

# Milwaukee Area-Racine-Kenosha Passenger Rail Commission

Meeting #1

December 5, 2025  
Racine, Wisconsin



# Agenda

Overview of MARK Rail Study

Approval of Bylaws

Election of Officers

Consideration of an MOU with Metra

Federal Funding Path Discussion

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## — Overview of MARK Rail Study

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# Study Corridor

- **Union Pacific Railroad** between **Milwaukee** and **Kenosha**
- Access to **Milwaukee Intermodal Station** provided via a short future connection to CPKC C&M Subdivision
- **Currently no passenger service** north of Kenosha, though Metra connects Kenosha to Chicago

# An Opportunity to...

- **Connect** Racine, Kenosha, and other lakeshore communities to a world-class economic region and cultural center
- **Increase** access to jobs and education
- **Grow** jobs, **spur** development, and **lift** property values
- **Attract** new residents and businesses



Enhance Regional  
Mobility



Spur Economic  
Development



Reduce Traffic  
Congestion

# Lakeshore Communities Need Better Options for Connecting to Chicago and Milwaukee

Proportion of households without access to a car in the Cities of Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine is **twice the regional average**

The three cities exhibit development patterns that are aligned with the **rail corridor connecting them**

Regional connectivity is critical for promoting **economic growth**, attracting and retaining a **skilled workforce**, promoting **tourism**, and creating a **vibrant business community**

The service would connect employers to **new labor markets**, help attract and grow **new businesses**, help raise family incomes and decrease poverty through improved **access to jobs**, and help catalyze **redevelopment and growth** near stations



# Past Efforts in the Corridor

- **Feasibility Study (1998)**
- **Corridor Study (2003)**
- **Technical Studies (2005-2011)**
  - Included alternatives analysis, draft environmental impact statement, and “New Starts” application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- **Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (2009-2011)**
- **VISION 2050 (updated in June 2024)**
  - Continues to identify the corridor as part of a larger network
- **WisDOT FTA New Starts Application (2022)**

# Study Overview

- **Federal grant** provided to the City of Racine to advance passenger rail service in the corridor
- Building on **extensive previous studies**
- Considering **different approaches** to service design, sponsorship, and local funding
- **Goal** of entering a federal funding program

- MARK Passenger Rail Commission was created to guide ongoing work
- MARK Commission succeeds an advisory Steering Committee that directed initial work assisted by a Technical Working Group
- Regional Planning Commission is assisting

## Primary Objectives

Determine a preferred service design, identify a project sponsor and funding, and develop a federal funding program request

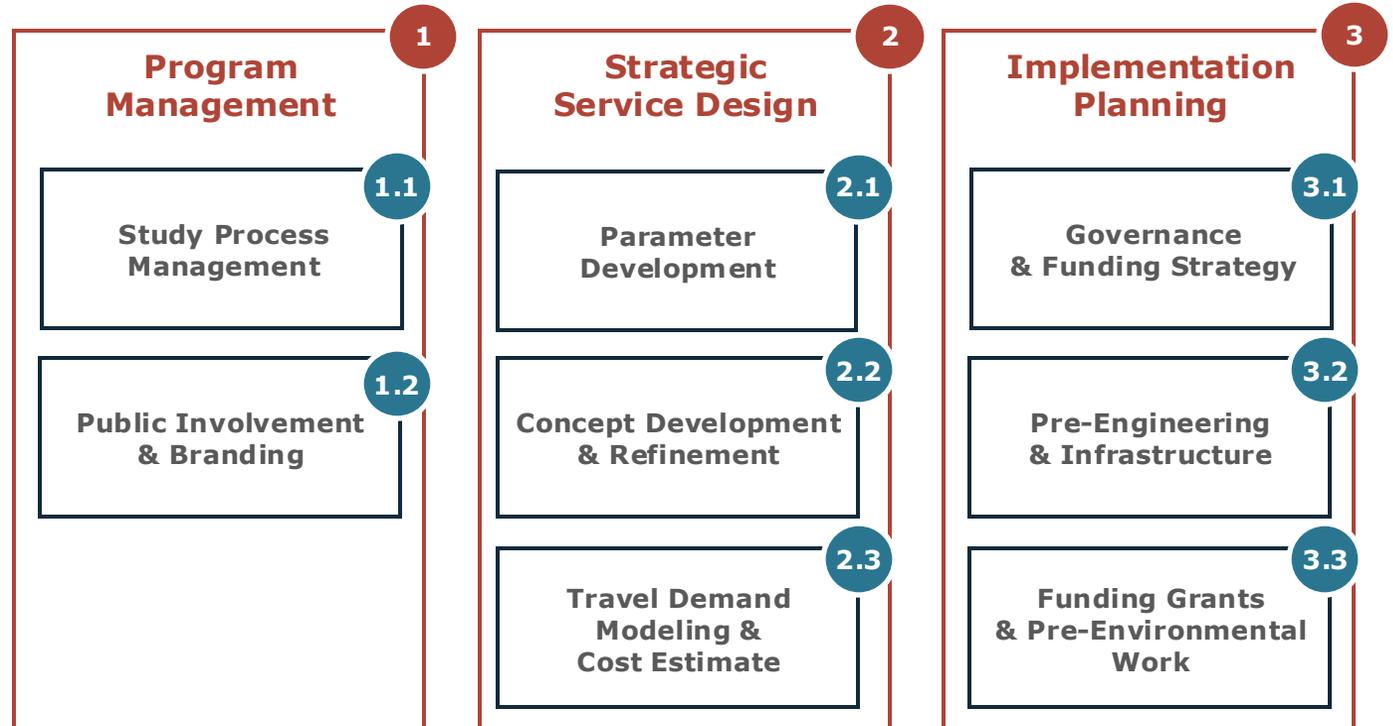
# Main Study Consultant Team & Scope



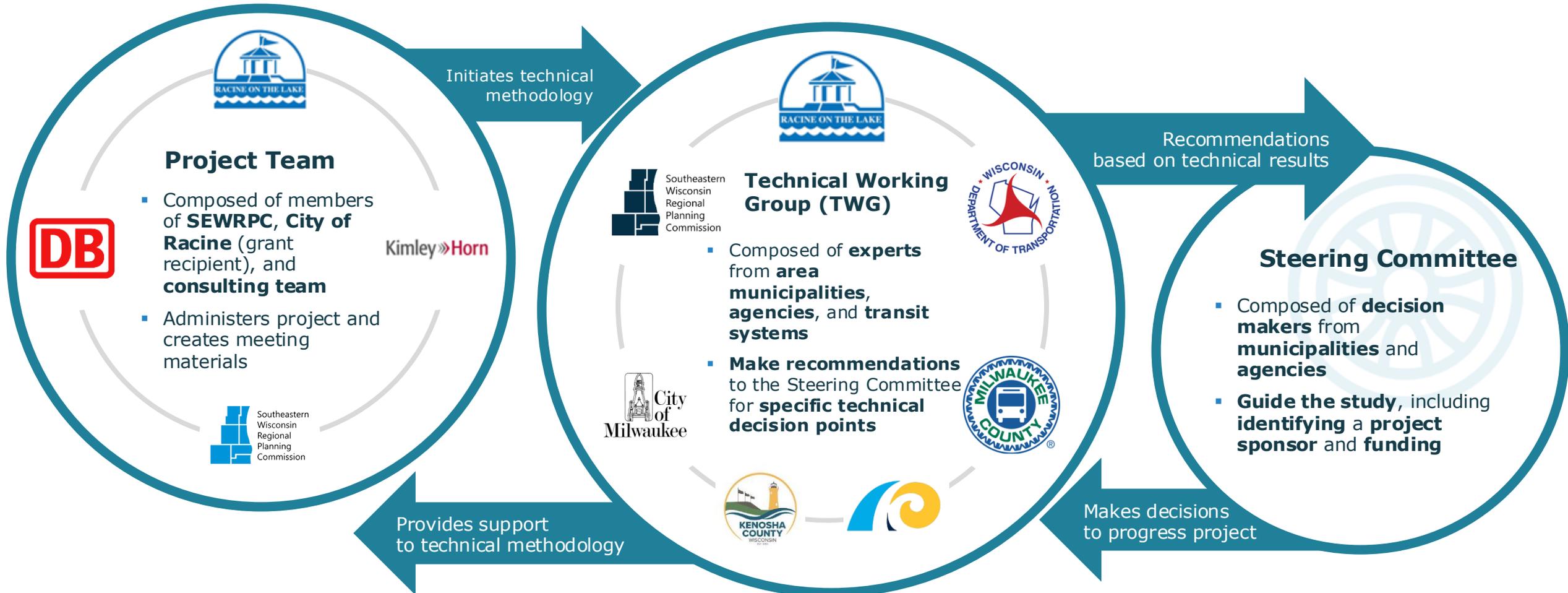
**Kimley»Horn**  
Expect More. Experience Better.



**THE LAKOTA GROUP.**



# MARK Rail Study – Previous Structure



# Over the past year, the Project Team has built the foundation for MARK Rail

- ✓ **Rebranded** effort as MARK Rail and launched website
- ✓ Held **10 Steering Committee meetings** and **9 TWG meetings**
- ✓ Identified a **federal funding pathway**
- ✓ Established the **MARK Rail Commission**
- ✓ Met with **key stakeholders** including WisDOT, UP, and CPKC
- ✓ Engaged **Metra and drafted an MOU** to support future collaboration
- ✓ Developed **initial service concepts** and initiated stringline modeling
- ✓ Began **station planning** for core MARK Rail station locations
- ✓ Conducted a **market analysis** and initiated demand modeling
- ✓ Completed **preliminary infrastructure and environmental assessments**

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Overview of MARK Rail Study

## **Approval of Bylaws**

Election of Officers

Consideration of an MOU with Metra

Federal Funding Path Discussion

# MARK Rail Commission Bylaws

## Articles:

I. Name and Purpose

II. Membership

III. Meetings

IV. Officers

V. Committees

VI. Amendments to the Bylaws

VII. Dissolution

VIII. Miscellaneous

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# Election of Officers

Principal Officers:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary/Treasurer

Roles are defined in the bylaws

May elect other officers and assistant officers as deemed necessary

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— **Consideration of an MOU with Metra**

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# Consideration of an MOU with Metra

Metra is expected to be an important project partner, due to their passenger rail expertise and the UPN Line's connection to Chicago

The MARK Rail team drafted an MOU in coordination with Metra to better formalize that partnership and collaborate on aspects of MARK Rail such as:

- Train schedules
- Fares
- Train equipment
- Organizational structure
- Capital and operating costs

The MOU states that Metra will review staff time to determine whether collaboration falls within their regular duties or if it would require a separate reimbursement agreement

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— **Federal Funding Path Discussion**

# Federal Funding Path Discussion

Kimley-Horn was tasked to provide the City of Racine and the Steering Committee an overview of relevant existing federal grant and loan programs for the MARK Rail project. A major focus was for the analysis to guide a Steering Committee decision on the federal funding program path.

Recommendations were presented to the Steering Committee in a series of meetings on:

- June 10, 2024
- August 12, 2024
- September 16, 2024
- October 21, 2024 (recommendation made)

A more in-depth recommendation of funding strategies will be conducted as part of the business case planning.

# MARK Commission Responsibilities Related to Funding Program

Regardless of the funding program that is chosen, the MARK Commission, as project sponsor, will need to guide the project through the next phases of planning and development, which will include funding strategies.

Project sponsor responsibilities:

- Conduct necessary administrative functions and fulfill fiscal responsibilities
  - Schedule meetings, maintain records, etc.
  - Maintain grant obligations, MARK Commission accounts if established, etc.
- Champion MARK Rail (touting economic benefits)
- Prepare and submit funding applications

# Primary Funding Program Options

There are two main federal funding programs for new rail projects, one through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and another through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).



## Corridor Identification and Development Program

Planning program for intercity passenger rail projects in the US administered by FRA under the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

5% (\$365M) of Federal-State Partnership program (\$7.2B) made available for FY22 Corridor ID planning and development activities

69 passenger rail corridors accepted into FY22 Corridor ID Program (4 WisDOT Corridor ID projects)



Federal Transit Administration

## Capital Investment Grant Program (New Starts)

The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law continues the discretionary Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program, which funds fixed-guideway investments including new/expanded commuter rail

Maximum annual appropriations for CIG is \$4.6B

FTA requested \$3.97B for FY2025 in total appropriations (\$3.21B for New Starts)

# Other Federal Programs\*

## FRA

Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP-National)  
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)  
Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program  
Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program

## USDOT

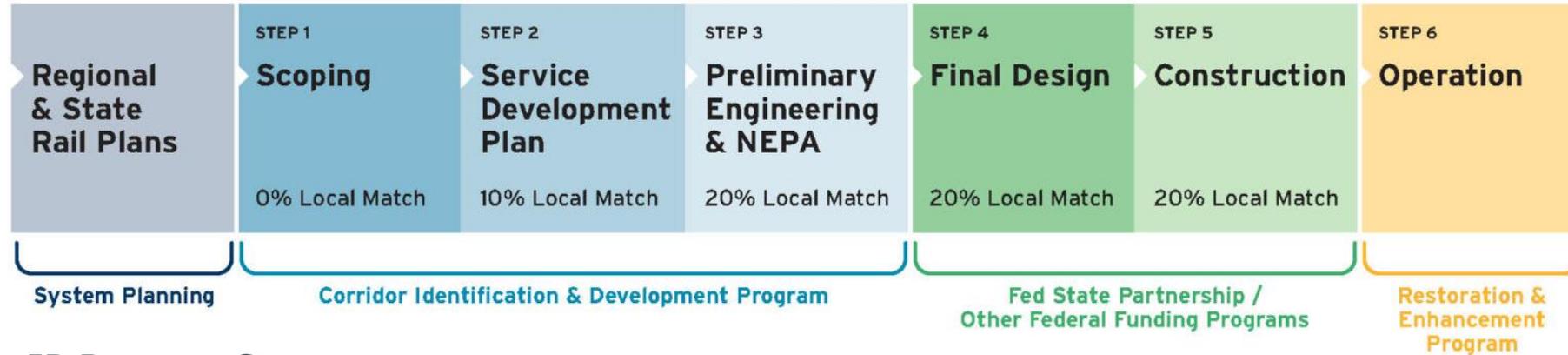
Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)  
National Infrastructure Project Assistance (Mega)  
Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA)  
Rural Surface Transportation Grant (Rural)  
Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF)  
Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA)

*\* Eligible applicants vary between programs.*



# **Federal Funding Program Decision: A Comparison of FRA's Corridor ID Program and FTA's CIG – New Starts Program**

# FRA Corridor ID Overview



## Corridor ID Program Steps

**Step 0:** Submit application with Corridor Narrative

**Step 1:** Development of scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing SDP (no local match, \$500k)

**Step 2:** Preparation of an SDP (10% local match)

**Step 3:** Preparation of additional Project Development work, completion of PE and NEPA activities (20% local match)

## Eligible Applicants

- Amtrak
- States/Groups of States
- Entities Implementing Interstate Compacts
- Regional Passenger Rail Authorities
- Regional Planning Organizations
- Political Subdivisions of a State
- Federally Recognized Tribes

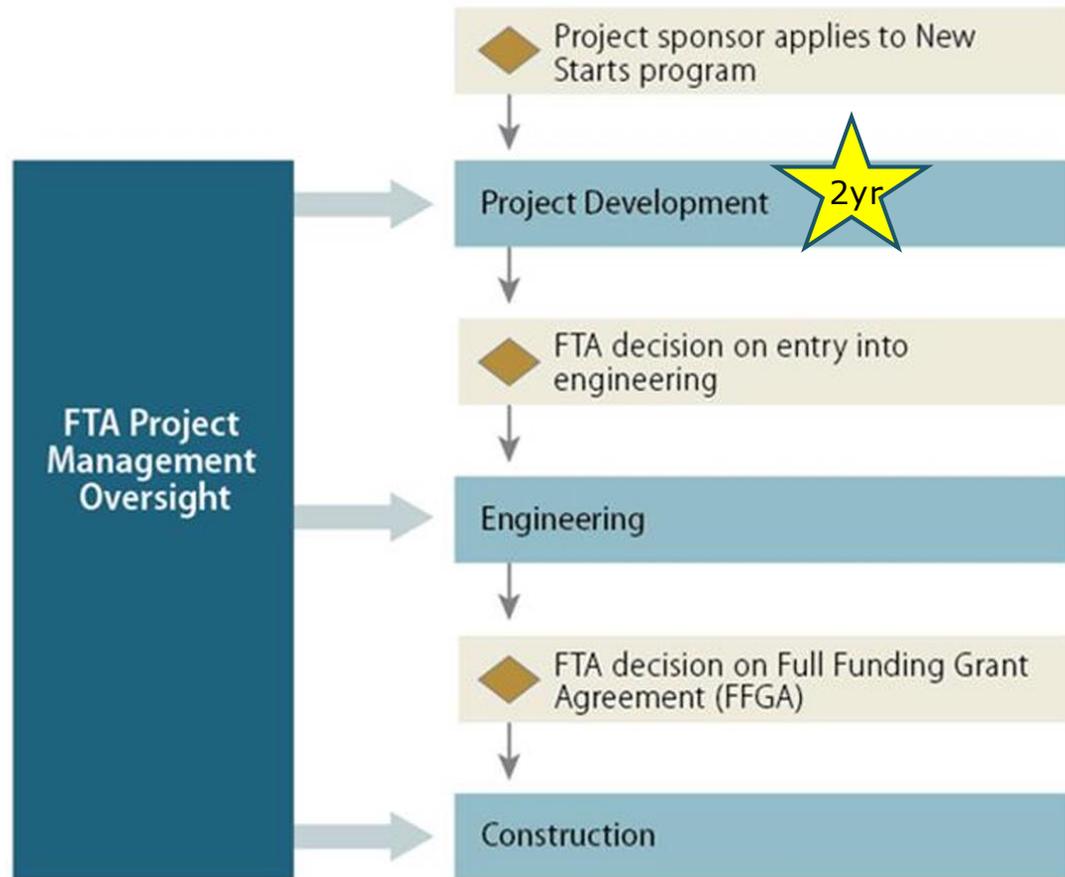
## Eligible Corridors

- New or existing routes under 750 miles (except commuter rail)
- Existing long-distance routes
- Long-distance routes discontinued by Amtrak or operating on April 30, 1971

## Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

- Last released December 20, 2022
- Selections made December 8, 2023
- Expected early 2026

# FTA CIG – New Starts Overview



## FTA CIG – New Starts Program

- New Starts projects must be new or extensions to fixed-guideway systems
- Must have capital cost of \$400 million or more or that are seeking \$150 million or more in CIG program funds
- PD must be completed within the two-year timeframe
- Max CIG Share – 60% | Max Federal Share – 80%

**Step 0:** Entry into Project Development

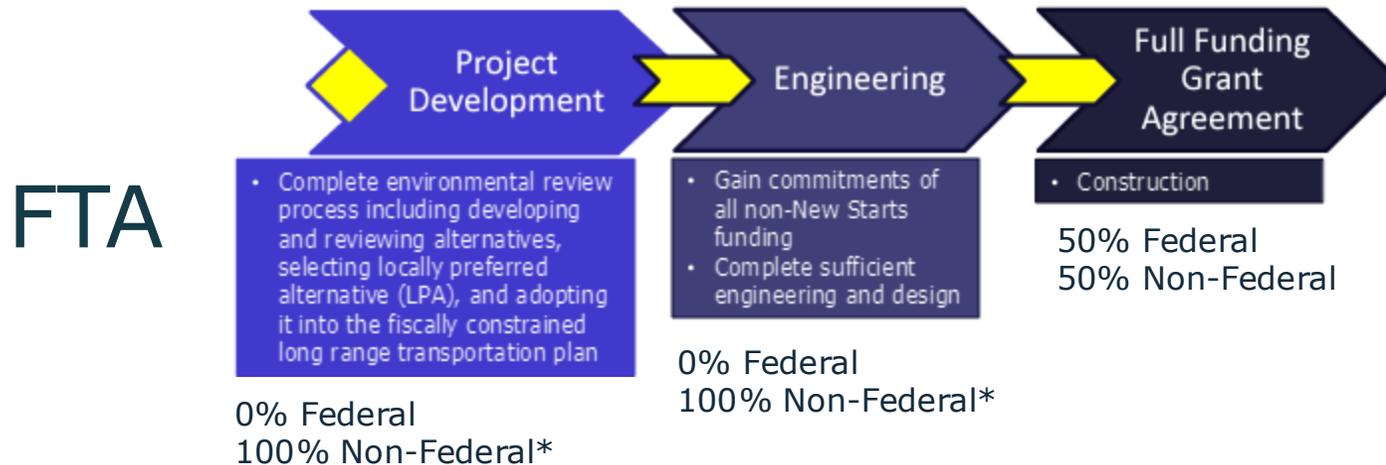
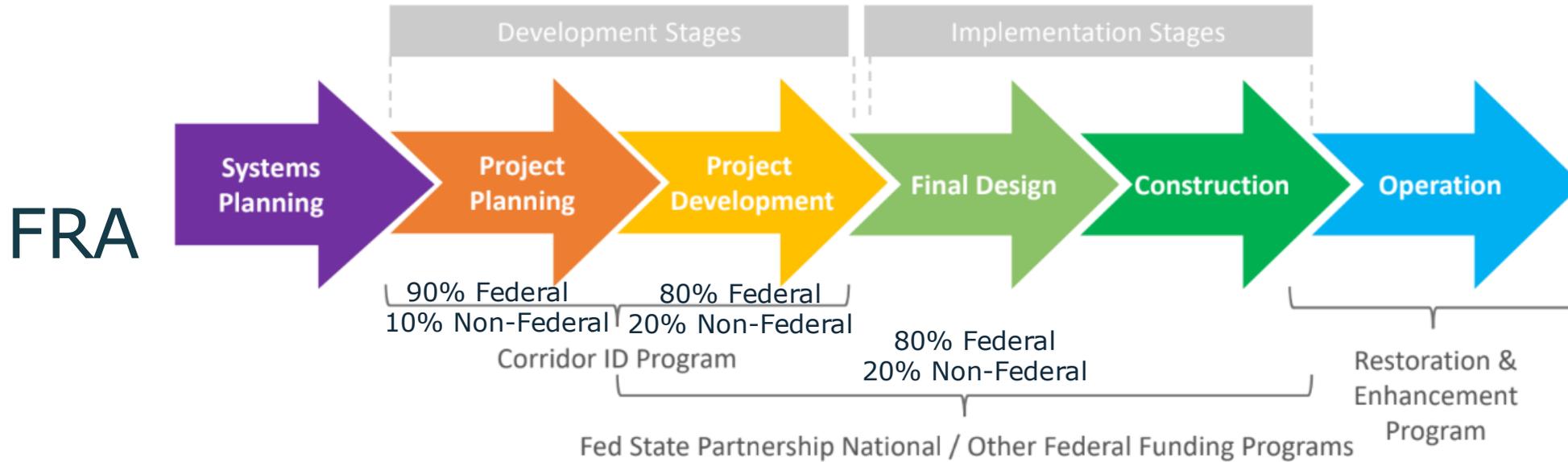
**Step 1:** Project Development (30% of non-CIG funding committed)

**Step 2:** Entry into Engineering (50% of non-CIG funding committed)

**Step 3:** Entry into Construction (50% of non-CIG funding committed)

- FTA must respond to Entry to PD requests in 45 days
- Requests should not be made Aug-Oct during annual report prep

# Federal Funding Analysis



FRA Corridor ID has a higher federal match and provides federal funding throughout project development, which aligns more closely with MARK resources

FRA partners to help develop rather than exclusively serve in a review/approval role

\* Non-Federal is reimbursable through a construction grant agreement

# Pursuing FRA Corridor ID Program

<https://railroads.dot.gov/corridor-ID-program>

## Why pursue Corridor ID?

- Process involves developing a Service Development Plan, which closely aligns with the current study
- Opportunity to advance MARK Rail further with federal investment throughout (in FTA New Starts, costs eligible for federal funding are not reimbursed until the end of the process)
- Steering Committee support for the project as an intercity rail project
- Well-defined, step-by-step process allows time to build capacity and support, and secure non-federal funding
- FRA staff work closely with project sponsors throughout process
- Schedule allows time to prepare highly competitive Corridor ID application (next funding opportunity anticipated early 2026)





# FRA Corridor ID Program Application Overview

# FRA Corridor ID Application

The elements listed below are based on the previous Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and anticipated changes based on a review of recent NOFOs for other programs.

**I. Cover Page** - Lists pertinent information outlined in NOFO

**II. Corridor Summary** - Brief 4-6 sentence summary including challenges to address, intended outcomes, and anticipated benefits

## **III. Corridor Funding**

- Identify non-federal funding available and its source
- Include overview of previous federal applications and highlight any project changes since application(s)
- Provide commitment letters as attachments or in appendix, as applicable

## **IV. Applicant Eligibility**

- Demonstrate applicant's eligibility criteria outlined in NOFO
- Cite applicable enabling legislation

# FRA Corridor ID Application

## **V. Detailed Corridor Description (15 page maximum)**

- Basic characteristics including travel markets to target, high-level initial service detail estimates (expressed as ranges or options)
- Corridor readiness and existing level of commitment to enter planning and development phase
- Eligible activities completed or ongoing
- Intended operator, if known
- Legal, technical, and financial capability of applicant and relevant partners to engage in planning and development
- Challenges to address
- Anticipated users and beneficiaries, including all railroad operators
- Applicant's interest in potential scaling proposal and/or phasing implementation

**VI. Corridor Location** - Summarize Corridor extent with map and geospatial data for reference

**VII. Evaluation and Selection Criteria** - Demonstrate compliance with evaluation and selection criteria, as outlined in the NOFO

**VIII. DOT Strategic Goals** - To the extent feasible, demonstrate Project's alignment with DOT strategic goals

	FRA Corridor ID Program for Project Development			FRA Federal-State Partnership and Other Federal Funding Programs	
Grant Phase	Step 1: Scoping the SDP	Step 2: Preparing or Updating the SDP	Step 3: PE/NEPA	Step 4: FD	Step 5: Construction
Timing	Early 2026	Secure Step 2 funding - <b>Summer/Fall 2026</b> ★	Secure funding <b>Summer 2027</b> for Step 3	Secure funding <b>Fall/Winter 2029</b> for Step 4	Secure funding <b>Fall 2031</b> for Step 5
Funding	Up to \$500,000 0% match	\$X (determine in Step 1) 10% match	\$X (determine in Step 2) 20% match	\$X (determine in Step 3) 20% match (minimum)	\$X (determine in Step 4) 20% match (minimum)
Scope	Using FRA SDP framework, sponsor develops <b>scope, schedule, budget</b> for SDP, including gap analysis to consider existing work	Sponsor develops or finalizes SDP including <b>scope, schedule, budget</b> for Step 3 and very high-level conceptual ranges for implementation costs	Sponsor completes PE and NEPA in close coordination with FRA for capital projects, outlines FD <b>budget</b> and refined estimates for construction	Sponsor completes FD in coordination with FRA for capital projects, outlines construction <b>budget</b>	Sponsor completes construction of capital projects to facilitate service outcomes outlines in the FRA grant agreement
Notes	This is a collaborative process with FRA that results in the scope, schedule, and budget for the next grant agreement for Step 2	Capital projects identified in SDP <i>may</i> advance into Step 3 at FRA's discretion based on project readiness (i.e., funding, governance, risk assessment, etc.) and funding availability	Capital projects that complete Step 3 will move into the Project Pipeline and <i>may</i> be prioritized for funding under the Federal-State Partnership Program	Capital projects that complete Step 4 will move into the Project Pipeline and <i>may</i> be prioritized for funding under the Fed-State Partnership Program	Capital projects completed in Step 5 facilitate Step 6: Operation

★ IJA expires 9/30/2026; potential new surface transportation bill

# Funding Considerations for MARK Rail

- FRA's Corridor ID project development process, the currently selected planning path, calls for a **phase-by-phase** approach to developing the project.
- MARK Rail will need to identify **10% non-federal match** funding for Step 2 SDP work determined in the gap analysis, likely **Fall 2026** if selected into CID in 2026 (Racine's existing FTA grant could also fund some of the work).
- In CID, an initial financial plan is first developed in Step 2 SDP in conjunction with FRA. Related MARK Rail Study tasks include Cost Estimation, a Funding Strategy Plan, and a Business Case.
- Subsequent PE/NEPA and Construction funding will require a **minimum of 20% match**, which may require State financial support and/or State action.

# The Current Study Progresses Many Elements of a Corridor ID SDP

- Study Tasks Ready for Initial FRA Submittal		
- Ongoing Tasks		
Task No.	SDP Task (Outlined by FRA)	FRA Recommended Deliverables
1	Project Administration and Management	Project Management Plan
		Final Performance Report
2	Purpose & Need and Stakeholder Coordination	Draft Purpose & Need
		Market Analysis
		Stakeholder Engagement Plans
3	Alternatives Analysis	Route Options
		Service Options
		Investment Packages
4	Transportation Planning	Data Collection (FRA list)
		Operations Analysis
		Travel Demand Model
		Ridership and Revenue Forecasting
		Station Area and Access Analysis
		Conceptual Engineering
		Labor & Fleet Planning
		Capital Cost Estimation
		Operating & Maintenance Cost
5	Environmental Planning	Public Engagement
		Agency Coordination
		Environmental Concerns Analysis
6	Financial Planning & BCA	Financial Planning
		Benefits-Cost Analysis
7	Governance Structure	Org Chart
		Stakeholder Agreements
8	Implementation Planning	Implementation Plan

# Consideration to Authorize Preparing Corridor ID Application for MARK Rail

- **Request to authorize Project Team to prepare application to enter Corridor ID once the program's funding opportunity is announced**
- Project Team would request authorization to submit completed application at one of the next MARK Commission meetings

# Next Meeting and Contact Info

- Next Commission meeting will be scheduled for early 2026
- MARK Commission Point of Contact:  
Trevor Jung  
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- Media Point of Contact:  
Leslie Flynn  
Communications Director, City of Racine  
[leslie.flynn@cityofracine.org](mailto:leslie.flynn@cityofracine.org)
- Additional information can be found at [www.markrail.org](http://www.markrail.org)

