



OIG: Amtrak's long distance train program faced early design challenges, leading to delays in the procurement process

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WASHINGTON – Amtrak's initial requirements for premium designs and amenities for its planned procurement of new long distance trains added complexities to an already complex program and led to delays in the program's early stages, an Amtrak Office of Inspector General report released today said.

The report credited Amtrak for establishing a program management framework for the program – Amtrak's single largest equipment acquisition by cost and volume in its history – but complex designs pose schedule, cost, and other risks, the OIG found. Specifically, the OIG found that Amtrak's changes to initial design requirements and a delay in incorporating feedback from train manufacturers resulted in approximately seven months of delays. Moreover, the report said that the complexity of the program itself poses an innate risk of cost increases and additional delays. Given the program's significant size, any such increases or delays could have cascading impacts on Amtrak's ability to accomplish other major capital projects and maintain its existing long distance service, the OIG found.

Amtrak has 765 cars in its long distance fleet, with the oldest Superliner I cars being 43 years old on average and the newest Viewliner II cars about six years old, on average. The company plans to replace its entire long distance fleet in four phases, with the first phase focusing on replacing close to 600 bilevel cars, including sleeper cars. To pay for phase 1, the company plans to use up to \$7 billion it received through the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The OIG's audit focused on phase 1.

Prior to developing its initial requirements for the new long distance equipment, Amtrak sent requests for information to car builders in December 2022 and July 2023 inquiring about experience with manufacturing bilevel coaches, sleepers, and food service cars; the number of car types that builders could manufacture at one time; and experience building elevators on rail cars for passengers with disabilities.

According to the OIG report, only one car builder said it could produce the eight to nine car types the company planned to request, although the builder went on to state that doing so and delivering these cars as a trainset would lead to capacity constraints and program delays. None of the car builders who responded to Amtrak's request had experience producing elevators inside of a trainset.

In December 2023, after weighing the car builders' feedback against its own market research, Amtrak decided to proceed with a request for proposal (RFP) that included nine different suggested car types with elevators intended to increase accessibility on two car types, pushing the limits of what car builders said was feasible, according to the report.

In response to several more rounds of car builder feedback, however, Amtrak in June 2024 began amending its requirements in the RFP both to reduce complexity and increase car builders' flexibility to propose solutions. The report said Amtrak now plans to ask car builders

to submit proposals for trainsets with fewer car types, likely five to seven, and include an option to deliver individual cars that could be interoperable with the existing fleet as a bridge to delivering the full trainsets.

Since the company is in the process of amending its requirements for the trainsets, the OIG did not make recommendations in this area, but it noted that the more complexity Amtrak opts for in the acquisition, the greater its potential cost and schedule risks.

The OIG did offer recommendations related to strengthening components of Amtrak's program management framework, to include reviewing and clarifying for all stakeholders the roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority and decision making for each stage of the program; prioritizing filling key senior management and program team vacancies; and updating the long distance program's risk register to include contingency plans for high impact risks.

The company agreed with the recommendations and described actions and plans it will take to address them. More information is included in the full report which can be downloaded on the OIG's website: <https://direc.to/m7Bh>.

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