

# **U.S. Railroad Retirement Board**

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## ***Strategic Plan*** ***2009-2014***



# RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2014

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## Introduction

We are pleased to present this Strategic Plan for the years 2009 through 2014 on behalf of the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). The RRB has a long and distinguished history of excellent customer service, and this plan continues that tradition by calling for the attainment and maintenance of high levels of accuracy and timeliness in paying retirement, survivor, unemployment and sickness insurance benefits. A major reason for this has been our expanded use of technology to improve efficiency. Our aim, as reflected in this plan, is to build upon these achievements and improve customer service and satisfaction.

We will do this by continuing to make effective use of technology in a variety of ways, including enhancing accessibility to customer services by telephone and the Internet, and reducing the amount of manual processing currently required in our operations. Of course, while budgets and technology are important, the true foundation for the agency's ongoing success is its dedicated employees. This plan places a heightened emphasis on human capital planning, including such components as enhanced training, increased entry-level hiring and managerial succession. The RRB will also continue to work closely with partner agencies such as the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Department of the Treasury (Treasury), as well as the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust (NRRIT) that oversees investment of the railroad retirement trust funds.

This plan reflects input and feedback from our stakeholders, including customers in the railroad community, Congressional committees, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and other Federal agencies. We believe this plan reflects an updated focus on our commitment to providing outstanding customer service in the most effective, efficient ways possible.



*Jerome J. Keener*  
**Management Member**

*Michael D. Schwartz*  
**Chairman**

*Tom Speck*  
**Labor Member**

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(pictured left to right)



# **RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD MISSION STATEMENT**

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The RRB's mission is to administer retirement/survivor and unemployment/sickness insurance benefit programs for railroad workers and their families under the Railroad Retirement Act (RRA) and the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA). These programs provide income protection during old age and in the event of disability, death or temporary unemployment and sickness. The RRB also administers aspects of the Medicare program and has administrative responsibilities under the Social Security Act and the Internal Revenue Code.

In carrying out our mission, the RRB will pay benefits to the right people, in the right amounts, in a timely manner, and will take appropriate action to safeguard our customers' trust funds. The RRB will treat every person who comes into contact with the agency with courtesy and concern, and respond to all inquiries promptly, accurately and clearly.

## **Vision**

The RRB will continue to be customer-focused, quality-driven, and fiscally responsible. While our overall mission and responsibilities will remain unchanged, we will use creativity, innovation and technology to deliver best-in-class service in a cost-effective, efficient manner. As a result, our customers will have a broad range of choices for conducting their business with the agency, including more online, web-based options that will allow for secure transactions from remote locations. In addition, we will offer expanded services to our customers through our nationwide toll-free telephone number and will build on their ability to file applications and claims online.

Direct customer feedback will shape our efforts and enhance responsiveness, with the goal of having our customer service levels serve as a standard of excellence in the Federal sector. However, our ultimate measure of success will be the sustained satisfaction of our customers and the agency's ability to respond to their needs and concerns.

The agency's internal culture will reflect a strong commitment to its employees, and a drive to ensure continual learning at all levels. Given the large percentage of employees eligible for retirement during this planning period, knowledge transfer will be a top priority in our managerial succession plans, coupled with a renewed emphasis on filling entry-level positions.

## **Programs & Responsibilities**

Our primary customers are the employees and employers of the rail industry and their families. They include, for example, train and engine service employees, maintenance of way employees, dispatchers, signalmen, computer specialists, sales personnel, lawyers and accountants. They also include railroad employees who have retired on the basis of age, their spouses and dependents, as well as younger beneficiaries who have retired on the basis of disability, survivors of deceased employees or retirees, and employees who are not working because of layoffs, injuries or illness. Employers include the nation's Class I freight railroads as well as more than 600 other employers, including short line and regional railroads, Amtrak, certain commuter roads and rail labor unions.

The RRB's benefit programs are based on two primary laws – the RRA and the RUIA. Under the RRA, the RRB processes retirement, survivor and disability annuities for railroad employees and their families. Under the RUIA, the agency pays unemployment benefits to railroad workers who cannot find a job in the industry and sickness benefits to those unable to work on a temporary basis due to illness, injury or pregnancy. In fiscal year 2008, the RRB paid just over \$10 billion in retirement and survivor benefits to almost 600,000 beneficiaries, and about \$80 million in unemployment and sickness insurance benefits to more than 30,000 claimants. Payroll taxes paid by railroad employees and employers are the primary funding source for these benefits. The agency also administers various provisions of the Medicare program for rail workers and family members including the selection of a carrier to process Medicare Part B (Supplemental Medical Insurance) claims. In fiscal year 2008, the carrier paid more than \$844 million to providers and beneficiaries for Part B services.

An independent agency in the executive branch of the Federal Government, the RRB is administered by three Board Members appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. One member is appointed upon the recommendation of railroad employers, one is appointed upon the recommendation of railroad labor organizations and the third, the Chairman, is appointed to represent the public interest. The Board Members serve staggered 5-year terms. The President also appoints an Inspector General for the RRB to provide independent oversight of the agency and its programs. The RRB currently employs approximately 900 full-time employees who work in its Chicago headquarters and more than 50 field offices around the country. The agency's administrative budget has historically approximated one percent of total benefits payments, and totaled just under \$102 million in fiscal year 2008.

While the railroad retirement system has remained separate from the social security system, they are closely coordinated with regard to earnings credits, benefit payments, and taxes. In addition to SSA, the RRB works closely with several other Federal and state agencies on benefit administration, such as CMS, state employment security departments and the Department of Labor. Other agencies with which the RRB interacts on a routine basis include OMB, Treasury, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the General Services Administration (GSA). The RRB and the Board Members also provide assistance, information and testimony to the Congress and its agencies, such as the Government Accountability Office, on a regular basis.

In addition to current and future customers and other governmental entities, the RRB's stakeholders include organizations that represent rail labor, retirees and rail employers. Examples are various rail labor unions, the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, the Association of American Railroads and the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. We also interact with contractors who assist the agency in performing its mission and work closely with the NRRIT, which oversees trust fund investments. The RRB also has internal stakeholders that include our dedicated employees and their representatives, such as the American Federation of Government Employees as the exclusive bargaining agent, and the Federal Managers Association.

## **Strategic Priorities**

We have two comprehensive strategic priorities for this planning period: Customer Service and Trust Fund Stewardship.

Our Customer Service priority is focused on meeting our customers' expectations for timely and accurate personal service. These expectations are based on past experience and performance, as reflected in several independent customer satisfaction surveys over the past decade. Our challenge in meeting this priority will be to make the most of our limited resources, using technology and staff in cost-effective ways. Another challenge will be the rising expectations of our customers, reflected in increased demands for new and improved services. We will strive to meet these expectations in this planning period.

Our Trust Fund Stewardship priority has several different aspects, including a focus on financial solvency for our programs for the future as well as maintaining a high level of program integrity.

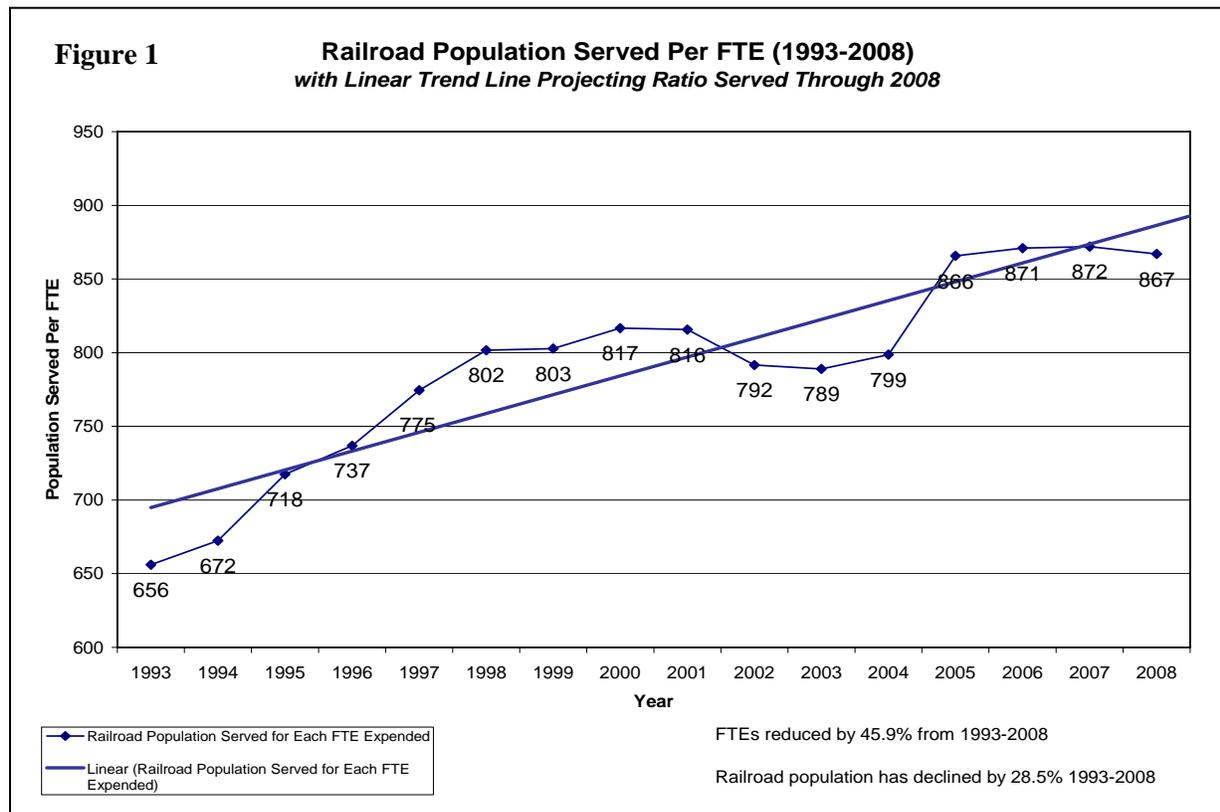
Future solvency was a major objective of legislative changes to the RRA in 2001. Those amendments, contained in the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act, created the NRRIT, a non-governmental entity that is charged with managing investment of the railroad retirement trust funds in a wide variety of financial instruments. Although this responsibility was shifted from the RRB, the agency still has the responsibility of monitoring the activities of the NRRIT and working with the NRRIT to ensure the availability of funds.

Program integrity involves managing our budgetary resources in a prudent, responsible way to ensure that customers receive those benefits to which they are legally entitled. To do this, we conduct automated reviews of our customers' benefit information to identify errors or inconsistencies, and maintain computer matching agreements with other agencies and entities that report information on, or pay benefits to, our customers. We also safeguard our trust funds through such activities as using competitive procurements whenever possible, increasing energy efficiency in our headquarters building, developing in-house training programs to better equip our employees to handle a variety of challenges and using online video to present both internal and external training. We also work closely with our Office of Inspector General (OIG) to have

our financial statements audited every year. All of these activities will continue during this 6-year planning period.

A key factor in meeting our strategic priorities is the RRB's administrative funding level. Budgetary resources have been tight in recent years, and are expected to remain so during the planning period. To deal with this challenge, the agency has made creative use of technology and other innovations, not only to maintain service levels, but to improve agency performance wherever possible.

The following figure demonstrates how the RRB has done more with less in recent years. The general trend over the last 15 years has been an increase in the ratio of customers served to agency employees. The major reasons the RRB has been able to maintain high performance levels with increasingly scarce resources are our extremely capable and dedicated employees coupled with expanded use of technology. However, the continued loss of personnel through retirements, coupled with ongoing budget restraints, has created a serious challenge for the future, to be addressed during the planning period.



# Strategic Goals

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## *Strategic Goal 1 – The RRB will Provide Excellent Customer Service.*

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Our primary means of providing excellent customer service is embodied in our mission statement to pay benefits in a correct, timely manner. However, in addition to this focus on performance, we also aim to satisfy our customers' expectations for high-quality service by providing a variety of delivery options and personalized attention. This includes expanded use of online, web-based services and a nationwide toll-free telephone number for inquiries and services. The RRB has developed the following objectives to meet this crucial goal.

- **Pay Benefits Accurately and Timely**

The RRB is committed to paying the right benefits to the right people in a timely manner. We have a number of measures in place to track the accuracy and timeliness of processing actions under both the RRA and the RUIA.

The principal indicators of **accuracy** are the benefit payment and case accuracy rates in each program. The former measures the percentage of dollars paid out correctly, while the latter deals with the number of individual cases handled in a proper manner.

Our long-term performance goal is to meet or exceed 99-percent payment accuracy in the payments we initiate in a given year, which is based on a measurement of the percentage of benefit dollars paid correctly. We also have case accuracy goals of at least 94 percent in RRA cases, and at least 98 percent in RUIA cases, which measures the percentage of cases or claims that are handled properly. To accomplish these goals, we will monitor the accuracy of award actions through automated programs and specialized reviews of a statistically significant sample of cases. These efforts look at performance trends and identify problem areas. In turn, we use this information to provide constructive feedback for process improvements, enhance performance appraisal/management and identify possible automation initiatives or training needs.

We measure the success of our efforts to make **timely** payments by looking at a variety of information, with a focus on average processing times. The RRB publishes a Customer

Service Plan that outlines a number of timeliness goals covering initial retirement, survivor and disability decisions and payments, as well as unemployment and sickness insurance applications and claims. In turn, the agency's Performance Budget sets yearly targets for the percentage of customers who will receive service in the time frames specified by the Customer Service Plan. We revise these targets on an annual basis, taking into account projected workloads and available resources.

Progress against these performance targets is tracked on a continuous basis, with the results reported to our customers and stakeholders on an annual basis. This includes press releases, inclusion in our Performance and Accountability Report, budget submission and related documents, and posting the information on the agency's website ([www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov)).

### *Customer Responsibilities*

The RRB communicates with our customers about actions they can take to ensure that they receive payments in a correct, timely manner when eligible for benefits. For example, some benefits are subject to reduction based on payments from another party, income thresholds and life changes (i.e., marriage, divorce, death, and children becoming adults). We provide our customers with periodic reminders that contain clear guidance on their responsibilities to provide accurate, complete information and notify us of changes in status. This will allow them to receive the maximum benefits to which they are legally entitled while helping the RRB avoid erroneous payments.

One occurrence that can delay receipt of payments is lost or stolen checks sent through the mail. While this does not happen on a widespread basis, such events not only cause financial hardship for our beneficiaries but additional costs to the agency and the government in terms of investigating and resolving claims. As a result, we will continue to work with Treasury to promote direct deposit as this is a safe, secure and less costly method of delivering benefit payments. The agency currently pays almost 92 percent of all benefits in this manner. The RRB will also assist in implementation of Treasury's Direct Express initiative to provide benefits via a prepaid debit card for individuals who do not have a bank account. In addition, we will work with Treasury on expanding the participation and scope of its International Direct Deposit program, which allows the

RRB and SSA, among others, to send benefit payments directly to banks in more than 40 foreign countries, providing for faster and more efficient service to beneficiaries residing abroad.

### Employer Responsibilities

Information provided by rail employers is the basis for the benefits paid to employees and retirees. For this reason, during the planning period, we will continue to set challenging objectives for timely, accurate and efficient reports of railroad service and compensation. We will continue to work closely with the employers to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and given support needed to carry them out.

- **Provide a Range of Choices in Service Delivery Methods**

To meet our customers' needs and expectations, we must provide services in ways that are accessible and convenient to all of them, including the elderly and those with impairments. Past surveys have shown that the telephone was the preferred means of obtaining service in most cases. At the same time, we have expanded the number of service delivery choices available through the Internet for those who prefer self-service online. As a complementary objective, we will take advantage of technological developments that will not only satisfy our customers but improve our internal processes as well.

Nationwide toll-free service, which was implemented during fiscal year 2009, is a key component of our plan because it provides us with the ability to dynamically route phone calls among our offices based on logical business rules and customer needs. This service will provide our customers with faster response times and allow agency management to more effectively balance and share workloads among offices. During this planning period, we will work to expand the functionality and services offered through the toll-free number (877-772-5772 or 877-RRB-5RRB). These enhancements will be geared to making more self-service options available in a secure manner through the interactive voice response now offered through the toll-free system.

We will also develop additional self-service options via the Internet, including the ability to send e-mails and transmit benefit-related data in a secure manner. This will include services for current or potential beneficiaries, as well as railroad employers. The RRB will continue to make improvements to its Employer Reporting System (ERS) to increase the amount of information relative to railroad compensation, employment and service that employers can exchange with the agency through the Internet. ERS enhancements will streamline the process by consolidating or reducing the number of forms to be submitted and providing links to allow employers to receive certain bills and recover payments through Treasury's Pay.gov website.

Our level of performance under this objective will be measured by the number of new service delivery options and access points we offer during the planning period, formal surveys and informal feedback, and utilization of online services.

#### *Paperless Processing*

The RRB will continue to expand paperless processing to increase efficiency and productivity. Our document imaging system has improved agency processing by making information more accessible and improving the ability of managers to assign and monitor work in a more effective manner. After first implementing this system at headquarters, the RRB began expanding this technology to its nationwide network of field offices that provides front-line customer service. After this is completed during 2009, we will focus on optimizing its use to improve efficiency and service.

The RRB will also continue to improve its automated systems to reduce referrals that require time-consuming and labor-intensive manual handling.

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***Strategic Goal 2 – Serve as Responsible Stewards for Our Customers’ Trust Funds and Agency Resources.***

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The RRB is committed to fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities, not only to the railroad community but as a member of the larger Federal Government community. We will run the agency in an efficient, effective manner, treat our employees with the respect they deserve, and ensure that funds appropriated for agency operations are spent for their intended purposes. We will also take appropriate action to safeguard the funds used for benefit payments. The following objectives will chart our success toward this broad goal.

- **Ensure that Trust Fund Assets are Projected, Collected, Recorded and Reported Appropriately**

The RRB is committed to prudent financial practices and reporting. Our success in this objective is reflected through annual audited financial statements, actuarial valuations, our financial projections, debt collection, experience-based contribution rates, and payroll tax and railroad employee compensation reconciliations. To accomplish this commitment, we will continue to issue audited financial statements, monitor the solvency of the trust funds through a sound program of actuarial valuations and financial projections and correctly estimate amounts needed for future benefit payments. The RRB will verify that payroll taxes are fully collected and properly recorded, and issue accurate, timely determinations and notices of contribution rates under the unemployment and sickness insurance program.

Also, in instances where erroneous payments do occur, the RRB will continue to apply its debt collection and management policies in a fair and equitable manner. The agency will carefully review individual cases to identify amounts eligible for waiver. Debts not subject to waiver will be collected, either directly or through referral to Treasury. Under the Improper Payments Information Act (IPIA) of 2002, the RRB continually reviews and reports on the amount of erroneous payments and engages in activities to reduce them. Since IPIA reporting began, the amounts attributable to the RRB's two benefit programs (the RRA and the RUIA) have been below the thresholds identified in the law and related guidance issued by OMB.

In addition to producing audited financial statements on an annual basis, we will measure our progress under this objective by doing a monthly “reasonableness” test that compares electronically deposited railroad retirement taxes with transfers by Treasury; complete annual reconciliations of railroad compensation reported by employers to the RRB for benefit purposes with that reported to the Internal Revenue Service for tax purposes; and issue timely notices of contribution rates to employers that maintain the solvency of the RUIA programs.

- **Ensure the Integrity of Benefit Programs**

As part of our fiduciary responsibilities to the rail community, we must ensure that the correct amount of benefits is being paid to the right people. Our primary approach in this area is to electronically match our benefit payments against SSA’s earnings and benefits database and death-reports file, CMS’ utilization and death records, and reports of wages to state agencies. We also refer cases to the RRB’s OIG, which can recommend civil or criminal prosecution upon completion of its investigation. We will continue these matching and monitoring programs, as well as our program integrity reviews whereby individual cases are reviewed on a periodic basis, such as obtaining information on medical improvement in disability cases, and contacting annuitants whenever discrepancies are identified through these matching programs or other sources of information.

We will measure the efficiency of this objective through a review and comparison of dollars collected or saved through these programs and the cost to administer them.

- **Ensure Effectiveness, Efficiency and Security of Operations**

How we conduct our business is a key indicator of good stewardship. The RRB is committed to effective, efficient and secure internal operations. Many factors and programs contribute to this goal. We use a management control review process for critical agency programs to provide reasonable assurance of their effectiveness, efficiency and security, with corrective action taken to address any identified weaknesses. In addition we perform a variety of quality assurance activities to ensure that our benefit programs comply with established policies, standards and procedures.

An increasingly important consideration is to safeguard our customers' privacy and enable them to conduct business with the RRB in a secure environment. We have made notable progress in strengthening and improving computer security, particularly in addressing concerns raised by our OIG's audit staff and developing contingency plans in the event of a disaster. We will continue to develop risk assessments and conduct periodic vulnerability assessments on informational assets, and deploy advanced security technologies to protect against physical and cyber-security threats. The agency also developed a response plan for instances in which our customers' personal information may be compromised. The plan includes notices to affected individuals and related assistance where appropriate.

The RRB has also taken steps to comply with a security directive that requires enhanced identity verification of Federal employees, including use of a more sophisticated identification containing a chip with biometric data (i.e., fingerprints) that will be common to all Federal agencies. The RRB has taken steps to implement the identity verification measures for new hires and entered into a shared-services agreement with GSA for production of the new cards for agency employees and contractors. The next phase of this initiative calls for use of the embedded chip to control access to government buildings and computer systems.

Under this objective, success will be determined by how well we respond to security audit findings, risk assessments and similar reviews, and any breaches involving personal information. We will also track our progress in meeting governmentwide directives on employee identification and any related initiatives.

- **Effectively Carry Out Responsibilities with Respect to the NRRIT**

The NRRIT was created by the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 to oversee investment of the railroad retirement trust funds. While the RRB no longer manages investment of trust fund monies, it continues to have responsibilities in ensuring that the NRRIT, and its seven-member Board of Trustees, complies with the provisions of the RRA. We fulfill these obligations through periodic meetings between the RRB's three-member Board and the NRRIT's trustees, more frequent meetings between the agency's General Counsel and NRRIT officials, and review of monthly and annual reports submitted by the NRRIT, including the audit reports on the NRRIT annual financial statements. The RRB has authority to bring civil action should these reviews indicate any violation of the RRA or non-compliance with any of the provisions of the law. We also post information about the NRRIT and its activities on the agency website for the benefit of our customers and stakeholders.

# Management Strategies

In addition to these ongoing programs and strategic goals, we have developed complementary plans in the areas of information technology investments, human capital planning, financial management and procurement. These areas are strategically important in that they provide vital support to achieving our stated objectives and strategic goals. Recognizing this interrelationship, these initiatives include measurable objectives and outcomes that are also reported and tracked as part of our Annual Performance Budget and related documents, as well as periodic reports required by statute, regulation or executive guidance.

- **Effectively Manage Information Technology for Results**

Information technology not only provides the underlying support for the agency's current day-to-day operations, but it also is a strategic means of improving the cost-effectiveness of our operations in the future. In that sense, information technology is a critical aspect of our goal to safeguard our trust funds and agency resources. We are continually striving for better ways to plan and control our information technology investments and initiatives, to ensure that they perform as expected, provide a meaningful return, and are delivered on time and within budget.

In recent years, the agency has taken steps to develop a consistent enterprise architecture and completed a major conversion of the databases underlying its benefit-processing systems to a more modern, robust platform. The next major step is to rewrite those systems to optimize use of the data housed in this new environment. We have also implemented a network-based project management system that allows us to estimate, track and monitor total costs and time schedules for information technology investments throughout the project life cycle.

Since information technology investments represent a substantial part of our annual operating budget, it is imperative that these investments pay the expected dividends. In this planning period, the RRB will develop metrics to analyze these investments for compliance with agency plans and needs. They will be reflected in the update of the RRB's Strategic Information Resources Management Plan, and the agency's Annual

Performance Budget will include objectives based on them. As part of our efforts to implement this plan and track progress, we will continue to develop Information Technology Capital Plans that will be reflected in our budget requests and supporting documents.

- **Effectively Manage Human Capital for Results**

The agency's dedicated, experienced employees have been the foundation for our outstanding track record in customer service and satisfaction. However, we recognize that there is an ongoing need and responsibility to effectively manage our human capital resources. This is particularly important given the number of RRB employees who are eligible for retirement and those who soon will be. We have been working closely with OPM, as well as OMB, to develop a long-range plan that will position the agency for continued success in administering our programs.

In particular, the RRB has been focusing on several aspects of the human capital standards prescribed by OPM's mandates under the Chief Human Capital Officers Act of 2002 and the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004. Following OPM guidelines, the RRB is developing a comprehensive plan which outlines the agency's human capital policies, programs and practices as they support this Strategic Plan. This includes a detailed analysis of the demographic features of the RRB workforce and the skills needed to fulfill our mission. It will also establish a framework of actions over the planning period that will assist the RRB in recruiting, retaining and developing talented employees. Key challenges facing the agency include an aging workforce, employee attrition and the increasing complexity of information technology needs.

Currently, about one-third of RRB employees are eligible for retirement, escalating to more than one-half by fiscal year 2012. The agency has prepared a draft succession planning document that identifies human capital needed to meet organizational goals, any competency gaps that may exist and strategies for addressing these needs/gaps. We have also placed added emphasis on filling entry-level positions, focusing on front-line service employees in the field offices and claims examiners to the extent possible. These new employees, together with those expected to be hired over the next several years, will be

key to effectively administering the RRB's programs and continuing to provide outstanding service over the long term.

During the planning period, we will foster a leadership environment that inspires, motivates and guides employees toward our strategic goals, allows them to link their responsibilities with the agency's strategic vision, and results in a stable, diverse workforce that has the competencies needed to fulfill our mission. As part of these efforts, we will incorporate human capital objectives in the Annual Performance Budget; will request funds in the agency's budget submissions to fill key positions and provide training; and will ensure that employees are able to link their daily activities to relevant goals in the agency's Strategic Plan.

In addition to the area of talent management, which deals with skills gaps in the agency workforce and effective recruitment/retention of new employees, the RRB's plans in this area will address leadership/knowledge management and development of a results-oriented performance culture. The former is particularly important given the number of senior executives and managers who are or soon will be eligible for retirement. The RRB will also establish accountability for human capital management by systematically monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and practices in this area.

- **Enhance Information Security**

Information security has taken on added importance in recent years, and has been identified as an issue of concern by the OIG. The RRB has taken steps to improve its policies and procedures in the areas of risk assessment, testing and evaluation, and implementation of logical access controls in our major application and general support systems. Our progress in this area includes documentation of the 357 tests of the agency's common controls as specified by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the agency is also in the process of having all of its systems certified and accredited in accordance with NIST standards. A special project is also underway to address specific shortcomings identified by the OIG. While the RRB has made significant progress in this area, it will continue to make additional improvements during the planning period.

- **Enhance Financial Reporting**

The RRB's financial statements received an unqualified audit opinion for fiscal year 2008 for the ninth consecutive year. Nevertheless, the agency is taking steps to improve processes related to preparation of the financial statements, issuance of payments, internal controls and quality assurance. These actions will address items identified by the OIG's audit of the financial statements as well as ensure continued compliance with the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act, OMB circulars and related requirements. Current initiatives by agency financial staff include steps to improve the reconciliation of benefit-payment subsystems to the general ledger, provide additional training and controls on voucher preparation/processing and update accounting procedures, among others. During the planning period, we will continue to work to maintain a clean opinion for the financial statements.

- **Effectively Use Competition in Contracting**

We will also strive to implement a first-class acquisition system that makes maximum use of competitive procedures, uses past performance as an evaluation factor in awarding contracts, and ensures that contractors meet all delivery requirements and schedules for goods and services. This will help ensure that the RRB consistently pays the lowest price for products and services commensurate with quality, service, delivery and reliability by promoting full and open competition to the maximum practical extent when procuring goods and services, awarding purchase orders only to responsible contractors, and closely managing solicitations and their resulting contracts.

Performance-based services contracting (PBSC) emphasizes objectives and measures performance requirements and quality standards in developing statements of work, selecting contractors, and determining contract type and incentives in performing contract administration.

In September 2004, OMB issued guidance on expanding use of PBSC on contracts of more than \$25,000. In recent years, the agency has been able to achieve an increase both in terms of the numbers of contracts and percentages of dollars awarded competitively.

The RRB's purchasing staff publishes all required and many optional procurement notices on the government-wide, point-of-entry website ([www.FedBizOpps.gov](http://www.FedBizOpps.gov)). The entries include pre-solicitation and award notices, as well as market surveys. The agency also has about 90 employees authorized to use procurement cards for rapid micro-purchases or other simplified acquisitions.

The RRB will continue to make use of strategic sourcing as well, which is a collaborative, structured process that critically analyzes agency needs so as to obtain commodities and services in the most effective, efficient manner. This involves awareness of Federal best practices in acquisition management and, in many cases, cooperating with other agencies to utilize shared contracts or other interagency agreements. The typical results of these efforts are increased value in the form of optimized performance and minimized price, improved vendor access to Federal business opportunities, and a greater likelihood of achieving socio-economic acquisition targets. Related to human capital planning, the RRB will also continue to have knowledgeable, well-trained acquisition specialists.

Lastly, as a small agency, it is not always economically feasible to retain staff expertise in extremely specialized areas so as to perform all activities in-house. As a result, we will also evaluate the use of outside resources, including partnerships with other Federal agencies, based on considerations such as cost and/or time savings, improved effectiveness, enhanced expertise and increased customer satisfaction.

## Program Evaluations

The RRB considered the results of numerous program evaluations in preparing its strategic plan and will use program evaluations to revise it in the future. The most important of these are summarized below.

### Program Evaluation Schedule

Program Evaluation	Methodology/Scope	Issues Addressed	Schedule
Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act reports and risk assessments	Analytical/RRB administration	Adequacy of internal controls	Annual
Actuarial Valuation	Actuarial/75-year financial projection	Railroad Retirement Act (RRA) revenue/expense projections	Triennial
Actuarial Status Report of Railroad Retirement System	Actuarial/25-year financial projection	RRA revenue/expense projections	Annual
Actuarial Status Report of Railroad Unemployment Insurance System	Actuarial/11-year financial projection	Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA) revenue/expense projections	Annual
Customer service performance reports	Analytical/RRA and RUIA benefit programs	Customer service/timeliness of benefits	Annual
Quality assurance reports	Statistical sampling of RRA, RUIA benefits	Accuracy	Annual
A variety of client satisfaction surveys and feedback	Statistical evaluations (e.g., ACSI); comment cards/meetings with groups of RRB beneficiaries	Client satisfaction with RRB services/need to change standards or update customer service plan	Periodic
Financial Statement Audit	Office of Inspector General audit of agency financial statements	Accuracy of financial statements	Annual
RRB Office of Inspector General audits	Audits/agencywide	Effectiveness and efficiency of agency operations	Periodic

<b>Program Evaluation</b>	<b>Methodology/Scope</b>	<b>Issues Addressed</b>	<b>Schedule</b>
Performance Budget monitoring	Longitudinal study/key agency performance goals	Customer service, stewardship, procurement, human resource and information technology issues	Semi-annual
Variety of special studies	Special studies/benefit program administration	Quality, timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of processes within benefit program administration	Periodic (on demand)
Enterprise Architecture assessment	Analytical/samples and audits	Effectiveness of existing architecture	Annual
Computer security and privacy assessment	Internal and/or external assessments, audits, and evaluations	Adequacy of internal and external controls impacting computer access controls, vulnerabilities and overall security status	Annual, quarterly updates
Report on electronic government (E-Gov) activities	Evaluate the implementation status of the E-Gov Act	Agency-specific E-Government initiatives and agency information available on the Internet	Annual
Improper payment evaluation	Analytical assessment of RRA and RUIA payments	Determination of the level of improper payments and assessment under the Improper Payment Information Act of 2002	Annual
Occupational disability program	Assessment by the Occupational Disability Advisory Committee	Accuracy and validity of the disability decision-making process	Periodic

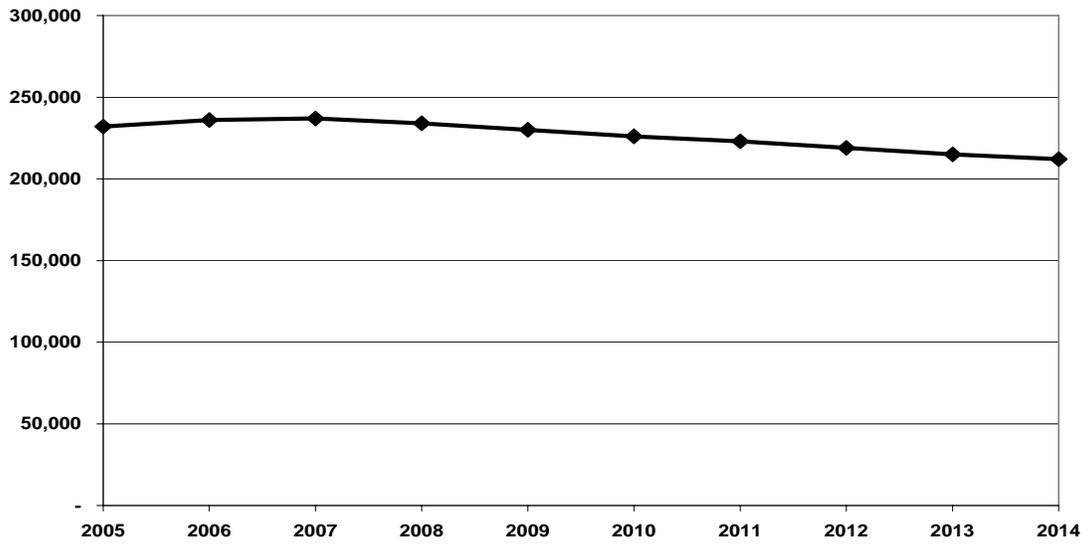
## **Planning Assumptions**

An organization cannot plan for all contingencies, but must base its vision within the framework of given assumptions. The following assumptions were used in formulating this strategic plan.

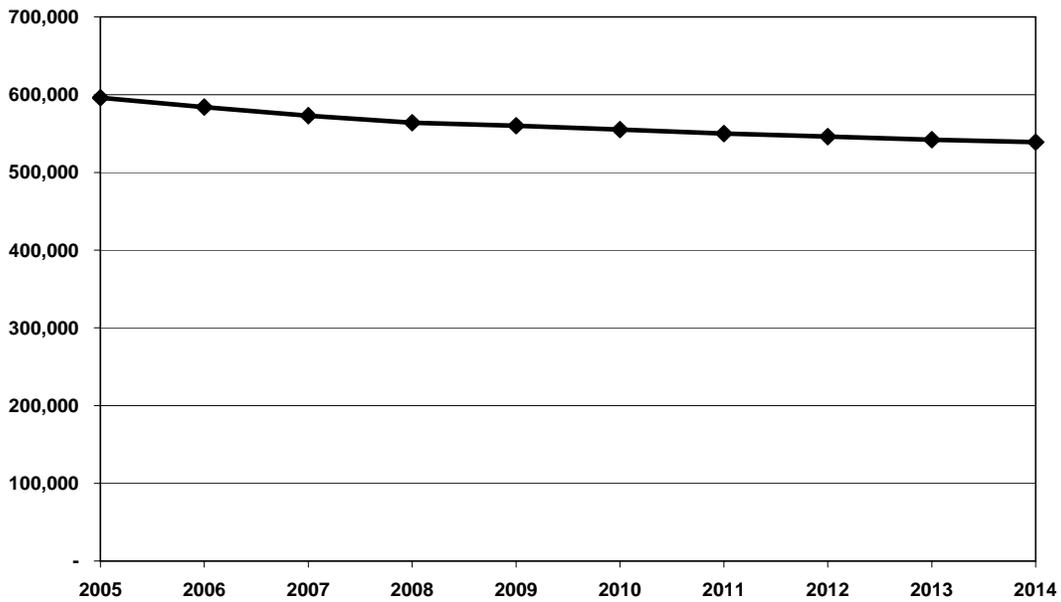
1. The mission of the RRB will not change during this planning period.
2. The RRB will continue as an independent agency in the executive branch of the Federal Government.
3. The benefit programs will not experience any funding crises during this period.
4. The public will expect continued excellent service.
5. Budgetary resources will remain tight during the planning period.
6. Technological improvements will be necessary for the RRB to meet customer expectations and operate within its budget.
7. The primary service delivery will be through a structure of field offices.
8. Over the long term, claims processing workloads will decline along with the total number of beneficiaries (see Figure 2).
9. Maintenance workloads will decline, but reductions will be partly offset by increased initiatives in quality assurance and program integrity.
10. A large number of experienced employees will retire during the planning period, resulting in a significant loss of business expertise.
11. Legislative amendments will continue to be made, and may affect both processing and maintenance workloads.

**Figure 2**

**Average Railroad Employment  
Calendar Years 2005-2014<sup>1</sup>**



**Railroad Retirement Beneficiaries  
Calendar Years 2005-2014<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>2008-2014 estimates from the 24<sup>th</sup> Actuarial Valuation, employment assumption II.

<sup>2</sup>2009-2014 estimates from the 24<sup>th</sup> Actuarial Valuation, employment assumption II.

## Key External Factors

The RRB recognizes that there are several key factors external to the agency which could affect the achievement of our strategic goals and objectives. These include the factors shown below, along with an assessment of their probability and impacts.

Factor	Strategic Goal(s)	Likelihood	Potential Impact/ Response
Significant reductions in our administrative budget.	Customer Service; Stewardship	Possible.	The Performance Budget will reflect the impact of funding reductions on these goals. To date, the RRB has managed to improve some aspects of operations within budget constraints, using various streamlining initiatives and automation of manual work processes.
Sudden, unanticipated and significant declines in railroad employment levels.	Customer Service; Stewardship	Possible. Payroll taxes are the primary source of financing for railroad retirement benefits. If economic conditions change significantly, rail industry employers may be required to substantially reduce staffing. Currently, we anticipate such action only under a pessimistic employment scenario.	In the past, declines in railroad employment have resulted in legislation to ensure the solvency of the railroad retirement system. A similar need for legislative changes may arise if there were a dramatic, sudden, unexpected decline in railroad employment. The impact could be mitigated if alternate sources of financing are identified.
Major program-related legislative changes.	Customer Service; Stewardship	Possible.	The impact of any legislative changes on the strategic goals would have to be fully assessed.

Factor	Strategic Goal(s)	Likelihood	Potential Impact/ Response
Major mission-related or structural legislative changes.	Customer Service; Stewardship	Unlikely. There have been several proposals to change the structure of the agency, but none have been introduced into the Congress for several years.	Legislative changes dealing with the agency's fundamental mission are not anticipated, and their impact would have to be fully assessed if and when proposals are made.
Lack of interagency cooperation or support for key operations (e.g., SSA's wage and data exchange, and the Internal Revenue Service's tax collections).	Customer Service; Stewardship	Unlikely. As other agencies find themselves operating with fewer resources, there is a possibility that their reductions would impact our services.	The RRB depends heavily on interagency cooperation and support to carry out many of our functions and services. We will continue to maintain contacts with key agencies to ensure active coordination and support.
Loss of public confidence in the railroad retirement system and the ability of the agency to provide necessary services.	Stewardship	Unlikely. The continued confidence of both railroad employers and employees and the beneficiary population is a critical factor. As customer satisfaction remains high, a loss of public confidence is unlikely, provided administrative funding is not significantly reduced.	We will continue to monitor the solvency of the funds, and look for ways to ensure administrative efficiencies to keep costs low. We will also continue to monitor our customers' level of satisfaction.

In developing this plan, we recognized that there are a number of potential strategic issues that may arise during the coming years which relate to various external factors. These include, but are not limited to, changes in basic program design, alternative sources of financing, transferring functions to other agencies, establishing performance-based organizations, and privatization. Issues of this nature could cause fundamental changes in the RRB's programs, operations, structure, and/or financing, and thereby directly impact this plan.

## Conclusion

This Strategic Plan expresses the agency's continued commitment to provide the best possible customer service and prudent stewardship for the rail community.

We are proud to present this plan, yet it is only that – a plan. The plan will not achieve success unless we widely communicate these strategic goals and incorporate them into the day-to-day business activities of the agency, with links to our employees' performance plans, our annual performance budgets, and other plans such as our Human Capital Plan, Succession Plans, and Strategic Information Resources Management Plan.

In order to ensure achievement of strategic goals, the RRB sets annual performance goals, based on its strategic goals and designed to make continual, measurable progress on our objectives during each budget year. This planning process is in compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act and OMB guidance that require each agency to develop annual performance budgets, which are submitted along with the agency's budget requests. We will monitor our performance throughout the year and make adjustments as needed to achieve the desired results.

The RRB expects that our Strategic Plan will guide us as we continue our long and distinguished tradition of excellence in service to our customers. The RRB has a proven track record of carrying out its plans and achieving results. For this reason, we believe that this Strategic Plan, along with sufficient resources, will help us to achieve the results our customers need and deserve.

We will monitor this Strategic Plan annually and update it as needed. At a minimum, we will continue to update this plan every 3 years to cover a new 6-year planning period. This plan is available on our website at [www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov).