

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2961

To establish the Office of Planning for Future Intercity Transportation within the Office of the Secretary of Transportation.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 20, 2014

Mr. BEGICH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To establish the Office of Planning for Future Intercity Transportation within the Office of the Secretary of Transportation.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Office of Planning for
5 Future Intercity Transportation Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) High-speed passenger rail technology, while
9 not new in Europe and Asia, is a new transportation
10 technology in the United States. Its design, develop-

1 ment, construction, financing, funding, and oper-
2 ation require specific skills and expertise that are
3 not abundant in the United States, and will require
4 years to develop.

5 (2) Unlike highways, mass transit, and aviation,
6 high-speed rail requires unique and separated rights
7 of way to operate and must be fully integrated with
8 other passenger transportation system elements to
9 be successful.

10 (3) In order to ensure the proper development
11 of high-speed intercity passenger rail service in the
12 United States, it is critical that a dedicated office be
13 established at the highest levels of the Federal Gov-
14 ernment to coordinate and facilitate the intricate re-
15 lationships between—

16 (A) various levels of government; and

17 (B) the wide range of industrial interests
18 that will be required to work together to make
19 high-speed rail successful.

20 (4) Resources for transportation infrastructure
21 are in high demand. Many people contend that there
22 are not enough resources to maintain the transpor-
23 tation system the Nation has built, let alone to build
24 new modes of transportation such as high-speed
25 intercity passenger rail.

1 (5) The capacity of the current transportation
2 system threatens the present and future competitive-
3 ness of the United States. Unless investments are
4 made in new, faster, and more efficient transpor-
5 tation capacity, such as intercity high-speed pas-
6 senger rail, it will be very difficult for the United
7 States—

8 (A) to rise out of its current economic con-
9 dition; or

10 (B) to regain its leadership role domesti-
11 cally and internationally.

12 (6) Placing the development of a national sys-
13 tem of intercity high-speed rail corridors that are
14 highly integrated with other modes of transportation
15 under the direct supervision of the Secretary of
16 Transportation and delegating the day-to-day ad-
17 ministration of such system to an Assistant Sec-
18 retary will ensure an effective launch and the effi-
19 cient operation of a new national transportation mo-
20 dality.

21 (7) It is in the interest of the United States to
22 expeditiously develop and deploy intercity high-speed
23 passenger rail under the singularly focused direction
24 of the Secretary of Transportation.

1 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term “Assist-
4 ant Secretary” means the head of the Office of
5 Planning for Future Intercity Transportation.

6 (2) ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANT.—The term “eligi-
7 ble participant” means—

8 (A) a State that has participated in the
9 process to develop and implement a cost alloca-
10 tion methodology under section 209(a) of the
11 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement
12 Act of 2008 (49 U.S.C. 24101 note);

13 (B) a group consisting solely of States de-
14 scribed in subparagraph (A);

15 (C) an Interstate Compact consisting solely
16 of States described in subparagraph (A);

17 (D) a public agency established by 1 or
18 more of the States described in subparagraph
19 (A) that is responsible for providing intercity
20 passenger rail service; or

21 (E) any entity that seeks to perform serv-
22 ices under a contract awarded pursuant to this
23 Act by providing—

24 (i) a description of how the entity in-
25 tends to perform the covered services; and

1 (ii) materials demonstrating the enti-
 2 ty's capability to perform the proposed
 3 services in accordance with the require-
 4 ments under this Act.

5 (3) OFFICE.—The term “Office” means the Of-
 6 fice of Planning for Future Intercity Transportation
 7 established within the Office of the Secretary of
 8 Transportation pursuant to section 4.

9 (4) PROGRAM PARTICIPANT.—The term “pro-
 10 gram participant” means an eligible participant that
 11 has entered into an authorized procurement process
 12 under this Act.

13 (5) RAIL CARRIER.—The term “rail carrier”
 14 has the meaning given such term in section
 15 10102(5) of title 49, United States Code.

16 (6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
 17 the Secretary of Transportation.

18 (7) STATE.—The term “State” means each of
 19 the several States and the District of Columbia.

20 **SEC. 4. OFFICE OF PLANNING FOR FUTURE INTERCITY**
 21 **TRANSPORTATION.**

22 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 6 months after
 23 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
 24 establish the Office of Planning for Future Intercity
 25 Transportation within the Office of the Secretary of

1 Transportation. The Office shall be composed of the Office
2 of High-Speed Rail Policy, the Office of High-Speed Plan-
3 ning, and the Office of High-Speed Rail Operations and
4 Safety.

5 (b) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—

6 (1) APPOINTMENT.—The head of the Office
7 shall be the Assistant Secretary for Intercity Trans-
8 portation Planning, who shall be appointed by the
9 President, by and with the advice and consent of the
10 Senate.

11 (2) DUTIES.—The Assistant Secretary shall—

12 (A) serve as the principal policy advisor to
13 the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary on
14 High-Speed Rail; and

15 (B) assume responsibility for all activities
16 of the Federal Government associated with
17 high-speed rail that were previously delegated
18 to the Administrator of the Federal Railroad
19 Administration or otherwise authorized by Con-
20 gress.

21 (c) FUNCTIONS.—Under the direction of the Assist-
22 ant Secretary, the Office shall oversee the planning, devel-
23 opment, construction, financing, funding, and operation of
24 high-speed rail in selected corridors throughout the United
25 States.

1 (d) FEASIBILITY STUDY.—Not later than 2 years
 2 after the date on which the Office is established under this
 3 section, the Secretary shall submit to Congress the results
 4 of a feasibility study that identifies and prioritizes cor-
 5 ridors that offer the best opportunity to provide point-to-
 6 point transportation service based on—

- 7 (1) travel demand;
- 8 (2) the total cost of construction and operation;
- 9 and
- 10 (3) expected passenger and other business rev-
 11 enue generated from the operation of transportation
 12 service.

13 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appro-
 15 priated out of the Highway Trust Fund, for each of the
 16 fiscal years 2015, 2016, and 2017—

- 17 (1) \$20,000,000 to carry out the feasibility
 18 study required under section 4(d); and
- 19 (2) \$5,000,000 for administrative expenses in-
 20 curred by the Office.

21 (b) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—

- 22 (1) FEASIBILITY STUDY.—Amounts appro-
 23 priated pursuant to subsection (a)(1) shall be avail-
 24 able for the procurement of contract services to

1 carry out such studies as the Secretary determines
2 necessary to carry out section 4(d).

3 (2) OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—Amounts appro-
4 priated pursuant to subsection (a)(2) shall be avail-
5 able for the procurement of contract services to
6 carry out any other requirement under this Act.

○