

Testimony of Amitabha Bose
Nominee to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
September 15, 2021

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee for Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for selecting me to fill this important role.

Allow me to introduce and thank my wife, Gira Bose, and our daughter, Ilina. Without their support, I would not be here today. I would also like to recognize my extended family and my parents, Nripendra and Sabita Bose, watching virtually, who brought me to this country at the age of five to begin my American Dream.

My thanks also go to the nearly 900 FRA employees. They are women and men who are passionate about our mission: keeping rail workers and the public safe, while strengthening passenger and freight rail mobility, now and in the future.

FRA's mission is one for which my over two decades of public service, along with my private sector transportation experience, have prepared me well. In the Obama-Biden Administration, I served as the FRA Deputy Administrator, Chief Counsel, Senior Advisor, and Director of Governmental Affairs. During those years, I guided the agency through the early stages of Positive Train Control implementation and the establishment, management and oversight of the \$10 billion intercity passenger rail program, among other issues. I also served in the Office of the Secretary of Transportation as Associate General Counsel and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs.

I carry these experiences with me today. Further, I bring a local perspective from my positions at New Jersey Transit and the New Jersey Department of Transportation, as well working as a land use attorney. And, I would be remiss not to mention my time serving on Senator Bob Menendez's staff in the Senate and House. It is humbling to now return to the Senate as a nominee.

If confirmed, the safety of the national rail network will remain the center of my focus. The possibility, and the urgency, for growth and investment makes that duty of safety even more critical. I commit to strong collaboration with stakeholders—that includes the rail workers who are the backbone of our railroads, the companies and agencies that own and operate the system, and the various other project sponsors that invest in the rail network. Communication is vital to

carrying out the FRA's mission and ensuring the safety of the rail network, and I am focused on reinvigorating the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee to ensure all affected stakeholders have an open forum to discuss challenges and opportunities.

I have heard continued concern from many of you about grade crossing safety and railroad trespass prevention. I want to assure the Committee that FRA will do everything possible to address these issues, including funding, education, enforcement, collaboration, technology, communication, and monitoring. This effort has to be addressed in partnership with other agencies, states, localities, law enforcement, and railroads.

It is with humility that I approach the path ahead of us. I reentered government service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, FRA took immediate action to disperse COVID-19 relief funding from Congress, including funding to Amtrak. In conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Transportation Security Administration, the Department took several actions to ensure the health and safety of rail workers and the traveling public, including issuance of an FRA Emergency Order.

As we recover from the pandemic, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act outlines investments needed to transform our Nation's infrastructure. Its proposed investments in rail would not only repair and replace aging infrastructure and achieve a state of good repair, but also increase efficiency, expand capacity and transportation options across our country. It will enable safe, high quality, and reliable rail service with competitive travel times and increased frequencies.

From the Gulf Coast to the West Coast; from the Pacific Northwest to the Northeast Corridor; from where I grew up in Georgia to the heartland—and all across this country—people are eager for expanded rail options. I hear from them regularly. These efforts will create good-paying union jobs, promote economic growth, combat the climate crisis, and advance equity--including increased access for people with disabilities and opportunities for disadvantaged business enterprises.

In closing, if this body honors me with confirmation, I pledge to work with the Committee to strengthen America's rail network—to ensure safety and build the future. The leadership of Congress and the voices of your constituents are critical to our joint success. Thank you again for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.