



OIG report: Incomplete governance framework and data weaknesses limit Amtrak's ability to manage its state-of-good-repair backlog

April 14, 2026

WASHINGTON – Amtrak has made targeted improvements since 2016 in how it manages the work required to bring its backlog of tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure assets into a state of good repair (SOGR), but weaknesses in its governance framework and data continue to hinder its efforts, an Amtrak Office of Inspector General report released today found.

According to the report, until Amtrak addresses these issues, it cannot reasonably demonstrate how the federal funds it receives will reduce its SOGR backlog or the timeline to eliminate it.

Infrastructure assets are considered to be in a state of good repair when they perform as designed, do not pose an unacceptable safety risk, and their maintenance is up to date. Amtrak estimated that the value of its infrastructure assets that do not meet this threshold is roughly \$47 billion, and it has established a target of eliminating its SOGR backlog by 2040.

The report credits the company for developing a strategy, policy, and plan for managing its SOGR work. However, each of these elements contains significant shortcomings, the OIG found. For example, the company's strategy lacks specific objectives and performance metrics, and without them, the company cannot measure its overall progress in reducing its backlog, assess whether its 2040 target is realistic, and it risks extending its timeline to eliminate its backlog, as it has done repeatedly since 2017.

Further, Amtrak has not effectively communicated its infrastructure asset management policy, the OIG found, and some company officials involved in SOGR work were unaware that the policy even existed. In addition, the company has not described how each department should support the company's SOGR efforts. According to the OIG, these issues have contributed to poor coordination and confusing decision-making processes between Amtrak departments.

Similarly, weaknesses in the company's infrastructure asset data have created additional challenges. The OIG found misaligned data between Amtrak's two primary asset tracking systems, with some assets appearing in one and not the other. Further, some assets were no longer in operation but remained in the systems, while other operational assets had not yet been added. According to the report, inaccurate or incomplete data increases the risk that the company may not perform safety-related maintenance, or it may maintain assets that are no longer in operation.

The OIG credited the company for collecting better data on the condition of its infrastructure assets, which may help the company make more timely and effective decisions about when to fix or replace them. These efforts are not yet complete, however, leading Amtrak to rely heavily on asset age and the institutional knowledge of field staff to identify repair priorities. The report noted that this raises the risk that older but functional assets may be prioritized over newer ones in worse condition.

To address the issues it identified, the OIG recommended that Amtrak fully establish a governance framework with specific objectives and performance metrics, communicate its policy companywide, and clarify roles and responsibilities across departments. It also recommended that Amtrak strengthen its SOGR data by validating that infrastructure data are complete and accurate, and finish its infrastructure condition assessments and use them to inform SOGR activities.

The company agreed with the OIG's 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/o9DQ>.

Reports of fraud, waste, or abuse; criminal or unethical acts affecting Amtrak's property or operations; or mismanagement in Amtrak programs or operations can be made 24 hours a day via the Amtrak OIG Hotline at 1-800-468-5469 or online at <https://direc.to/hPAu>.

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