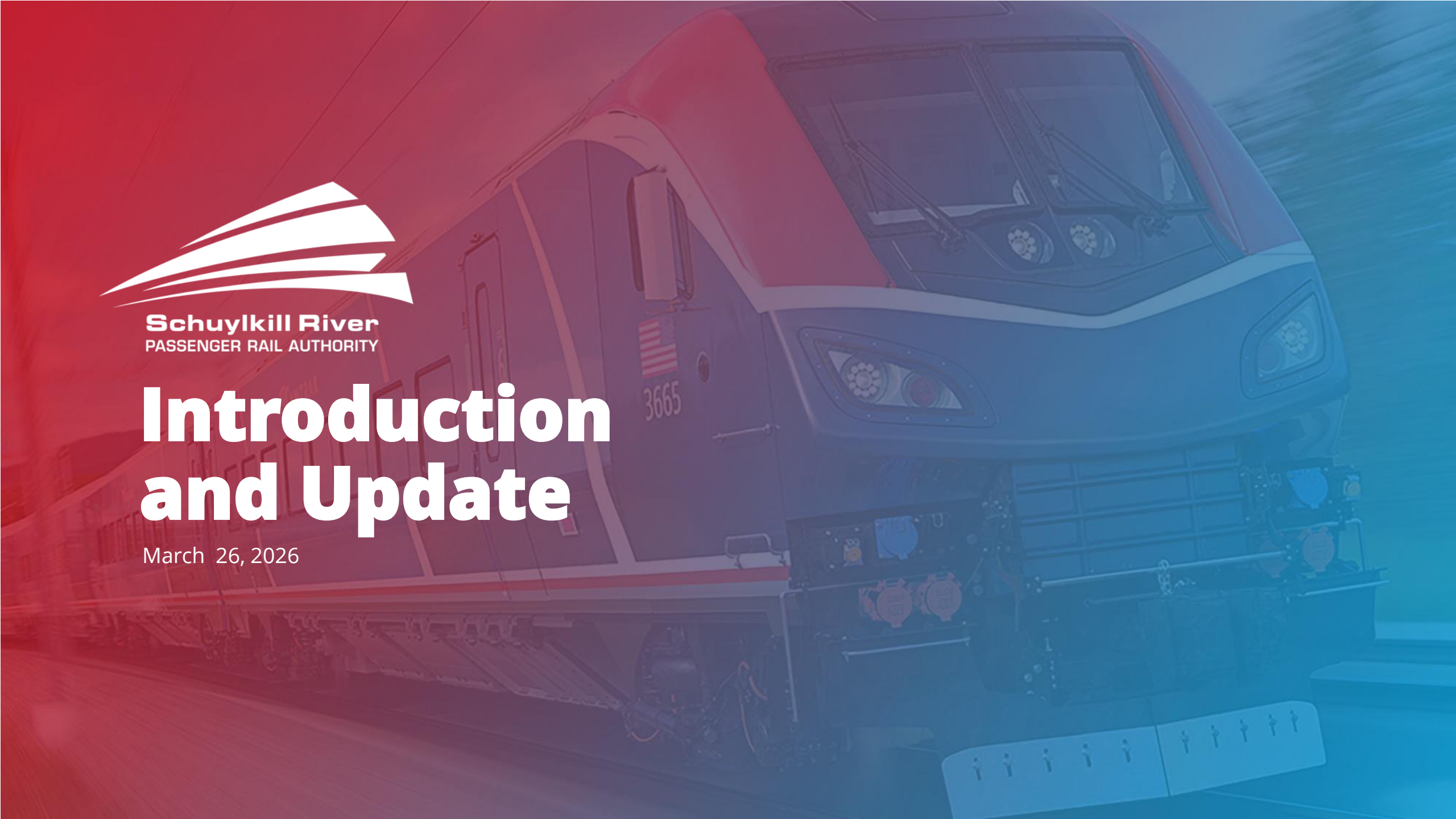




Schuylkill River
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY

Introduction and Update

March 26, 2026



Today's Agenda:

- Reading-Philadelphia Passenger Rail History
- SRPRA – A Single-Purpose Agency
- Authority Organization
- Federal Railroad Administration Corridor Program
- SRPRA Project Plan and Project Timeline
- Technical Details
- Next Steps
- Contact Information

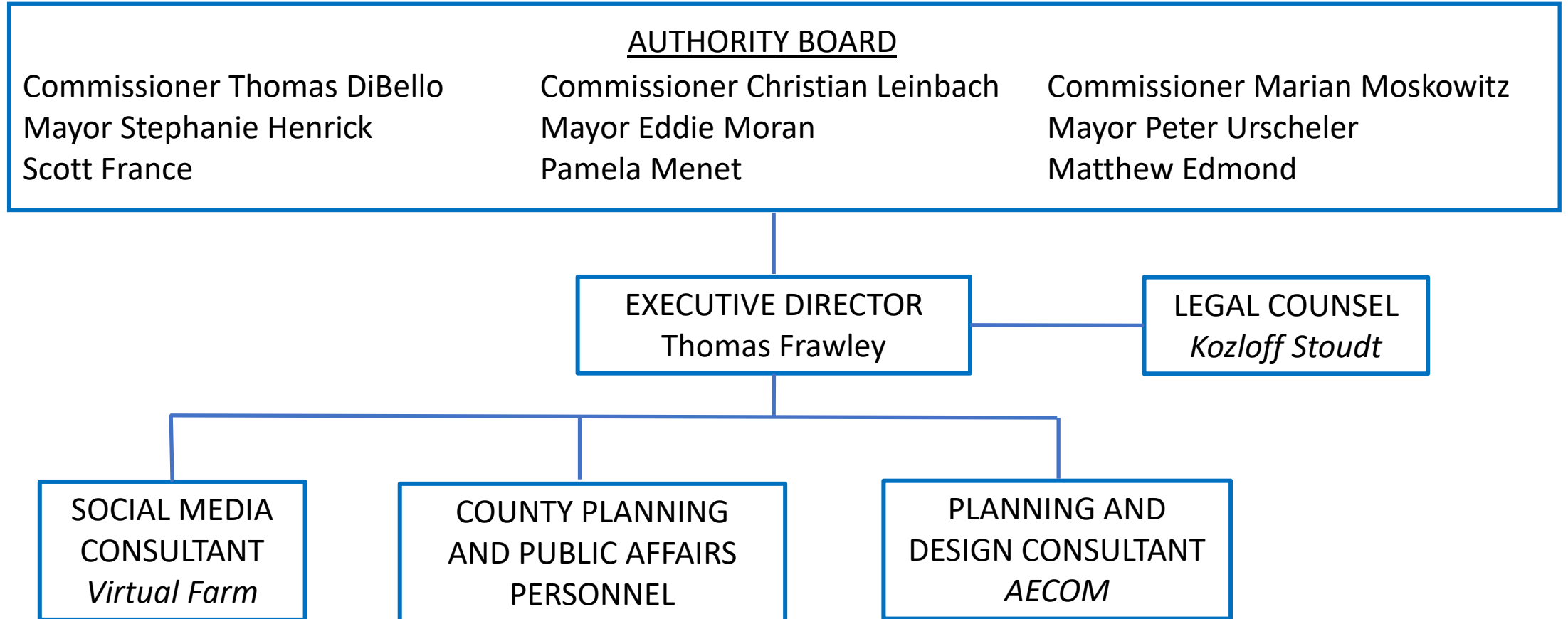
Reading-Philadelphia Passenger Rail History

- Philadelphia & Reading Rail Road founded April 4, 1833 to haul coal between Pottsville, Reading and Philadelphia.
- Passenger rail volumes reach record levels during World War II.
- Service shrinks to peak-period-only schedule in the 1960s.
- SEPTA assumes responsibility in 1976.
- SEPTA suspends service in 1981.
- NS studied commuter rail alternative in 2005; and Schuylkill Valley Metro light rail transit project cancelled in 2006.
- Most recent studies were prepared by PennDOT (2020) and the Berks Alliance and the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (2020)

SRPRA – A Single-Purpose Agency

- 2021 – Committee formed by Berks, Montgomery and Chester Counties
- June 16, 2022 – Authority incorporated
- September 2022 – Hired Executive Director
- March 2023 – Submitted FRA CIDP application
- December 8, 2023 – Accepted by FRA into CIDP
- December 2023 – Selected AECOM as planning and design consultant
- March 2024 – FRA grant funds obligated and Step 1 work initiated
- August 2025 – Step 1 work officially approved by FRA.

SRPRA Organization



Federal Railroad Administration CIDP

- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is part of US Department of Transportation (USDOT).
- The pathway for all intercity passenger rail corridor projects is the FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP).
- Program created as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), aka the Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), on November 15, 2021.
- SRPRA submitted Expression of Interest in July 2022 and application in March 2023, and was accepted into CIDP on December 8, 2023.
- CIDP Step 1 work was initiated March 1, 2024, largely completed by late 2024, and officially completed in August 2025.
- Currently awaiting advancement into Step 2.

FRA CIDP Includes 3 Steps

PROGRAM PHASE	MATCH
Step 1: Develop Project Management Plan (PMP); Perform Gap Analysis; and, Develop Scope, Schedule and Cost Estimate to Prepare Service Development Plan (SDP)	Up to \$500k; No Match Required; Actual Spend \$412k
Step 2: Prepare Service Development Plan	No Ceiling Identified; 10% Match Required
Step 3: Preliminary Engineering and Design (30%); and, Environmental Documentation	No Ceiling Identified; 20% Match Required

FRA CIDP Step 1

- Project Management Plan (PMP) addressed:
 - Project management team roles and responsibilities
 - Processes and procedures for maintenance of schedule and budget
 - Compliance with federal reporting requirements
- Reviewed Previous Studies to Identify Useable Materials for Service Development Plan (aka Gap Analysis)
- Completed Scoping Tasks for Performance of CIDP Step 2:
 - Statement of Work
 - Schedule
 - Budget

FRA CIDP Step 2

- Create Service Development Plan (SDP) consisting of:
 - Formal Project Goals and Objectives / Statement of Purpose and Need
 - Identification and Evaluation of Alternatives
 - Ridership and Revenue Forecasts
 - Operational Analysis
 - Station and Access Analysis
 - Conceptual Engineering and Capital Programming
 - O&M Costs and Capital Replacement Forecasts / Financial Plan
 - Community Involvement / Outreach
 - Environmental Scan
 - Long-Term Governance Plan
 - Economic Analysis
- Prepare Scope, Schedule and Budget for Step 3

Step 2 – Community Involvement

- Outreach spans Railroad Stakeholders, Agencies/Municipalities, and the Public.
- Outreach will expand with advancement into Step 2.
 - Focused to-date on municipalities and stakeholder groups in Reading, Pottstown, Phoenixville.
 - Future efforts will include more public involvement through information sharing and in-person meetings and open-houses.
 - Underrepresented populations and environmental justice communities will be particularly important in shaping the outreach efforts.
 - Smaller communities in the Reading – Philadelphia corridor will be included in expanded outreach efforts.

Step 2 – Environmental Scan

- Environmental scan will seek to identify potential environmental issues to be examined in detail during CIDP Step 3.
- Scan will consist primarily of review of previous studies to identify previously raised environmental concerns, a workshop exercise to identify potential additional concerns by considering individual project elements, e.g., locomotive models and station facilities, and limited field inspection/documentation.
- Scan will include areas anticipated to be addressed during preparation of Environmental Documentation, presumably a Categorical Exclusion, during CIDP Step 3.
 - Air Quality Impacts
 - Traffic Impacts
 - Historic Resources

Step 2 – Environmental Benefits

- Scan Will Highlight Anticipated Environmental Benefits:
 - Reduced Automobile Exhaust Emissions
 - Reduced Automobile Tire Dust and Noise
 - Reduced Traffic Congestion in US422 Corridor
 - Reduced Sprawl Development

FRA CIDP Step 3

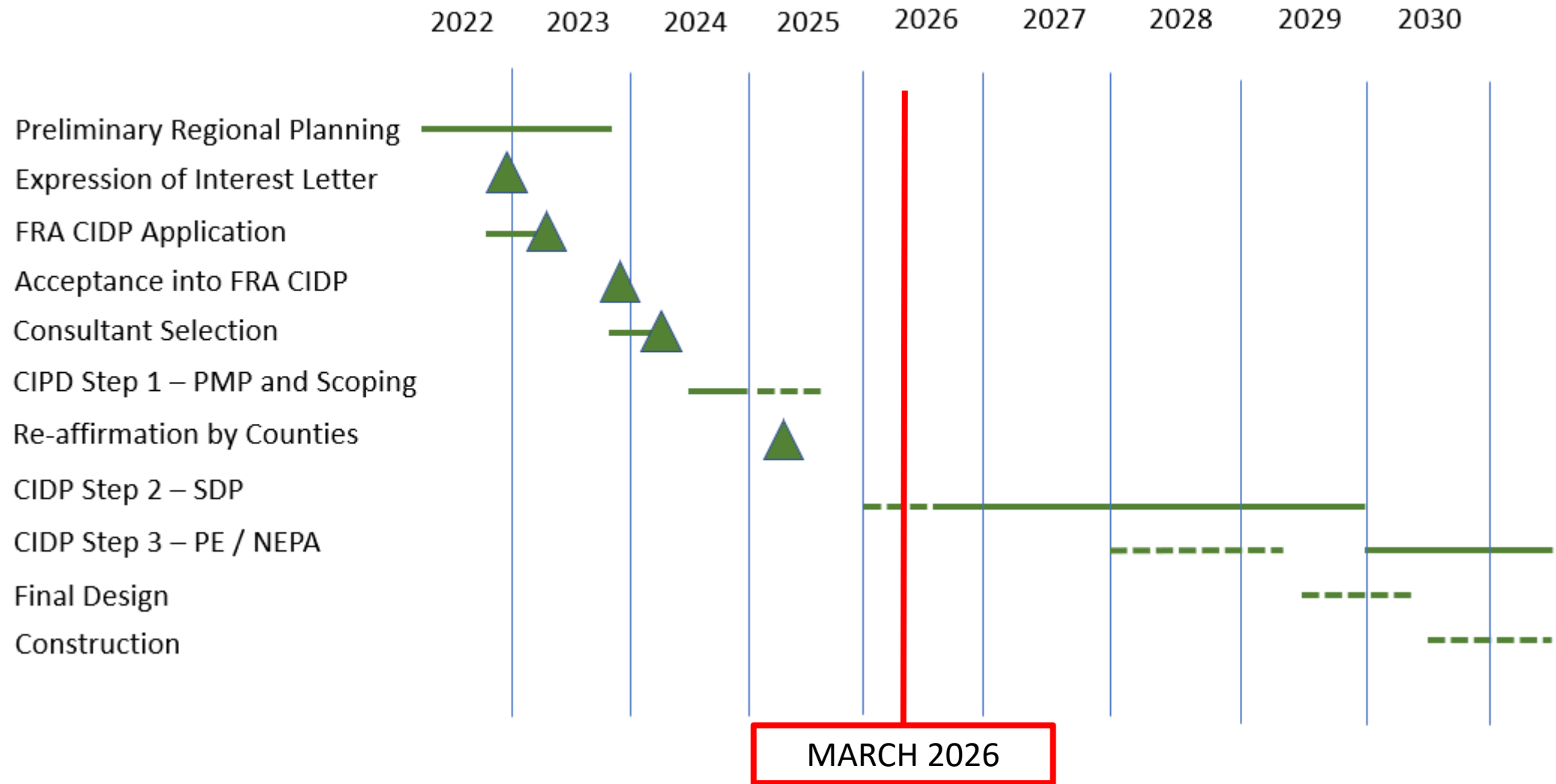
- Preliminary Engineering and Design (30%)
 - Track
 - Signals and PTC
 - Stations
 - Tunnels, if needed
- NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) documentation; Seeking Categorical Exclusion (CE)
 - Significant Adverse Effects on the Human Environment
 - Induced Significant Changes in Land Use
 - Relocation of People
 - Unusual Circumstances Requiring Further Study
 - Substantial Controversy
 - Impacts on Properties Protected Under Paragraph 4(f), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
 - Inconsistencies with Other Laws



Beyond CIDP Step 3

- Final Design
 - End products include construction bid documents
- Construction
 - Work on railroad property likely to combine “Force Account” (i.e., railroad employees) and qualified contractors
 - Work on stations and parking facilities anticipated to be performed by qualified contractors
 - Project delivery likely to be design-bid-build, but design-build possible for some project elements
 - Prevailing wage requirements expected to apply due to government funding
- Start up and Revenue Service
 - Training and qualification of personnel
 - Revenue service launch

SRPRA Project Timeline



SRPRA Project Status

- CIDP Step 1 Complete
 - Completed Project Management Plan (Approved April 8, 2024)
 - Completed Gap Analysis (Approved June 3, 2024)
 - Final revision of Draft Step 2 Statement of Work, Schedule and Budget approved by FRA technical staff, and FRA legal staff comments received and incorporated in late May 2025.
 - Step 1 activities officially concluded mid-August 2025.
- Entering CIDP Step 2 (Service Development Plan) early in 2026
 - Multiple Step 2 Tasks in-progress using in-house resources
 - New Step 2 FRA Grant Agreement and Forms for Step 2
 - Re-start AECOM consulting tasks after grant agreement in-place
 - Execute non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and service development agreements (SDAs) with host railroads

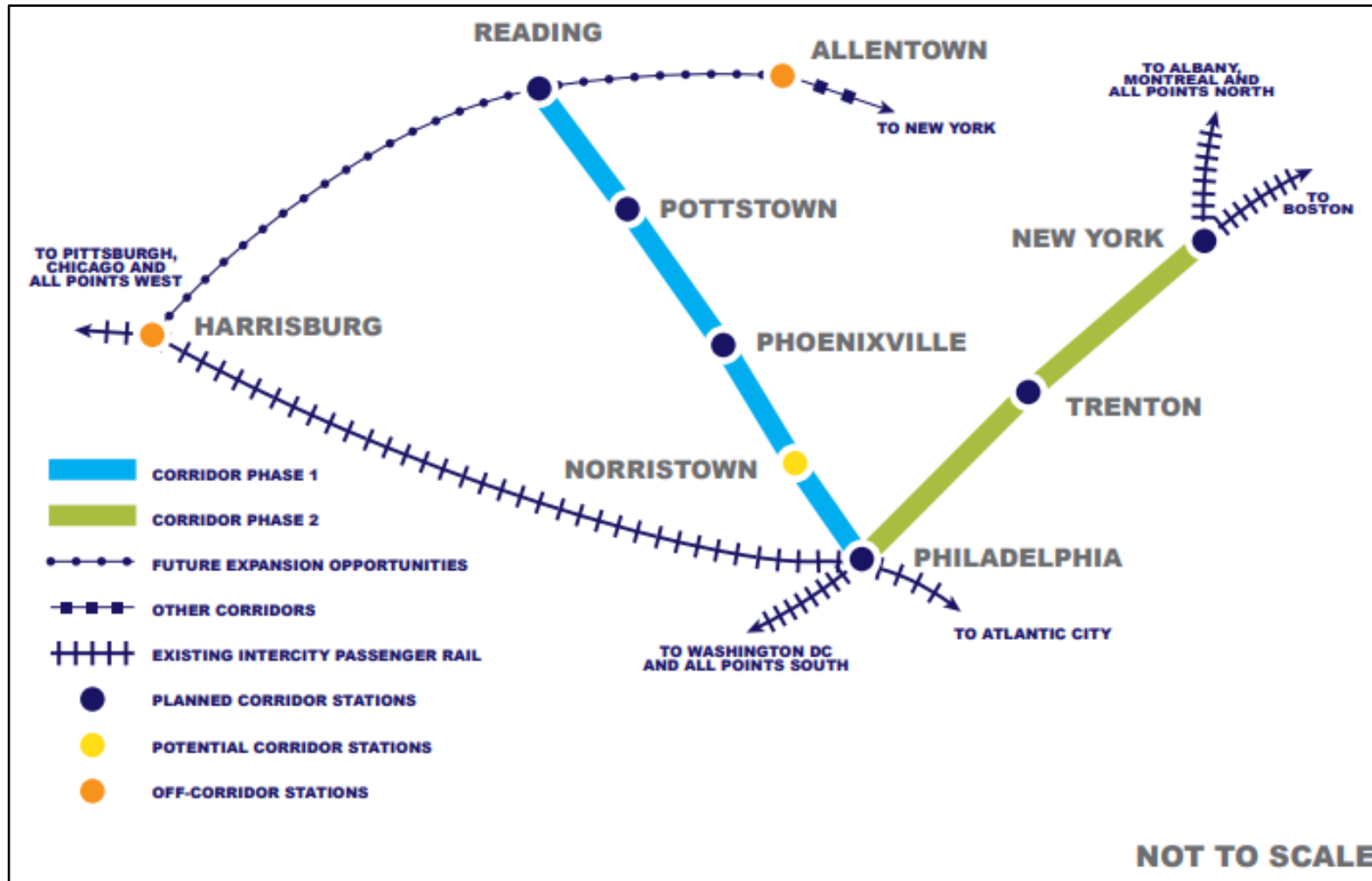
SRPRA Project Status

- Step 2 Tasks Currently In-Progress
 - Project Management Plan
 - Uses FRA Provided Template
 - Draft Preliminary Statement of Purpose and Need
 - Guides subsequent Tasks and Subtasks
 - Methodology Reports
 - Build upon Statement of Work (SOW) prepared in Step 1
 - Require FRA approval before individual Tasks and Subtasks may be performed
 - Route Alternatives Analysis for Bridgeport-Philadelphia Segment
 - Planned to reduce three Route Options to two or possibly one
 - Includes input from SEPTA and Amtrak

SRPRA Plan – A Phased Approach

- Phase 1: Reading – Philadelphia
 - Begin with approximately six to eight daily rail round-trips
 - Expand to ten or more daily rail round-trips when justified by demand
 - Possibly complement rail with limited bus service
- Phase 2: Reading – Philadelphia – New York “One-Seat Ride”
 - Requires completion of Gateway Projects in New York (c2035+)
 - Requires delivery of new Amtrak dual-powered *Airo* rolling stock
- Beyond Phase 2: Long-Term Possibilities
 - Harrisburg – Connection with PennDOT Keystone/Pennsylvanian
 - Allentown – Connection to Lehigh Valley and beyond

SRPRA Plan - A Phased Approach



Technical Details

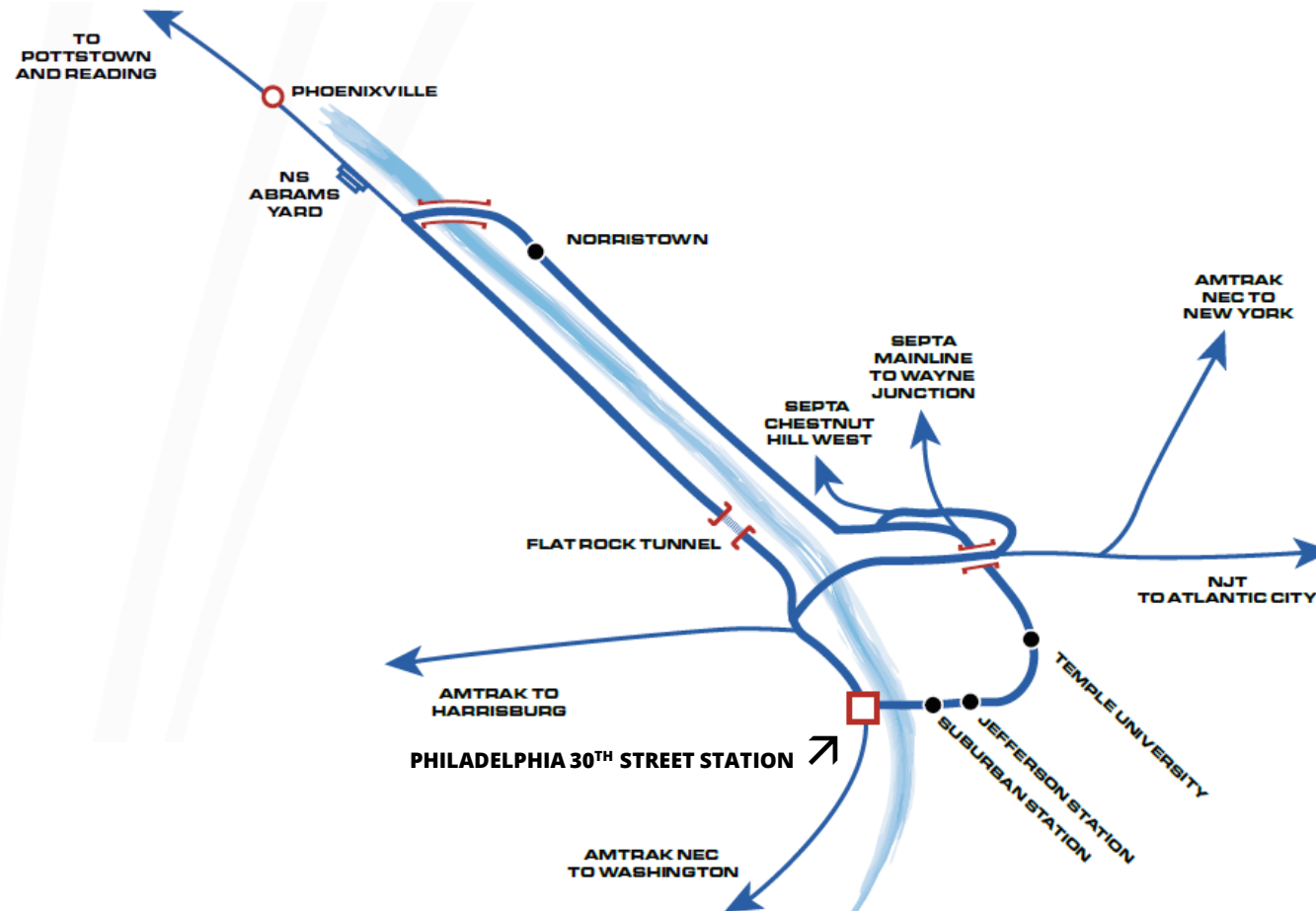
- Route Alignment Alternatives
- Infrastructure and Systems
 - Track
 - Signals and PTC
 - Stations
 - Tunnels (if needed)
- Rolling Stock



Technical Details – Route Alternatives

- Alternatives Analysis underway for selection of preferred alignment between Bridgeport and 30th Street Station in Philadelphia.
- Three candidate alignments identified:
 - Norfolk Southern on south/west side of Schuylkill River to CSX Philadelphia Subdivision and Belmont Branch to Amtrak via Zoo Interlocking;
 - SEPTA on north/east side of Schuylkill River to new “Reverse Swampoodle Connection” and onto Amtrak in North Philadelphia; and,
 - SEPTA on north/east side of Schuylkill River to Center City Commuter Connection tunnel and upper level of 30th Street Station

Technical Details – Route Alternatives



Technical Details – Track

- The existing track is in excellent condition including Norfolk Southern (NS), CSXT, SEPTA and Amtrak. NS between Reading and Philadelphia is largely FRA Class III or higher, allowing 60 MPH and potentially higher speed for passenger trains, subject to geometric limitations.
- New track will need to be added to increase operational flexibility and capacity, likely consisting of both sidings and crossovers.
- Depending upon the alignment chosen between Bridgeport and Philadelphia, a new “Reverse Swampoodle Connection” may need to be built or a connection within Amtrak’s Zoo Interlocking may need to be restored.

Technical Details – Signals and PTC

- At locations where track and special trackwork (e.g., turnouts or crossovers) are added, corresponding signal system modifications are required.
- The entirety of the route, including all three alternatives between Bridgeport and Philadelphia on the initial Reading – Philadelphia Segment, are already equipped with Congressionally-mandated Positive Train Control (PTC).

Technical Details – Stations

- Local communities have primary responsibility for station buildings and parking facilities, consistent with Amtrak policy; SRPRA will lead efforts related to platforms and canopies within host railroad right-of-way.
- Initial station locations are in Reading, Pottstown and Phoenixville. If Norristown is served, the existing Norristown Transportation Center would presumably be the station in that community.
- Station platforms are anticipated to be 48” above top-of-rail (TOR) to achieve ADA compliant level boarding, potentially requiring dedicated passenger tracks at station platforms to avoid interference with host freight railroad clearance requirements.

Technical Details – Tunnels

- Black Rock Tunnel in Phoenixville is single-track to allow modern doublestack container freight train clearances without significantly modifying the original two-track bore. If the single-track tunnel is concluded to be an unacceptable capacity constraint, it would need to be enlarged to allow two tracks that comply with current dimensional requirements.
- Flat Rock Tunnel in Philadelphia could also be found to be an unacceptable capacity constraint. If the NS/CSXT alignment between Bridgeport and Philadelphia is selected, this tunnel could also require enlargement.

Technical Details – Rolling Stock

- Amtrak procuring up to 83 *Airo* trainsets from Siemens, to be manufactured in Sacramento
- Options for up to 130 additional trainsets
- Bi-Directional, with control cabs at both ends
- Variable length, with 6 cars being the standard configuration
- Diesel, electric and dual-powered propulsion modes available
- ADA compliance via car-borne lifts and level boarding at floor height station platforms.



Technical Details – Rolling Stock

- *Airo* amenities include:
 - Comfortable seating
 - Individual power outlets and USB ports
 - Onboard Wi-Fi
 - Enhanced lighting and panoramic windows
 - Large vestibules
 - Contemporary food service experience including self-service options
 - Advanced HVAC systems
 - Touchless restroom controls



Funding - Secured

- CIDP funding will support completion of the SDP (Step 2) and Preliminary Design/ Environmental Documentation (Step 3) but requires state and/or local match.
- Pennsylvania LSA Grants (No Match Requirement):
 - \$250k through Montgomery County application
 - \$406k through SRPRA application
 - Planned to be used as match for federal funding in CIDP Step 2 and 3
- Congressionally Directed Spending Grant: \$750k to Berks County through FRA
 - No match requirement
 - Cannot be used as match for other federal funding
 - Planned to be used for final design and/or construction, post CIDP

Funding - Future

- Potential Federal Funding Sources
 - National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program
 - Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program
 - Passenger Rail Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program
 - Other grant programs
 - Additional Congressionally Directed Spending Grants
- Potential State Funding Sources
 - PennDOT Programs
 - Pennsylvania DCED Programs

Project Economic Impacts

- Temporary Economic Benefits
 - Construction of Railroad and Station Area Improvements
 - Construction of New Housing and Commercial Spaces
- Permanent Economic Benefits
 - Passenger Rail Direct Employment
 - Increased Indirect Employment
 - Expanded Tax Base for Property and Income Taxes

Next Steps – Near Term Priorities

- Formally advance into FRA CIDP Step 2
- Formalize relationships with host railroads Norfolk Southern and either CSXT or SEPTA depending upon alignment selected
- Formalize relationship with proposed operator Amtrak
- Advance planning for participation in Amtrak *Airo* rolling stock procurement.
- Advance financial planning including applications for additional state funds for CIDP matching funds and federal funds post-CIDP for final design and construction
- Advance institutional planning regarding long term governance.
- Continue coordination with Reading, Pottstown and Phoenixville regarding station planning and design efforts

Thank You for your Attention!



The mission of the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority is to facilitate the successful return of reliable passenger rail service, connecting the communities of Reading, Pottstown and Phoenixville, Pennsylvania with Philadelphia and beyond.

Learn more at GoSRPRA.com

Contact Information

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