

## RAIL ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION TODAY



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Megaprojects, high-speed rail, freight renovations and more all make the list of projects to watch, including the Brightline West High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail System connecting Las Vegas to Southern California on a 218-mile route.

# The Tenacity of Rail Transportation

A focus on teamwork and collaboration propels the future of rail systems

By Kate Gawlik

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# The Rail Market: A Key Pillar of Commerce

**The rail transportation market is transporting more than products and people.** According to a study released on February 28 by the Association of American Railroads (AAR), the market in the United States influences financial growth, international trade and community opportunity. The study looked at 2023, when the rail transportation sector added \$233.4 billion in total economic output. Upgrades and retrofits were a significant aspect of the growth, with freight railroads investing \$26.8 billion in capital improvements.

AAR President and CEO Ian Jefferies says, “Railroads are a key pillar of American commerce, powering our supply chains and driving economic growth nationwide. With billions invested annually and a highly skilled workforce, railroads generate economic activity that extends from major industries to small businesses across

the country. This study confirms that today’s rail investments build tomorrow’s jobs and prosperity.”

Other data showed the importance of domestic rail with international markets and foreign trade. AAR reports that trade-related activity is tied to 38% of all rail traffic (11.3 million shipments) in 2023. Jobs also were a highlight of the report, saying that every railroad project supports 3.9 more jobs in related industries, like logistics, manufacturing and technology.

The investments and expansions in rail in the United States do not match the pace in Asia (43% of railway groundbreaking starts in 2024) and Europe (40% of railway groundbreaking starts in 2024). The global market is, however, on pace for yearly growth with a large boost in capital expenditure.

Thomas J. Spearing III, senior vice president, Rail and Transit Sector

leader, Hill International, says, “We continue to see unprecedented growth in rail and transit. Intermodal projects connecting rail, streetcar, paratransit and bus rapid transit with state-of-the-art facility designs are either in the design and/or construction phases across the United States. In addition, new technological innovations are continuing the trend of shorter schedules, enhanced quality and more tightly controlled budgets. AI applications, for example, are taking risk management and mitigation to a new level. For owners, partnering with designers, contractors and project managers who know how to leverage these tools and turn uncertainty into opportunities, including collaboration with all stakeholders and the communities served, enables them to deliver innovative and purpose-driven solutions more efficiently than ever before.” ♦

## All Aboard for Art



**Chicago Union Station has begun a \$418-million renovation to improve space for train capacity and lower train backlogs.**

With additional funding needed for the vast plans, the station has found additional ways to improve passenger experiences, like with the Art at Amtrak series. The artists on display include Caroline Kent, Chad Kouri and POSE (Jordan Nickel). They will remain on view through the summer.

Art at Amtrak, launched in June 2022 at New York Penn Station, is run by Debra Simon Art Consulting. Other stations that were all aboard for art included: Washington Union Station, Moynihan Train Hall in New York and William H. Gray III 30th St. Station in Philadelphia. ♦

## Bay Area or Bust



**The Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system in California, from San Jose, Milpitas and Santa Clara, is getting an expansion under The Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority (VTA).** VTA's BART Silicon Valley Phase II Extension (BSVII) project is a six-mile, four-station extension of a line that serves 55,000 weekday riders. This includes an underground tunnel to reduce construction impacts and lower the area's road traffic burdens. Construction will run from September 2024 to 2037.

This follows a completed Phase I that brought a 10-mile extension from Fremont and two stations in Milpitas and North San Jose. ♦

## Darting Along in Dallas



**The Silver Line, a 26-mile hybrid rail project, is making headway in Dallas.** Part of the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), the line will connect Grapevine, Coppell, Dallas, Carrollton, Addison, Richardson, Plano and a final connection at Dallas Fort Worth Airport. Projections for completion include late 2025 to early 2026. ♦

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMTRAK (LEFT), VTA (MIDDLE) & DART (RIGHT)



## Collaborative Contracting: Streamlining Procurement, Gathering Ideas, Protecting Owner Interests

By **Gavin Martin**, Vice President, Rail and Transit Sector, Hill International Inc.

**Collaborative contracting, also known as relationship contracting, is a procurement method that can achieve greater teamwork and better goal alignment.**

Collaborative contracting entails beginning the procurement process well in advance of the formal request for proposal (RFP) or request for qualification (RFQ). Instead, owners engage with potential partners to judge interest, industry capacity and other factors. This drives a greater understanding of how contractors, designers and other service providers are preparing—or not—to participate in the project and then adjusting and refining the procurement to better match the market.

With this information in hand, agencies can then take steps such as producing procurement documentation and asking

for requests for information (RFI) responses to clarify the overall program and considering comments regarding how the opportunity will be packaged and/or the delivery method being considered, among other topics. This dialog can be advanced even further by the agency by developing a pre-RFQ or draft RFP.

For rail and transit agencies, collaborative contracting offers several advantages: better distribution of risk during procurement; a less adversarial environment; a team on the same page when it's time to deliver the project. In Texas, for example, the Austin Transit Partnership is using collaborative contracting during its pre-solicitation process and in final selection.

If your agency is considering collaborative contracting, understand your

responses will vary based on the responder's knowledge of your local market, the communities you serve and the eventual outcome you are looking to reach. This is why the concept of "Live here. Build here." becomes a strong collaboration tool, as selected consultants will have a vested interest in providing viable, implementable solutions to the communities in which they live.

Agencies looking to streamline procurement on their large infrastructure projects should strongly consider collaborative contracting. With the right project and construction management support, the advantages of collaborative contracting can last the full duration of the project life cycle. For more details, visit [www.hillintl.com](http://www.hillintl.com). ♦

PHOTO COURTESY OF HILL INTERNATIONAL

## Hitting New Safety Product Standards

**The need for efficient transportation to carry goods and passengers is apparent across the country.** The Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program—part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act—was a substantial motivator in improving rail lines. With its investment and other initiatives rolling on to line up projects in the rail market, successfully completing these projects will take the right partners.

Valtir Rentals is poised and ready to support rail expansion projects by offering flexible rental options to accommodate the various phases of the construction project. A visit to [www.ValtirRentals.com](http://www.ValtirRentals.com) will uncover all the options of the next generation of construction site safety products.

This includes water-filled barricades with perimeter fencing panels

that can be used around the construction sites to delineate pedestrian walkways and traffic from the construction work zones. Options include the Yodock 2001 or 2001MB barricade, a plastic, water-filled longitudinal channelizing device (LCD) that attaches end-to-end using a plastic coupler.

There are additional construction site safety possibilities, too. Valtir Rentals is the sole manufacturer and the No. 1 supplier of the Yodock brand water-filled barrier and barricade. There is also SiteGuide, an ADA-compliant, plastic, water-filled LCD that is MASH-16 TL-3 tested. Individual units can articulate 270 degrees while connected to create inside and outside corners.

The grants for some of the proposed rail projects are at historic



Valtir Rentals' 2001MB Barricades were used in the Phoenix Passenger Rail Project.

levels. The standards by which the projects are completed should hit another level too, with the right products, in every application. Whether it is traffic control, perimeter fencing, temporary sign support, work zone barricades or pedestrian channelization, Valtir Rentals has an ideal product for each rail project. ♦

PHOTO COURTESY OF VALTIR RENTALS





# COLLABORATE INNOVATE DELIVER

*Hill International collaborates with our clients to achieve equitable outcomes for diverse communities, providing customer-centric solutions at the forefront of every Rail and Transit project.*

## Rail solutions that move communities forward.

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