

RAILCET INTELLIGENCE REPORT #36

To: RAILCET
From: Ray Chambers
Subject: APTA Rail Leg Steering Committee -UP-NS Merger and FRA RSAC Dissolution Discussion

Date: August 22, 2025

Yesterday, I participated in the August meeting of the APTA High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Steering Committee. Highlights were discussions on the UP-NS merger and its impact on rail passenger service and the termination of the RSAC program at FRA. The meeting was Chaired by California Deputy Secretary for Rail and Transit Chad Edison and APTA Policy VP Art Guzzetti.

UP-NS Merger Proposal. Allan Rutter led the discussion on Union Pacific's \$85 billion plan to acquire Norfolk Southern, which would create the first coast-to-coast railroad in the United States. The combined company will continue to be called Union Pacific. Neither Burlington Northern nor CSX have announced any counter move.

The STB outlined a rather thorough process including notifications, timelines, and public notice requirements. If the UP-NS merger application is filed by January 2026, the process could extend to late 2027 or later due to review complexity, public feedback, and potential hearings. Stakeholder scrutiny is expected, with conditions likely proposed. The STB probably won't address third-party conditions until next summer, but interested parties should begin preparations. So far, shippers have withheld comments, while labor groups have raised concerns.

A UP-NS merger will have major implications for the future of intercity passenger rail service. The question is whether the merger will improve reliability or exacerbate delays. Amtrak has been quiet, but Rutter said they will likely push for conditions that will protect or even enhance Amtrak service. Amtrak board member Elaine Clegg confirmed that Amtrak has taken no formal position and is now analyzing negative impacts and potential condition requests. There was discussion as to whether APTA should weigh in--but no opinions given. The Rail Passenger Association has stated they will participate in the STB review. All passenger advocacy groups, including AIPRO/RAILCET, have a real interest in this question and you can be sure we will be following it carefully.

FRA Regulations–RSAC Disbanded. The Federal Railroad Administration recently closed the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC), following the Trump Administration's directive to disband advisory groups under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. FRA did not issue a press release or even give any public notice. Rather they sent private termination notices to all RSAC members. Participants in the APTA discussion agreed RSAC, which was created by our Trusted Advisor Jolene Molitoris, when Administrator, played a key role in achieving management-labor consensus on safety regulations. Following RSAC rail safety improved measurably. The consensus seems to be that the new administrator should reconstitute RSAC in some form. Undoubtedly it will be aligned with the current Trump priorities.

AGENDA

Opening Remarks by Chad Edison and APTA VP Art Guzzetti

- FRA Update: Sergio Coronado
- Amtrak Updates:
 - Airo Cars: Celia Pfleckl
 - General Updates: Mariah Morales
- MTI / APTA Webinar Thursday, September 4: [From Paris to Madrid: What Great Stations Teach Us](#) - Karen Philbrick
- UP / NS Railroad Merger and the implications for passenger rail - Allan Rutter
- FRA Regulations / RSAC Update (attachments): Bryan Sooter / Jim Michel
- Legislative Update: Benji Schwartz
- Boston TRANSform Conference:
 - Saturday, September 13 HS&IPR 7:00 pm Dinner Options / Signup
 - Sunday, September 14 HS&IPR Committee Meeting (4:00 - 5:30 pm)
 - NEC Session (Tuesday, September 16, 1:30 - 2:30 pm)
 - New Acela Trainsets on Northeast Corridor
- [SPEEDLINES](#) - Ken Sislak
- APTA 2026 APTA Conference Lineup - Art Guzzetti
- Open Mic: News and information sharing
- Adjourn