

# **NORTHWOODS RAIL TRANSIT COMMISSION**

## **REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACCELERATOR (RIA)**

U.S. DOT's Build America Bureau (Bureau) funds the RIA program. The Bureau is responsible for supporting transportation infrastructure development projects in the United States. The Bureau streamlines credit opportunities and access to grant programs with more speed and transparency, while also providing technical assistance and encouraging innovative best practices in project planning, financing, delivery, and monitoring. To achieve this vision, the Bureau draws upon the full resources of U.S. DOT to best utilize the expertise of all the modes within the Department while promoting a culture of innovation and customer service.

The Bureau works closely and coordinates with states, municipalities, and project sponsors looking to utilize federal transportation expertise; apply for federal transportation credit programs; and explore ways to access private capital in public private partnerships.

The Bureau combines the TIFIA and RRIF loan programs, Private Activity Bonds (PABs), and technical assistance all under one roof within the Office of the Undersecretary for Policy.

The Bureau addresses the procedural, permitting and financial barriers to increased infrastructure investment and development by:

- Intervening earlier in project lifecycles
- Actively helping sponsors navigate the often-complex federal permitting and procedural requirements.
- Centralizing project coordination
- Cultivating public private partnerships
- Providing technical assistance

The Bureau has created the RIA program to accelerate regional project delivery and assist states, municipalities and project owners drive efficiency and create further financing opportunities for projects in a shorter timeframe helping to accelerate the repair and development of critical U.S. transportation infrastructure.

## **RRIF Loans**

Under the RRIF program the Department of Transportation is authorized to provide direct loans and loan guarantees up to \$35.0 billion to finance development of railroad infrastructure. Not less than \$7.0 billion is reserved for projects benefiting freight railroads other than Class I carriers.

The funding may be used to:

- Acquire, improve, or rehabilitate intermodal or rail equipment or facilities, including track, components of track, bridges, yards, buildings and shops, and including the installation of positive train control systems.
- Develop or establish new intermodal or railroad facilities.
- Reimburse planning and design expenses relating to activities listed above.
- Refinance outstanding debt incurred for the purposes listed above; and
- Finance [transit-oriented development](#)

Direct loans can fund up to 100% of a railroad project with repayment periods of up to 35 years and interest rates equal to the cost of borrowing to the government.

Eligible borrowers include railroads, state and local governments, government-sponsored authorities and corporations, limited option freight shippers that intend to construct a new rail connection, and joint ventures that include at least one of the preceding.

## TIFIA Loans

Like RRIF, TIFA provides funding for the following types of projects:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • Highways and Bridges                       | • Transit-Oriented Development                     |
| • Intelligent Transportation Systems         | • Rural Infrastructure Projects                    |
| • Intermodal Connectors                      | • Passenger Rail Vehicles and Facilities           |
| • Transit Vehicles and Facilities            | • Surface Transportation Elements of Port Projects |
| • Intercity Buses and Facilities             | • Airports   |
| • Freight Transfer Facilities                |  |
| • Pedestrian Bicycle Infrastructure Networks |  |

The RIA will also support applicants with assistance on competitive discretionary grants such as CRISI, RAISE and Marad grants if these programs are a better fit for the project.

**The Northwoods Rail Transit Commission RIA** application requested \$1.5 million to support a technical assistance center to support the development and financing of rail, intermodal and marine infrastructure projects within Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana over a twenty four month period, This center will provide technical assistance which will serve public and private applicants over a 24-month period,

The RIA will fund education and outreach activities to support project applicants in project development activities and will host a bench of subject matter experts to assist with

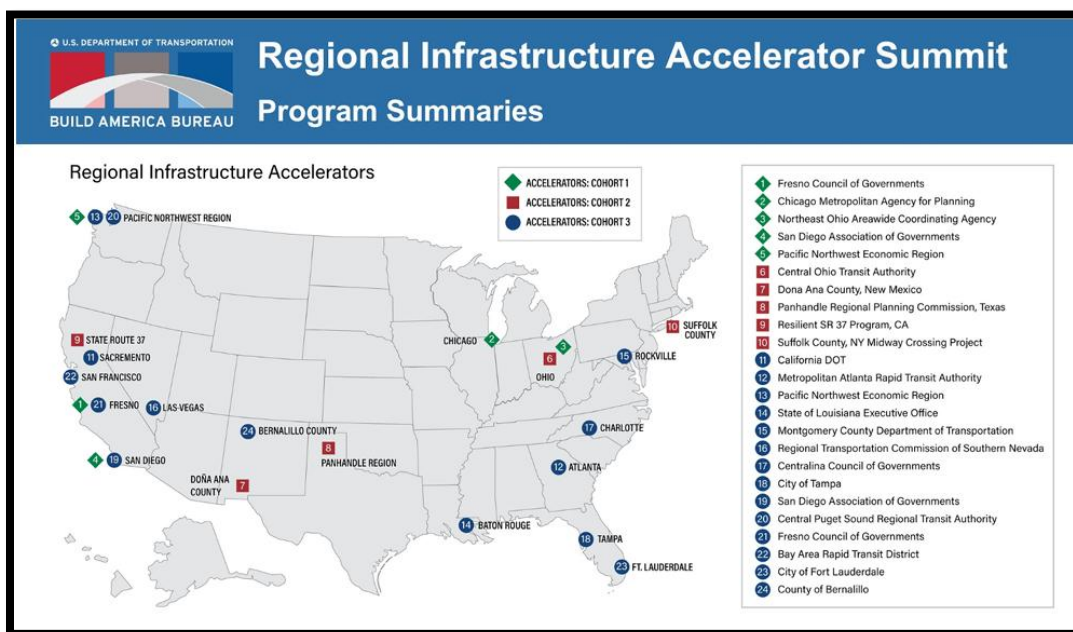
project predevelopment activities to improve project success. The RIA will also assist regional applicants with RRIF and TIFIA loans and Private Activity Bonds.

The NWRTC application has received support from the following Universities to provide educational and workshop assistance in the development of infrastructure projects:

- University of Wisconsin Superior
- Michigan State University
- Michigan Tech University
- University of Michigan
- DePaul University
- Northwestern University

After the award, an RFP will be issued to secure a bench of engineers, public finance and project development experts to assist in the mobilization of project development.

The Map below shows the existing RIAs and the gap in coverage in the Upper Midwest.



## Next Steps:

Send your U.S. Congressional Representative a letter expressing your interest as a NWRTC member to fund this program. A template letter is available upon request. Please contact Libby Ogard at [logard@primefocusllc.com](mailto:logard@primefocusllc.com) or 920-217-7222.

This program has broad eligibility and the NWRTC RIA proposal is aimed at supporting regional project development to successfully revitalize our stranded regional assets which need public assistance to improve regional efficiency, productivity and economic competitiveness.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1. *How Much Funding is Available via the Build America Program?*** There is \$100 Billion available in the RRIF and TIFIA program. The RIA will be awarded funding to support this Technical Assistance Center for a period of two years. The renewal of the RIA will be determined by the number of projects successfully completed and there will be an emphasis on the use of innovative financing available through the Build America Program.
- 2. *What will it cost to participate in this Regional Infrastructure Accelerator?*** The Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) asks that those seeking technical assistance provide a 10% match, applicants will be allowed to select from a list of pre-qualified consultants to complete predevelopment work for project applications.
- 3. *What types of projects are you looking for?*** The proposed RIA is looking for projects within the five-state region which will improve rail, intermodal and marine transportation services. The Build America Bureau would like to see at least one RRIF or TIFIA loan application come from this region.
- 4. *What does a successful project look like?*** A good project will support the development of transportation assets and will improve the network resilience and efficiency of the supply chains it serves. These investments will increase the economic competitiveness of the region and will be sustainable over time.
- 5. *Will the RIA complete my grant application for me?*** The RIA will provide technical assistance in the form of education and outreach for each of the grant narrative sections of the Federal grants. Individual consultations will be available for specific questions and Benefit Cost Analysis support will be provided. The RIA will also provide pre-submission reviews and coaching about the best grants to focus on for your specific project.
- 6. *What Size Projects Are You Looking for?*** Ideally, we are looking for projects between \$5 million and \$75 million.
- 7. *What if I have a project need but I am not an eligible applicant and have little experience in State and Federal Grants?*** No problem, the RIA is aimed at helping the public and private partners explore the options of innovative financing and if the project moves forward the RIA will provide technical assistance to support go or no-go decisions.
- 8. *Are Planning Projects Eligible?*** Yes
- 9. *Is there a fee to participate?*** Not for general guidance and education. A full schedule of services will be identified based on your requests.
- 10. *Is equipment an eligible project expense?*** Yes, however Buy America provisions may apply.