



2025 Spring Conference at Rocky Gap Resort
Flintstone, Maryland

**MDOT Rail and Intermodal Freight &
State Freight Rail Corridors**

Thomas Mackay

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BIOGRAPHY

- Rail Program & Policy Manager, MDOT Rail and Intermodal Freight
- 2016-2022 MARC Train Service, as Contractor and as State Employee
- 2014-2016 CSX Transportation Train Operations and Management
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ABSTRACT

Freight Rail Corridors

Overview of freight rail operations in the State of Maryland including interactions with counties and municipalities, private railroad operators and transit agencies.

- What is the role of MDOT's Office of Rail and Intermodal Freight in state-wide rail planning and administration?
- What are trains, and what distinguishes the railroad network from other rail operations like transit?
- What is common carrier rail service, and what parts of Maryland have common carrier rail service?
- How are private and state-owned railroad corridors managed? How are grade crossings managed?
- Which railroad corridors are owned by the State of Maryland, and how are they administered?



Office of Rail & Intermodal Freight

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Office of Rail & Intermodal Freight

- Major Roles and Functions
 - State Rail Plan
 - Communications with Railroad Carriers
 - Supporting Priority State Rail Projects
 - Oversight of Grade Crossings
 - Freight Rail Service Support
 - Non-Rail Freight Transportation Projects
 - www.mdot.Maryland.gov/freight



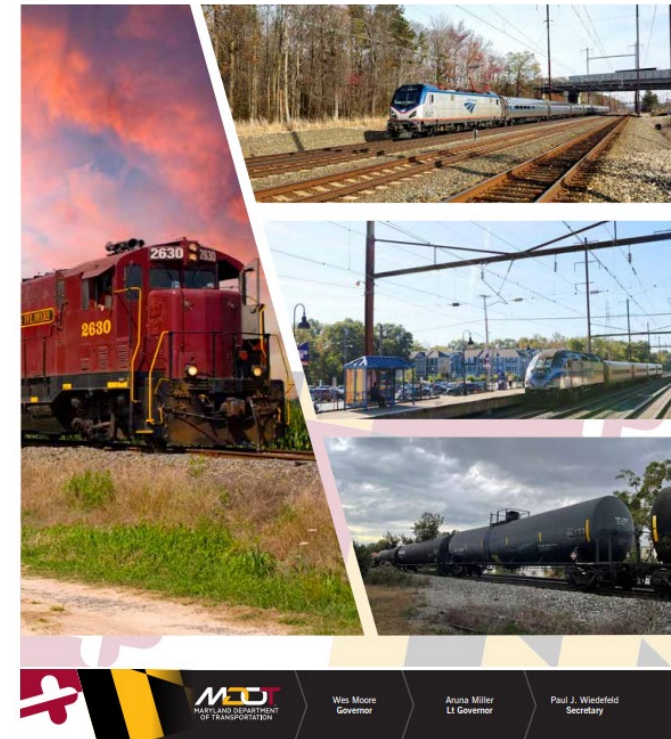
Maryland State Rail Plan

Updated in 2022, the Rail Plan echoes the Maryland Transportation Plan and focuses similarly on the following seven goals for

- **Safe, Secure, and Resilient [Systems]**
- **Economic Opportunity [Promotion]**
- **System Maintenance and Modernization**
- **Quality and Efficiency**
- **Environmental Protection and Sensitivity**
- **Transportation Choice and Connections**
- **Fiscal Responsibility**

<https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=151>

MARYLAND STATE RAIL PLAN





Don Katkman Photo

The Basics of Railroads

What they are, What they do.

What is a “Train”?

- Consider: Function, Form, and Governance
- What does a train do?
 - *“A carrier of people or property on cars that are operated on stationary rails” –COMAR*
- What does it look like?
 - *“General Railroad System of the United States” -CFR*
- How are trains governed?



Railroads...

- Railroads are Federally regulated by:
 - The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) – a USDOT agency that creates and enforces rail safety regulations, administers rail funding, and researches rail improvement strategies and technologies.
 - The Surface Transportation Board (STB) - an independent federal agency that is charged with the economic regulation of various modes of surface transportation, primarily freight rail.



What is a “Train”?

continued

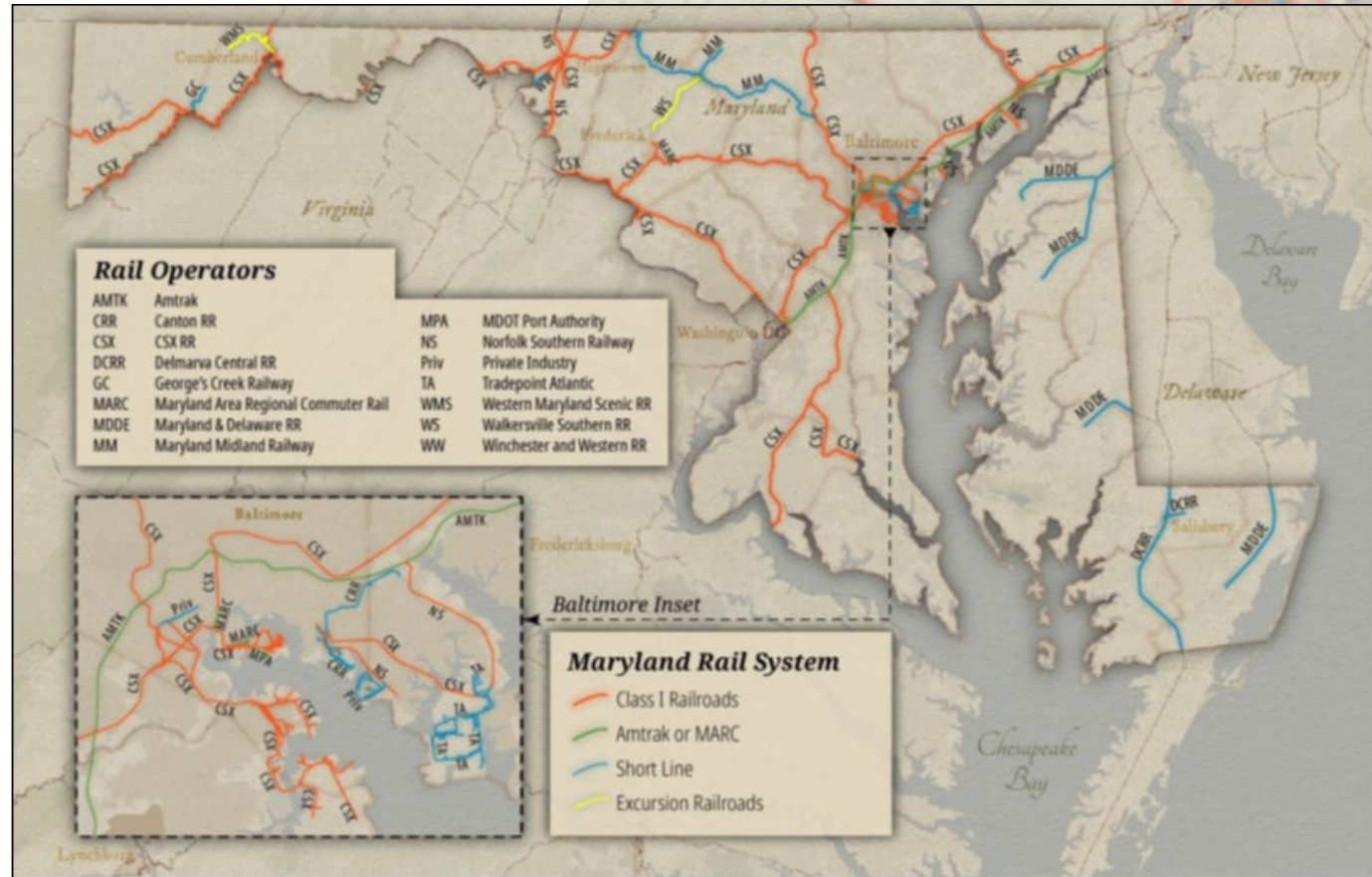
- Types of Trains, part of *General System*
 - Intercity Passenger
 - Common Carrier Freight
 - Commuter
 - Some Heritage Railroads
- Types of Transit, not part of *General System*
 - Metro
 - Light Rail
 - Tram
 - Interurban



Railroad Corridors in Maryland

Maryland's rail network is comprised of about 886 miles of active track, owned and operated by a variety of railroads.

Most corridors assembled from privately owned lands.



Rail Corridor Statuses and Uses

- Active: Railroad operations routinely occur or are likely to occur. Trains should be expected at any time. Subject to regulation by USDOT or STB.
- Stay off, stay away, stay safe.
- Inactive: Railroad operations have ceased but railroad corridor not formally abandoned or railbanked. Subject to regulation by USDOT and STB.
- Never assume a track is inactive by its appearance.



Rail Corridor Statuses and Uses

- Railbanked: A STB status where an inactive corridor is approved for interim use, such as trail use, prior to abandonment while preserving the potential return of freight service.
- Some Rails to Trails projects
- Abandoned: Railroad corridors that have been formally abandoned in terms of freight or passenger service with approval of the STB. Railroad corridor is no longer federally regulated, though may still be considered private property.
- Abandoned railroads take many forms



A word on Safety around Tracks

- We all know its dangerous to walk on busy highways....
- But we can all help raise awareness about the dangers of walking on tracks.



Roadway/Railroad Grade Crossings

- Approximately 2,000 railroad/roadway grade crossings
- Managed carefully to mitigate risk to roadway and railroad traffic
- MDOT monitors the use and improvement of all railroad/roadway grade crossings in the State





Freight Rail Program

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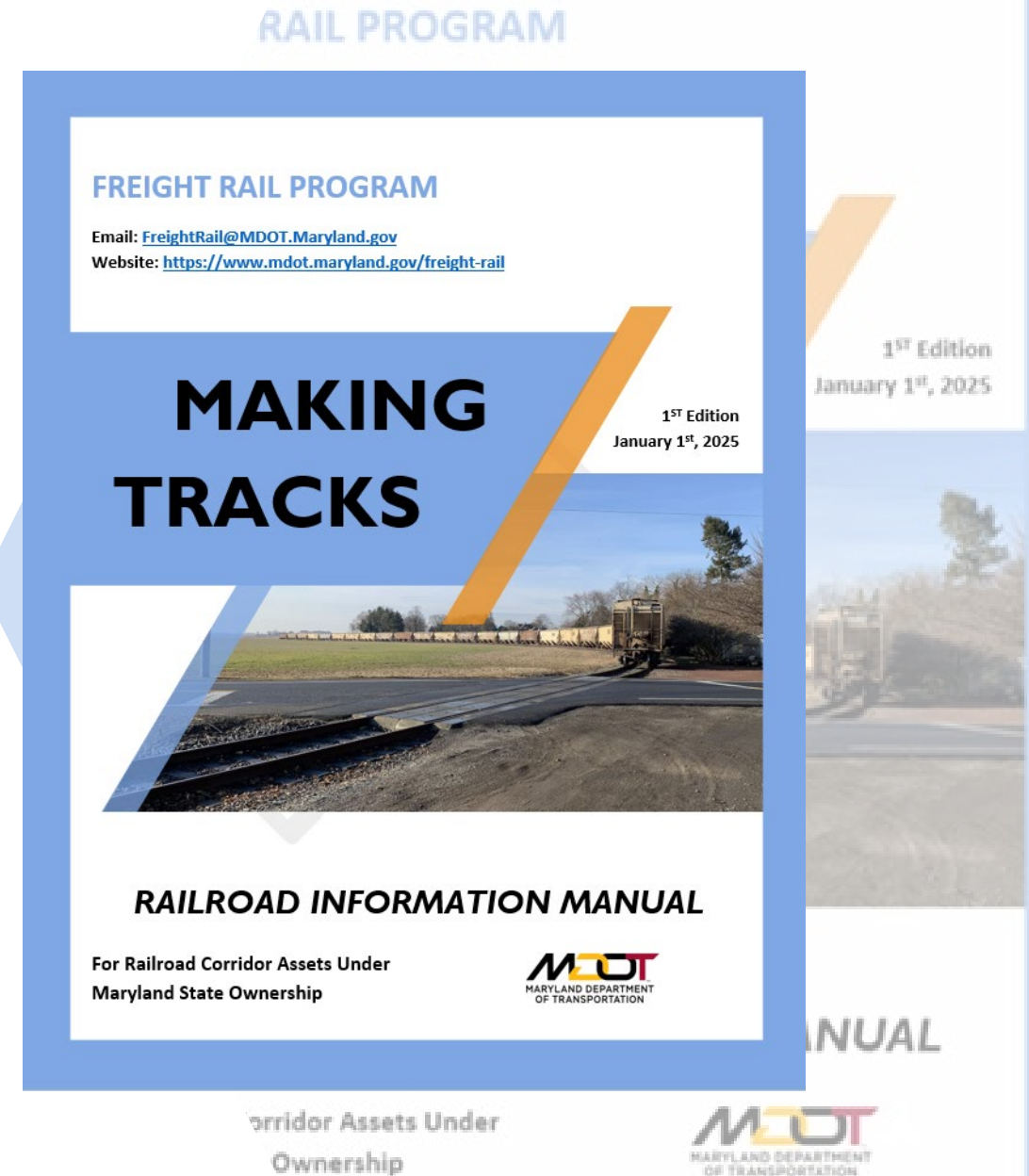
Freight Rail Program

- Through the MTA, the State of Maryland owns 154 miles of regulated railroad corridors in both Maryland and Delaware
- The State owns railroad corridors to:
 - Support Economic Development
 - Advance Sustainability and Environmental Goals
 - Preserve Railroad Corridors for future uses



Rail Information Manual

- The Railroad Information Manual (RIM) establishes common processes, specifications, and methods for the management of the State's railroad corridor assets
- Does not apply to mass transit or rapid transit systems such as MTA Light Rail, Metro or MARC
- Similar to "Public Projects Manuals" from major railroads.



Design Considerations

- American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of way Association (AREMA)
 - Manual of Standards and Specifications
- AASHTO, (Bicycle Facilities)
- FHWA, MUTCD
- USDOT, Rail Crossing Handbook
- Railroad Specific



Freight Rail Grant Program

- Freight Rail Grant Program (FRGP) is a state-funded, competitive, reimbursable grant program
- The program is designed to make targeted investments that allow MDOT to better leverage existing infrastructure, assets, and funding programs





Office of Rail & Intermodal Freight

Questions & Feedback



QUESTIONS?

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