



New Report: Amtrak needs a comprehensive program management framework for its Gateway commitments

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WASHINGTON – Amtrak has started hiring staff and building a schedule to manage the volume of work it will soon encounter on the Gateway program, its highest priority infrastructure investment, but it has not fully developed a comprehensive program management framework to help successfully manage its commitments, an Amtrak Office of Inspector General report released today found.

Given the enormity of the company's commitments over the next decade, and the fact that major projects are already underway, the report noted the company has an opportunity now to build this framework to better prepare itself to succeed with the program.

For example, the program management plan the company issued in 2021 does not contain necessary details that company and industry standards call for, the report said. Specifically, a program management plan should include details on how a company plans to manage, monitor, and control a program. The OIG found that the company's program management plan provided generic descriptions of participating departments instead of detailed plans identifying and describing how it will perform its work.

Without a detailed program management plan, the company risks managing its workflow in an ad hoc way that reacts to issues and demands as they arise instead of in a disciplined manner, across projects, and guided by defined processes, the report said. The OIG's prior work on other major company programs identified early planning deficiencies as the reason for schedule delays, cost overruns and strains on partner relationships during the later construction phases.

According to the report, Amtrak is experiencing three challenges because it has not conducted this planning as part of its program management framework for Gateway.

First, Amtrak has not fully determined its Gateway program team's personnel requirements or developed plans to address them. Although Amtrak has recently added staff to the Gateway program team, the core team remains understaffed and has been overtasked with multiple and competing responsibilities to balance. According to the report, this hindered the company's work to complete early program management planning efforts.

In one case cited in the report, the lead engineer for Gateway had such extensive responsibilities on the program that when he left the company in April 2021, the company split his responsibilities among five other engineers in addition to their normal workload, also

overtasking them. Company officials decided that this workload combined with anticipated future work warranted the hiring of an additional Deputy Chief Engineer and four managers.

Second, Amtrak has not determined how it will collect and provide comprehensive and consolidated information on the program's overall status to all internal company stakeholders with responsibilities for Gateway. While some mechanisms are in place to update certain company stakeholders, the OIG identified instances when employees with responsibilities in the program and key decisionmakers were not aware of the status of the program or the projects included within it.

Third, while Amtrak has assessed risks to individual projects in coordination with its partners, it has not assessed the broader program risks facing the company, such as potential impacts to other company acquisitions or projects. Doing so will help prepare decisionmakers to address risks that could hinder Amtrak's ability to deliver its commitments, the report said.

The OIG recommended that Amtrak further develop its program management framework by building out its program management plan; assessing its current and future resource needs; implementing communication protocols to manage how it will generate, collect, and distribute program information; and developing and implementing a risk management process for the program. More information is included in the full report which can be downloaded on the OIG's website: <https://direc.to/hzT>.

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