

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Amit Bose
Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Support for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Application: ***The Rail Academy of Central California***

Dear Administrator Bose,

I write in support of the application by the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRR) to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program (CRISI) for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Application competitive grant program for The Rail Academy of Central California (TRACC).

The rail and transit industries are struggling to attract new talent to replace a workforce that is aging and cycling out. The Rail Academy will address our region's current training and accessibility gap. Sacramento City College (Sac City) has suspended its railroad workforce program in our region, hampering efforts to attract young talent. Many previous Sac City program graduates have successful, well-paying careers with Union Pacific Railroad, Amtrak, and SJRR.

TRACC will base its FRA-approved curriculum on the original Sac City College program while providing students with hands-on training at the Altamont Corridor Express Rail Maintenance Facility (RMF) in Stockton. This modern, 157,000 sq. ft. facility will give students an unrivaled opportunity to learn the skills they need to succeed and grow within the industry. The RMF currently maintains the appropriate facilities for classroom-style instruction.

We understand that TRACC, led by SJRR, will create employment opportunities that will directly enhance our region's economic growth. SJRR's goal and that of their sectoral partners, the Stockton Unified School District and Sac City, is to provide the youth of Stockton, California, and the adult learners of the surrounding region with the opportunity to gain marketable skills to position them for success in the rail industry. TRACC represents an innovative strategic partnership between educational, public, and business entities.

The Federal Railroad Administration has only made four workforce development grants in the history of the program. TRACC provides FRA a tremendous opportunity to address structural workforce challenges and specifically benefit students and adult learners in

federally designated Areas of Persistent Poverty and in Historically Disadvantaged Communities.

A strong national passenger rail system requires a strong workforce. The advancement of TRACC and other similar workforce development opportunities will result in mobility and growth for current employees, and new opportunities for currently unemployed and underemployed workers.

SJRRC is requesting \$2 million in Federal CRISI grant funding for TRACC. SJRRC will provide the required 20 percent matching funds.

Madera County Transportation Commission would like to thank the USDOT for its consideration and welcomes the opportunity to support SJRRC in the pursuit of CRISI grant funding to support TRACC.

We urge your careful consideration and review of this important funding request.

Sincerely,



Patricia Taylor
Executive Director
Madera County Transportation Commission