

President's Perspective

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On January 28, 2010, President Obama announced the awarding of \$8 billion in high speed and inter-city passenger rail grants to 31 different states. The grants have been awarded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to fund the development of 13 targeted high-speed rail corridors. I congratulate President Obama and Vice-President Biden for their foresight and vision and look forward to BMWED's participation in the expansion of both higher-speed and true high-speed passenger rail.

Our Brotherhood has long supported government investment in the development and expansion of safe and reliable passenger rail service. I am proud to say that BMWED played a prominent role in helping to secure passenger rail funding under the ARRA. We have long known that an efficient and balanced transportation infrastructure is necessary for economic growth and development. After many decades of government neglect, it is refreshing to finally have national leaders who understand the benefits of passenger rail and are willing to help fund its development.

Grant funds for passenger rail under the ARRA have been awarded to the following projects:

- * California: \$2.3 billion. The bulk of these funds are targeted to begin work on an 800-mile-long, high-speed rail line tying Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay area to Los Angeles and San Diego. A portion of these funds will also go towards improving other existing passenger rail service and increasing maximum authorized speeds on those lines.
- * Florida: \$1.25 billion. The bulk of these funds are slated to build 84 miles of new rail line connecting Tampa with Orlando, with future plans to extend the line southward to Miami.
- * Illinois-Missouri: \$1.1 billion. For track and signal improvements to the existing corridor between Chicago and St. Louis and an increase in operating speeds to 110 mph.
- * Massachusetts: \$40 million. For construction of a second main-line track linking Springfield, MA with New Haven, Conn.
- * Michigan: \$244 million. To improve operating speeds and renovate and build stations on the existing 300-mile corridor linking Detroit with Chicago.
- * Missouri: \$31 million. To improve existing railroad bridges, crossovers, and grade crossings on the line linking St. Louis and Kansas City.
- * Northeast Corridor: \$112 million. Funds slated for several long-neglected projects in Amtrak's premier passenger corridor. Such projects include the completion of engineering and environmental work for a new tunnel under Baltimore Harbor, passenger station upgrades and

improvements, and various track and bridge projects in Maryland, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Washington, DC.

* North Carolina: \$520 million. Funds slated for existing line to increase top speeds to 90 mph on trains between Raleigh and Charlotte, and double the number of round trips on an existing route that links Washington, D.C., Richmond, Raleigh and Charlotte.

* Ohio: \$400 million. Funds slated for a number of projects across the state, including track upgrades, grade crossings, new stations, and maintenance facilities on a line known as the Cleveland-Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati corridor.

* Wisconsin: \$810 million. To upgrade and refurbish passenger stations and install Positive Train Control on the existing Madison-to-Milwaukee leg of a line that stretches from Minneapolis to Chicago.

* Washington-Oregon: \$590 million. To increase line capacity, improve existing track and signal systems, and upgrade stations in the corridor linking Eugene, Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.

The ARRA awards come at a time when American workers are still suffering from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Upgrading existing rail corridors for higher-speed passenger service will help preserve BMWED jobs and create new ones. Building new high-speed rail passenger corridors will create additional jobs and spur economic development along these new routes. America's long-awaited "down-payment" for the development of high-speed rail will have both short-term and long-term benefits for our country. It will preserve and create jobs, spur U.S. manufacturing, increase economic development, decrease our dependence of foreign oil, improve the environment, reduce highway and airport congestion, and improve our ability to move goods and people safely and efficiently.

Members of the BMWED possess the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to immediately commence the building and upgrading of tracks and related infrastructure to improve passenger rail service. We are ready to claim our rightful place and lead the resurgence of passenger railroading in the United States. I promise you that as President of the BMWED, I will fight to preserve every existing maintenance-of-way job and will work tirelessly to expand the ranks of BMWED and increase work opportunities for our members under the ARRA. For the past 123 years, BMWED and its members have been recognized for their skill, safety, dedication, and efficiency in "Keeping America on Track." I intend to do everything in my power, and use every resource at my disposal, to ensure BMWED maintains its position as the preeminent track construction and maintenance union in the United States.