Foreword

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is being issued for the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project, which is proposed by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and the New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT). The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and NJ TRANSIT published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in February 2008 in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The DEIS was circulated to all involved and interested agencies, members of the public, and other stakeholders. The public and agency comment period for the DEIS ended on March 31, 2008.

The FEIS responds to all relevant comments made on the DEIS during the comment period, including testimony provided at the March 18, 2008 public hearing. A summary of the comments received and responses to these comments are provided in Chapter 11, "Response to Comments." Individual chapters of the EIS were revised to address the comments where appropriate. Changes and additions to the EIS are indicated by double-underlined text.

The FEIS also reflects refinements to the project design that have been made since publication of the DEIS. These refinements include: a more detailed assessment of the project's construction schedule; a shift in the track centers on the western end of the project area to provide for the future extension of Track 4 west of Swift Interlocking; a substantial reduction in the acreage of wetlands to be filled through the use of elevated structures on the east bank of the Hackensack River and the relocation of a permanent access road; more detailed calculations of shading impacts due to elevated structures; and project costs updated to 2008. Additional information concerning proposed mitigation measures has been included in the FEIS. The FEIS analyzes the results of these project refinements as appropriate. No new significant adverse impacts would be created as a result of these changes; rather, some adverse impacts would be reduced.

Finally, the FEIS includes a comparison of the project alternatives in Chapter 9, "Preferred Alternative." This chapter identifies a preferred alternative based on the project goals and objectives (including operational, engineering, and environmental considerations), construction duration, and project costs. ✷