat, .db, .dbf, .dll, .ini, .log, .ora, .sys, and .zip.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applicants must submit complete applications for PTC system projects to www.Grants.gov no later than 5:00 p.m. EDT, [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. FRA reviews www.Grants.gov information on dates/times of applications submitted to determine timeliness of submissions. Late applications will be neither reviewed nor considered. Delayed registration is not an acceptable reason for late submission. In order to apply for funding under this announcement, all applicants are expected to be registered as an organization with Grants.gov. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply early to ensure all materials are received before this deadline.

To ensure a fair competition of limited discretionary funds, the following conditions are not valid reasons to permit late submissions: (1) failure to complete the Grants.gov registration process before the deadline; (2) failure to follow Grants.gov instructions on how to register and apply as posted on its website; (3) failure to follow all instructions in this NOFO; and (4) technical issues experienced with the applicant's computer or information technology environment.

5. Intergovernmental Review

Executive Order 12372 requires applicants from State and local units of government or other organizations providing services within a State to submit a copy of the application to the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC), if one exists, and if this program has been selected for review by the State. Applicants must contact their State SPOC to determine if the program has been selected for State review.

6. Funding Restrictions

Consistent with 2 CFR 200.458, as applicable, FRA will only approve pre-award costs if such costs are incurred pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the grant agreement and if such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work. Under 2 CFR 200.458, grant recipients must seek written approval from the administering agency for pre-award activities to be eligible for reimbursement under the grant. Activities initiated prior to the execution of a grant or without written approval may not be eligible for reimbursement or included as a grantee's matching contribution.

7. Other Submission Requirements

If an applicant experiences difficulties at any point during this process, please call the Grants.gov Customer Center Hotline at 1-800-518-4726, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (closed on Federal holidays). For information and instructions on each of these processes, please see instructions at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

E. Application Review Information

1. Criteria

a. Eligibility and Completeness Review

FRA will first screen each application for applicant and project eligibility (eligibility requirements are outlined in Section C of this notice), completeness (application documentation and submission requirements are outlined in Section D of this notice), and the 20 percent minimum match in determining whether the application is eligible.

FRA will then consider the applicant's past performance in developing and delivering similar projects and previous financial contributions, and previous competitive grant technical evaluation ratings that the proposed project received under previous competitive grant programs administered by the DOT if applicable.

b. Evaluation Criteria

FRA subject-matter experts will evaluate all eligible and complete applications using the evaluation criteria outlined in this section to determine project benefits and technical merit.

i. Project Benefits:

FRA will evaluate the Benefit-Cost Analysis of the proposed project for the anticipated private and public benefits relative to the costs of the proposed project and the summary of benefits provided in response to subsection D(2)(a)(ii)

including—

- (A) Effects on system and service performance;
- (B) Effects on safety, competitiveness, reliability, trip or transit time, and resilience;
- (C) Efficiencies from improved integration with other modes; and
- (D) Ability to meet existing or anticipated demand.

ii. Technical Merit:

FRA will evaluate application information for the degree to which—

- (A) The tasks and subtasks outlined in the SOW are appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes of the proposed project.
- (B) Applications indicate strong project readiness and meet project requirements.
- (C) The technical qualifications and experience of key personnel proposed to lead and perform the technical efforts, and the qualifications of the primary and supporting organizations to fully and successfully execute the proposed project within the proposed timeframe and budget are demonstrated.
- (D) The proposed project's business plan considers potential private sector participation in the financing, construction, or operation of the proposed project.
- (E) The applicant has, or will have the legal, financial, and technical capacity to carry out the proposed project; satisfactory continuing control over the use of the equipment or facilities; and the capability and willingness to maintain the equipment or facilities.
- (F) If applicable, the proposed project is consistent with planning guidance and documents set forth by DOT, including those required by law or State rail plans developed under Title 49, United State Code, Chapter 227.

c. Selection Criteria

In addition to the eligibility and completeness review and the evaluation criteria outlined in this subsection, the FRA Administrator will select projects applying the following selection criteria:

- i. The FRA Administrator will give preference to projects for which the:
 - (A) Proposed Federal share of total project costs is 50 percent or less;
and
 - (B) Net benefits of the grant funds will be maximized considering the BCA, including anticipated private and public benefits relative to the costs of the proposed project, and factoring in the other considerations in 49 U.S.C. 24407 (e).
- ii. After applying the above preferences, the FRA Administrator will take into account the following key Departmental objectives:
 - (A) Supporting economic vitality at the national and regional level;
 - (B) Leveraging Federal funding to attract other, non-Federal sources of infrastructure investment, as well as accounting for the life-cycle costs of the project;
 - (C) Using innovative approaches to improve safety and expedite project delivery; and,
 - (D) Holding grant recipients accountable for their performance and achieving specific, measurable outcomes identified by grant applicants.

2. Review and Selection Process

FRA will conduct a three-part application review process, as follows:

- a. Screen applications for completeness and eligibility;
- b. Evaluate eligible applications (completed by technical panels applying the evaluation criteria); and
- c. Select projects for funding (completed by the FRA Administrator applying the selection criteria).

F. Federal Award Administration Information

1. Federal Award Notice

FRA will announce applications selected for funding in a press release and on the FRA website after the application review periods. FRA will contact applicants with successful applications after announcement with information and instructions about the award process. This notification is not an authorization to begin proposed project activities. A formal cooperative agreement or grant agreement signed by both the grantee and the FRA, including an approved scope, schedule, and budget, is required before the award is obligated and complete.

For all projects, obligation occurs when a selected applicant and FRA enter a written project specific cooperative agreement or grant agreement and is after the applicant has satisfied applicable requirements. For FD/Construction projects, these requirements may include transportation planning, PE and environmental reviews.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Due to funding limitations, projects that are selected for funding may receive less than the amount originally requested. In those cases, applicants must be able to demonstrate the proposed projects are still viable and can be completed with the amount awarded.

Grantees and entities receiving funding from the grantee, must comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Examples of administrative and national policy requirements include: 2 CFR part 200; procurement standards; compliance with Federal civil rights laws and regulations; requirements for disadvantaged business enterprises, debarment and suspension requirements, and drug-free workplace requirements; FRA's and OMB's Assurances and Certifications; Americans with Disabilities Act; safety requirements including those applicable to PTC projects; NEPA; environmental justice requirements; performance measures under 49 U.S.C. 24407(f); 49 U.S.C. 24405, including the Buy America requirements and the provision deeming operators rail carriers and employers for certain purposes. Grants for PTC system projects selected under 49 U.S.C. 24407(c)(1) for Commuter Rail Passenger Transportation, if transferred to a different agency, must comply with the requirements of chapter 53 of Title 49.

See an example of standard terms and conditions for FRA grant awards at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L19057>.

3. Reporting

a. Reporting Matters Related to Integrity and Performance

Before making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold of \$150,000 (see 2 CFR 200.88 Simplified Acquisition Threshold), FRA will review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)). See 41 U.S.C. 2313.

An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.

FRA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR 200.205.

b. Progress Reporting on Grant Activity

Each applicant selected for a grant will be required to comply with all standard FRA reporting requirements, including quarterly progress reports, quarterly Federal financial reports, and interim and final performance reports, as well as all applicable auditing, monitoring and close out requirements. Reports may be submitted electronically.

c. Performance Reporting

Each applicant selected for funding must collect information and report on the project's performance using measures mutually agreed upon by FRA and the grantee to assess progress in achieving strategic goals and objectives.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

For further information regarding this notice and the grants program, please contact Ms. Amy Houser, Office of Program Delivery, Federal Railroad Administration,

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W36-412, Washington, DC 20590; email: amy.houser@dot.gov; phone: 202-493-0303.

H. Other Information

All information submitted as part of or in support of any application shall use publicly available data or data that can be made public and methodologies that are accepted by industry practice and standards, to the extent possible. If the application includes information the applicant considers to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information, the applicant should do the following: (1) Note on the front cover that the submission “Contains Confidential Business Information (CBI)”;

(2) mark each affected page “CBI”; and (3) highlight or otherwise denote the CBI portions.

DOT protects such information from disclosure to the extent allowed under applicable law. In the event DOT receives a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the information, DOT will follow the procedures described in its FOIA regulations at 49 CFR 7.17. Only information that is ultimately determined to be confidential under that procedure will be exempt from disclosure under FOIA.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on May 15, 2018.

Ronald Louis Batory,
Administrator.