



Innovation in Community-Driven Railway Technology

Mendocino Railway

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MENDOCINO RAILWAY AWARDED FEDERAL CRISI GRANT TO REDUCE EMISSIONS AND IMPROVE RAIL EFFICIENCY

Fort Bragg, CA – November 4, 2024 – Mendocino Railway receives a \$14.8 million grant to replace three Tier 0 locomotives with three new Tier IV locomotives. The grant was made through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Grant Program.

The CRISI Program, administered by the Federal Railroad Administration, funds projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail. As a Class III common carrier railroad that offers freight rail services, Mendocino Railway is honored to have been awarded this grant, which will allow Mendocino Railway to further reduce the environmental impacts of its railroad operations. These new engines will run predominantly on the California Western Railroad, commonly called the “Skunk Train” out of Fort Bragg and Willits, in Northern California.

“Mendocino Railway is proud to stand alongside other Class II and Class III common carrier railroads in securing this vital funding to promote continued environmental sustainability,” said Robert Jason Pinoli, President of Mendocino Railway. “This project is a critical step in advancing our operations while allowing us to do even more to align with federal and state goals to reduce emissions in the transportation sector. Railroads are already among the most environmentally friendly ways to transport goods and services, accounting for less than 2% of total greenhouse gas emissions annually. Trains can move one ton of freight more than 500-miles on less than one gallon of diesel. This grant reaffirms our railroad’s commitment to even cleaner, and even more efficient, transportation of freight and passengers.”

Mendocino Railway’s sister company, Sierra Northern Railway, is the lowest emission railroad in America, operating a fleet of Tier III locomotives and building the first Zero Emission hydrogen fuel cell locomotive in the nation. In fact, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association recently awarded Sierra Northern Railway its prestigious Environmental Award.

The new Tier-IV locomotives are projected to reduce fuel consumption by up to 47% and significantly reduce Mendocino Railway's already low railroad emissions, directly supporting state and federal objectives to further reduce the carbon footprint of railroads. In addition to reducing emissions, the project will improve safety and operational efficiency by replacing nearly 70-year-old equipment.

The new Tier-IV locomotives will also assist Mendocino Railway in diverting more freight traffic from trucks to rail, which will help further reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions. By enhancing the capacity and efficiency of its freight operations, Mendocino Railway is positioning itself to meet the expressed demand for local freight services along its line.

Mendocino Railway extends its gratitude to the Biden-Harris administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Southern California Air Quality Management District for their leadership and support. Mendocino Railway also thanks Crystal M. Zorbaugh and her colleagues at Mullins Law Group for their advocacy and commitment to this important project.

The CRISI Program is the only federal grant program that prioritizes smaller railroads. According to the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, this round of funding involved a record \$1.29 billion in grants being awarded to 81 short-line projects across 36 states.

Mendocino Railway's California Western Railroad / Skunk Train is a Class III common carrier public utility railroad located in the redwood forests of Northern California's Mendocino County. This heritage freight railroad, which has been operating since 1885, added passenger service after its founding, initially moved redwood logs from the rugged back country to Mendocino Coast sawmills, later transporting finished lumber out to the national railroad network. In 1925, the railroad became known as the "Skunk Train" and, since that time, has become a beloved institution touted as one of the "10 Best Rail Tours in the Country" (USA Today) and a "Top 10 Family Activity in California" (National Geographic Traveler). The Skunk Train's journey covers the same 40-mile route that its freight trains use, crossing over some 30 bridges, all while retaining its original charm—minus the historic pungent aroma that once preceded the train's arrival. Freight, passenger, and excursion trains operate year-round.

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