

AMTRAK

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# Strategy Book

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A woman with curly hair, wearing a white shirt and a brown bag, is looking out of a train window. The train is blurred in the background.

# We're *routing* for you.

## Project Premise and Overview

Amtrak stands at a crossroads. After 54 years of service as America's backbone transportation system, the organization faces existential challenges that threaten its future viability. This project aims to reposition Amtrak's brand to connect with the next generation of travelers while addressing critical operational realities.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a brand strategy that resonates with Amtrak's specific audience
- Create a visual identity system that reflects audience needs
- Design applications based on customer journey touchpoints
- Position Amtrak for growth opportunities



# Part I

## Approach

# Design Philosophy

Design is not decoration—it's problem-solving through intentional decision-making. In the context of transportation and branding, design serves as the bridge between functional necessity and emotional connection. Every design choice should serve both practical and aspirational purposes.

### CORE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 1. Function Drives Form** – Transportation design must prioritize usability and efficiency while creating experiences that inspire and delight.
- 2. Emotional Resonance** – Successful transportation brands tap into the deeper human need for connection, movement, and progress.
- 3. Systems Thinking** – Every touchpoint is interconnected—from the first moment of brand awareness to the final destination.

“DESIGN IS THE SILENT AMBASSADOR OF YOUR BRAND.”  
- PAUL RAND

# Approach Methodology

My approach to strategic design follows a structured yet flexible methodology that ensures both rigor and creativity.

**Proposal:** – Establish a clear precursory understanding of the brand history, current concerns, and agreement on what work is being asked for by the brand.

**Phase 1: Research** – Cast the widest possible net to understand the challenge from every angle.

**Phase 2: Frameworks** – Organize research into actionable frameworks that guide decision-making.

**Phase 3: Strategy** – Develop brand positioning and strategic direction based on insights that reflect the audience's values and needs.

**Phase 4: Synthesis** – Transform strategy into tangible identity and applications relevant to the brand audience for experiential and emotional connection.

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## RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY: LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED

Effective brand strategy requires understanding not just what customers say they want, but what they actually need—often before they realize it themselves. To discover these needs, both spoken and unspoken research must go beyond surface level.

**Primary Research:** Direct interviews and observation from primary sources

**Secondary Research:** Industry analysis, financial data, cultural trends, etc.

**Experiential Research:** Journey mapping and firsthand experience

**Competitive Research:** Understanding the broader landscape

# Criteria for Success

Establishing clear metrics for success is vital for project completion, as they provide a scale to stack work against and ensure goals are being accomplished. These metrics are different for every project as they are unique to the business and the specific project. For Amtrak's repositioning, success means:

## Business Metrics

- Increased ridership among 20-45 age demographic
- Improved brand perception scores
- Enhanced operational efficiency
- Revenue growth through ticket sales

## Brand Metrics

- Brand awareness increase in key markets
- Positive sentiment shift in social listening
- Improved customer satisfaction scores
- Stronger emotional connection resonance

## Design Metrics

- Reduced navigation time in stations
- Decreased customer service inquiries about wayfinding
- Increased engagement with visual content
- Awards and industry recognition

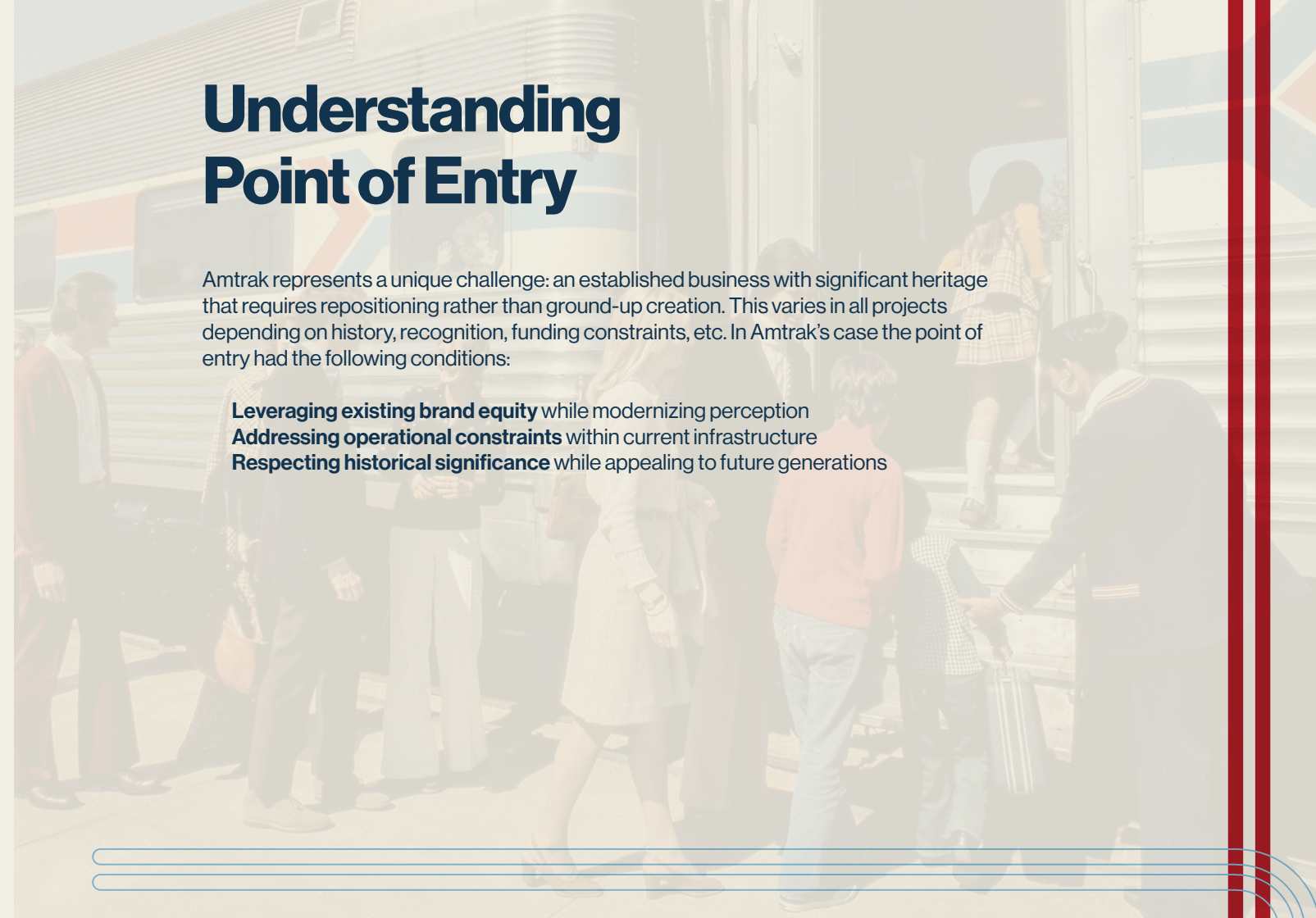
# Understanding Point of Entry

Amtrak represents a unique challenge: an established business with significant heritage that requires repositioning rather than ground-up creation. This varies in all projects depending on history, recognition, funding constraints, etc. In Amtrak's case the point of entry had the following conditions:

**Leveraging existing brand equity** while modernizing perception

**Addressing operational constraints** within current infrastructure

**Respecting historical significance** while appealing to future generations



# Part II

## Research Phases

# Background Research

## BUSINESS UNDERSTANDING: THE CRITICAL ISSUES

### Financial Reality Check

Amtrak operates under a unique and challenging business model

### The 3% Problem

Amtrak owns only 3% of the tracks they use  
Dependent on freight rail companies for infrastructure  
Limited control over service delivery and timing

### The Deficit Dilemma

Operating in continuous spending deficit  
Government entity with for-profit mandate  
“Made whole” by federal funding despite losses

### The Navigation Paradox

Harder to operate efficiently than private companies  
Bureaucratic processes slow decision-making  
*But guaranteed funding provides stability*



BRAND AUDIT: CURRENT STATE ANALYSIS

Visual Identity Assessment

Logo Analysis

- Current design lacks modern appeal
- Limited scalability across digital platforms
- Fails to convey speed, connectivity, or innovation

Color Palette

- Traditional blue lacks emotional resonance
- No connection to American geography or culture
- Limited application across touch points

Typography

- Inconsistent application across platforms
- Poor legibility in transportation contexts
- Doesn't reflect brand personality

Regionally

- Inconsistency for regional identities
- No defining characteristics



Body Copy

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Headlines

ABC

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INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVES

Internal Stakeholders *(Based on research when inaccessible)*

- Pride in service
- Frustration with operational constraints
- Desire for modernization
- Concern about public perception
- Conflict amidst administration upheaval

External Stakeholders *(Consumption and aspirational audience, related professionals)*

- Riders appreciate comfort, convenience, and accessibility
- Riders concerned with reliability and service continuity
- Public transport professional view it as necessary and vital
- Non-customers view as outdated/unreliable/unsafe
- Local communities see economic and connection benefit
- Government views vary on necessity and expense

# BUSINESS FINANCIAL DEEP DIVE

A solid grasp on business financials is essential to seeing where business is suffering so improvements can be made strategically to uplift and support those divisions.

A **Business Model Canvas** (below) is a valuable framework to complete for a well rounded understanding of cost structure, key partners, resources, revenue streams, activities, and customer relationships.



# BRAND TIMELINE

- 1950s – 1960s**  
*Shift from rail reliance to highways  
Commercial jet service takes flight*
- 1970s: Formation**  
*Created from remaining passenger rail services  
Government takeover to prevent total collapse  
Initial focus on survival*
- 1980s – 1990s: Quiet Persistence**  
*Steady service during economic changes  
Supported changing workforce dynamics  
Maintained essential connectivity*
- 2000s: Modernization Begins**  
*Acela introduction in Northeast Corridor  
Post-9/11 critical transportation role  
Technology integration*
- 2010s – Present: Seeking Relevance**  
*Competition from ride-sharing and budget airlines  
Infrastructure challenges increase  
Need for repositioning becomes critical*

BRAND ARCHITECTURE

Product name	Acela	Amtrak	Amtrak Vacations	Amtrak Guest rewards	Infrastructure
Category	High speed rail	National and Regional rail travel	All inclusive train Vacation packages	Rewards program	Maintenance and Safety
Target customer	Streamlined NEC traveler	All travelers	Leisurely rail riders	Frequent riders	Safety officers, engineers, and maintenance workers
Value proposition (Promise)	A distinctive experience for travelers to save time in comfort	High quality, safe, on-time rail passenger service	One-of-a-kind travel experiences throughout North America	Redeem points for travel, trip enhancement, dining, and more!	To keep Amtrak running
Ksp	150 mph speeds	Free bags and no hidden fees	Inclusive packages	Priority level access	Restores Amtrak service
Ksp	Passenger amenities Rich experience	Room to roam the cars And no middle seat	“Thrill of riding the rails”	Buy, share, transfer points	Ensures safety for passengers, employees and bystanders
Ksp	Comfortable travel With leg room	Private rooms and On-board services	500 points of travel	Enhanced travel experience	Essential for daily operations

TRENDS AND GLOBAL MARKET ANALYSIS

Starting with **global trends** affecting interconnected aspects of daily life, these shifts have repercussions in policy making, business ventures and set the stage of relevance for about 20 years.

**Macro-trends** are industry specific to the project. For Amtrak the transportation industry is seeing trends regarding sustainabiity, experiences, accessibility, and ownership changes.

**Niche micro-trends** are hyperspecific to the project and the brand's audience, for Amtrak these involve work-life balance, slow/leisure travel, productivity, experience economy, and commuting.

Urbanization

The majority of riders travel under 400 miles on the train either between cities or city and suburbs. Urban areas are expanding while home purchase patterns shift.

Leisurely travel

People look to the train for inexpensive leisure options. Cruising and slow travel culture means more people opting for long-distance and scenic routes.

Passenger tech

From fleet modernization and improved on-board passenger services with integrated technology and ergonomics.

Sustainable travel

With airlines charging more for 'sustainable' flights producing less emissions, environmentally conscious consumers are seeking eco-options that rail service provides.

Rail modernization

High-speed rail systems are gaining viral popularity as travelers venture to other countries spuring updates and improvements for train transport.

Microcations

A few free hours to a weekend is all that is needed for a trip of a lifetime to refuel the mind, and find balance with work. Microcations are short and impactful getaways for busy lives.



STEEP ANALYSIS

Social	Tech	Econ.	Enviro.	Polit.
<p><b>Aging population:</b> By 2030, 20% of americans will be over 65, increasing demand for accessible rail services due to their comfort and reliability compared to driving or flying. Amtrak's rural services are vital, but accessibility upgrades are needed.</p> <p><a href="https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/urban-rural-populations.html">https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/urban-rural-populations.html</a></p>	<p><b>High-speed rail dev.</b> The new acela fleet, reaching 160 mph, strengthens competitiveness on the northeast corridor, with potential for expansion to other regions.</p> <p><a href="https://media.amtrak.com/2023/05/article-introducing-a-new-era-of-rail-in-america/">https://media.amtrak.com/2023/05/article-introducing-a-new-era-of-rail-in-america/</a></p>	<p><b>Federal and state subsidies</b> Amtrak's \$2.2 billion revenue in 2024 relies on subsidies, with the infrastructure investment and jobs act (iiija) providing significant support.</p> <p><a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/02/c/mate-biden-pu-blic-transit-amtrak.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/02/c/mate-biden-pu-blic-transit-amtrak.html</a></p>	<p><b>Sustainability commitments</b> Net zero emissions by 2045 goal drives sustainable practice adoption across all aspects of operation and positions amtrak as a green transport leader considering their current national reach. Making claims about the goal and hyping this will garner attention and ridership.</p> <p><a href="https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf">https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Government Ownership Structure</b> Amtrak operates as a federal entity with a for-profit mandate, creating bureaucratic inefficiencies and slower decision-making compared to private companies, while being "made whole" by government funding despite operating deficits.</p>
<p><b>Urbanization and suburbanization:</b> With 32% of the us population in urban areas as of 2020, and suburban growth continuing, amtrak's short-distance routes (83% of passengers) benefit, but suburban expansion is key.</p> <p><a href="https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/urban-rural-populations.html">https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/urban-rural-populations.html</a></p>	<p><b>Fleet modernization:</b> Amtrak aims trainsets, debuting in 2026, offer improved comfort and efficiency, meeting customer expectations</p> <p><a href="https://media.amtrak.com/2023/05/article-introducing-a-new-era-of-rail-in-america/">https://media.amtrak.com/2023/05/article-introducing-a-new-era-of-rail-in-america/</a></p>	<p><b>Ridership growth shift</b> 38.6 million customer trips in fy2023 (up 24%) Goal to double ridership by 2040 is achievable if trend continues.</p> <p><a href="https://media.amtrak.com/2023/11/amtrak-fiscal-year-2023-ridership-exceeds-expectations-as-demand-for-passenger-rail-soars/">https://media.amtrak.com/2023/11/amtrak-fiscal-year-2023-ridership-exceeds-expectations-as-demand-for-passenger-rail-soars/</a></p>	<p><b>Energy efficiency</b> Rail is 46% more energy-efficient than cars and 34% more than air travel, supporting marketing efforts. travelers actively look for more efficient modes of transport—outside of the us this is part of the culture rather than a trend.</p> <p><a href="https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf">https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Infrastructure Dependency</b> Amtrak owns only 3% of the tracks they use, making them dependent on freight rail companies and federal/state infrastructure investment decisions that are subject to political priorities and budget allocations.</p>
<p><b>Work from home</b> Remote work has reduced commuting but increased leisure travel, potentially boosting amtrak's long-distance routes like the empire builder.</p> <p><a href="https://media.amtrak.com/2023/11/amtrak-fiscal-year-2023-ridership-exceeds-expectations-as-demand-for-passenger-rail-soars/">https://media.amtrak.com/2023/11/amtrak-fiscal-year-2023-ridership-exceeds-expectations-as-demand-for-passenger-rail-soars/</a></p>	<p><b>Digitization/automation</b> Mobile ticketing and real-time tracking improve user experience, while ai-driven maintenance could enhance reliability</p> <p><a href="https://www.wulpi.org/news/10-trends-resaping-north-american-public-transport-in-2024/">https://www.wulpi.org/news/10-trends-resaping-north-american-public-transport-in-2024/</a></p>	<p><b>Economic development</b> Connection of rural and urban centers through the heartland flyer promotes growth through travel</p>	<p><b>Carbon emission reduction</b> Bolstering facts like the dc to nyc produces 70% fewer co2e emissions than flying</p> <p><a href="https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf">https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Federal Funding Vulnerability</b> Amtrak's survival depends on annual congressional appropriations, making them vulnerable to political shifts, budget cuts, and competing priorities for federal transportation spending.</p>
<p><b>Social equity</b> Emphasis on equitable transport access for low-income and rural communities aligns with amtrak's network, serving over 500 destinations across 45 states</p>	<p><b>Electric/hybrid transport</b> Electrified trains reduce emissions, aligning with global sustainability trends and amtrak's goals</p>	<p><b>Workforce shortages and retention</b> 96% of us transit agencies face workforce shortages, with 37.2% of transit workers over 55 in 2023, higher than other sectors. Amtrak and other rail operators struggle with recruitment and retention, prompting initiatives like flexible scheduling to maintain service reliability.</p> <p><a href="https://www.upi.com/transport-workforce-leadership-house/trail-workforce-shortage-synthesis-report/">https://www.upi.com/transport-workforce-leadership-house/trail-workforce-shortage-synthesis-report/</a></p>	—	<p><b>Regulatory Framework</b> As a government entity, Amtrak faces complex federal regulations and oversight requirements that private competitors don't, while also being subject to political pressure for service decisions and route planning that may not align with business efficiency.</p>
<p><b>Environmental consciousness</b> Growing climate awareness favors rail's energy efficiency (46% more than cars, 34% more than air travel), attracting eco-conscious travelers.</p> <p><a href="https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf">https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/environmental/amtrak-sustainability-report-ly23.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Multi-modal integration</b> Partnerships with local transit and ride-sharing platforms, inspired by global models, enhance connectivity</p>	<p><b>Fare structure</b> Fare capping and discounted passes, such as those implemented in chicago's access pilot program, make rail travel more affordable. Amtrak could adopt similar strategies to attract low-income riders, boosting ridership, which grew 12.3% from 2022 to 2023.</p> <p>Subscription</p>	—	—

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

By Industry

Airlines

Strengths: Speed for long distances, extensive route network  
Weaknesses: Airport hassles, weather delays, carbon footprint  
Opportunity: Position rail for medium-distance, city-center convenience

Bus Lines

Strengths: Low cost, extensive coverage  
Weaknesses: Comfort, speed, reliability  
Opportunity: Premium alternative with better experience

Car Travel

Strengths: Flexibility, familiarity, privacy  
Weaknesses: Traffic, parking, environmental impact  
Opportunity: Stress-free, productive alternative

Ride-sharing

Growing acceptance of shared mobility  
Technology-enabled convenience  
Urban-focused solutions

Remote Work Technology

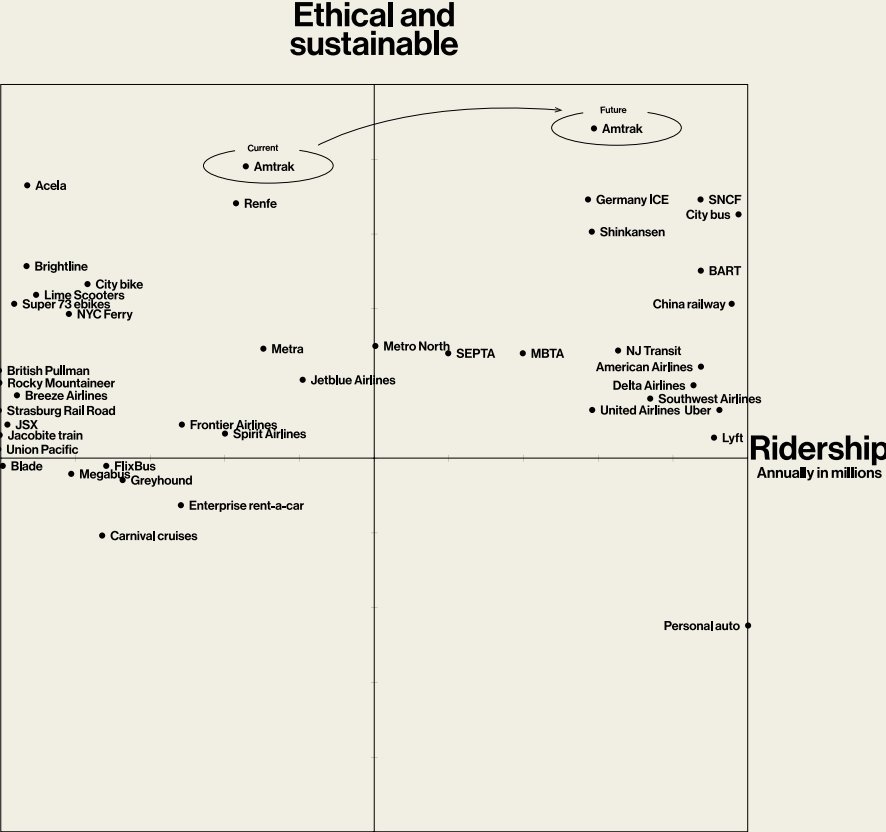
Reducing need for business travel  
Virtual meeting adoption  
Opportunity: Leisure travel focus

KEY COMPETITORS

- Japan Shinkansen
- Orient Express
- Uber
- American Airlines
- Brightline



COMPETITIVE MATRIX



CHESSGAME

Uber	Amtrak's fixed rail routes can't match Uber's flexible, on-demand ride-hailing, which serves 600 million trips annually with door-to-door convenience for commuters and leisure travelers across the US. Our app-driven model offers real-time options that Amtrak's scheduled trains simply can't replicate	While Uber excels in urban flexibility, Amtrak provides a sustainable, high-capacity rail network carrying 32.8 million passengers with 46% lower emissions than cars, ideal for intercity travel and accessible to disabled passengers with ADA-compliant stations. We're investing in digital tools to enhance booking convenience, bridging the gap with ride-hailing's on-demand appeal.
Brightline	Amtrak's aging trains and slower speeds pale in comparison to Brightline's modern, high-speed rail connecting Miami to Orlando with premium amenities for leisure travelers. Our all-electric service delivers a greener, more luxurious experience that outshines Amtrak's regional offerings	Brightline's regional high-speed rail is impressive, but Amtrak's nationwide network serves 32.8 million across 500+ destinations. We're upgrading our Acela fleet to match high-speed standards, ensuring broader reach and inclusive, plus our new Airo fleet will rival the best in comfort and accessibility while maintaining eco-friendly travels.
American Airlines	Amtrak's rail services are limited by fixed routes and slower speeds, while American Airlines connects over 230 U.S. destinations, serving 210 million passengers with modern, fuel-efficient aircraft and a commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050. Our extensive network and frequent flights offer unmatched convenience for business and leisure travelers compared to Amtrak's constrained schedules.	American Airlines' vast network is ideal for rapid air travel, but Amtrak's 32.8 million passengers enjoy a more sustainable journey with 46% lower emissions than air travel. We also offer service to more than twice the number of destinations of American Airlines. We're enhancing our Acela high-speed services and expanding routes to offer greener, inclusive travel options nationwide.
Personal Automobile	Amtrak's routes pale against the freedom of personal cars, which enable 5 billion trips with door-to-door flexibility for U.S. commuters and leisure travelers. Our convenience and ease overshadow Amtrak's limited network and longer travel times by miles.	While personal automobiles offer ease and flexibility Americans, that comes at a price—fuel consumption, pollution, and sitting trapped in traffic. Amtrak's emission are 46% lower than cars making it the most sustainable way to travel. To enhance convenience, we're expanding Thruway services and station car-sharing partnerships to reduce travel times and match the seamless nature of car travel.
Japan Shinkansen	Amtrak's slower trains and inconsistent schedules can't match Japan's Shinkansen, which carries 80 million passengers with world-class speed, punctuality, and electric-powered efficiency. Our high-speed network delivers a superior intercity experience that Amtrak's limited high-speed offerings struggle to emulate.	While Shinkansen's 80 million passengers benefit from world-class speed and punctuality, Amtrak's 32.8 million passengers can travel on Acela, reaching 150 mph with First Class seating, complimentary at-seat meals, and 95% on-time performance in FY24. We're investing \$75 billion to upgrade Acela trains and Northeast Corridor tracks, to improve travel speeds and reliability to rival Shinkansen's intercity excellence.

## AMBITIONS: POSSIBLE FUTURES



Fueled by administration upset and deficit spending reduction, **Amtrak is dismantled by Congress**. Equipment and railcars are sold off, and the small sections of Amtrak owned railroads become privatized. The North East Corridor and Wolverine Line through Chicago remain in operation under new names, operators, and price increases.



**Amtrak reconnects with riders** through strategic operational changes starting with the understanding of who they serve, and what those riders require for successful travel. Strategic partnerships and campaigns provide Amtrak with much needed public attention and inspire a new host of riders who see Amtrak as a solution to their transportation needs, whether they are commuting or traveling leisurely.



# Audience Understanding

## JOURNEY MAPPING: EXPERIENCE FROM EVERY ANGLE

To truly understand Amtrak customers, I experienced the service as they do—from initial awareness through post-trip reflection.

### Pre-Travel Phase

#### Awareness

- How do people discover Amtrak as an option?
- What triggers consideration of rail travel?
- Information sources and decision factors

#### Research & Booking

- Website navigation and booking experience
- Mobile app functionality and design
- Comparison with other transportation options
- Price transparency and value perception

### Travel Day Experience

#### Arrival At Station

- Wayfinding and signage effectiveness
- Check-in process and staff interactions
- Waiting area comfort and amenities
- First impressions and anxiety points

### Boarding & On-Train

- Boarding process efficiency
- Seat finding and luggage storage
- Staff interactions and service quality
- Amenities and comfort assessment
- Productivity possibilities during travel

### Arrival & Departure

- Disembarkation process
- Station connections and exits
- Overall satisfaction and likelihood to recommend

### Reflection

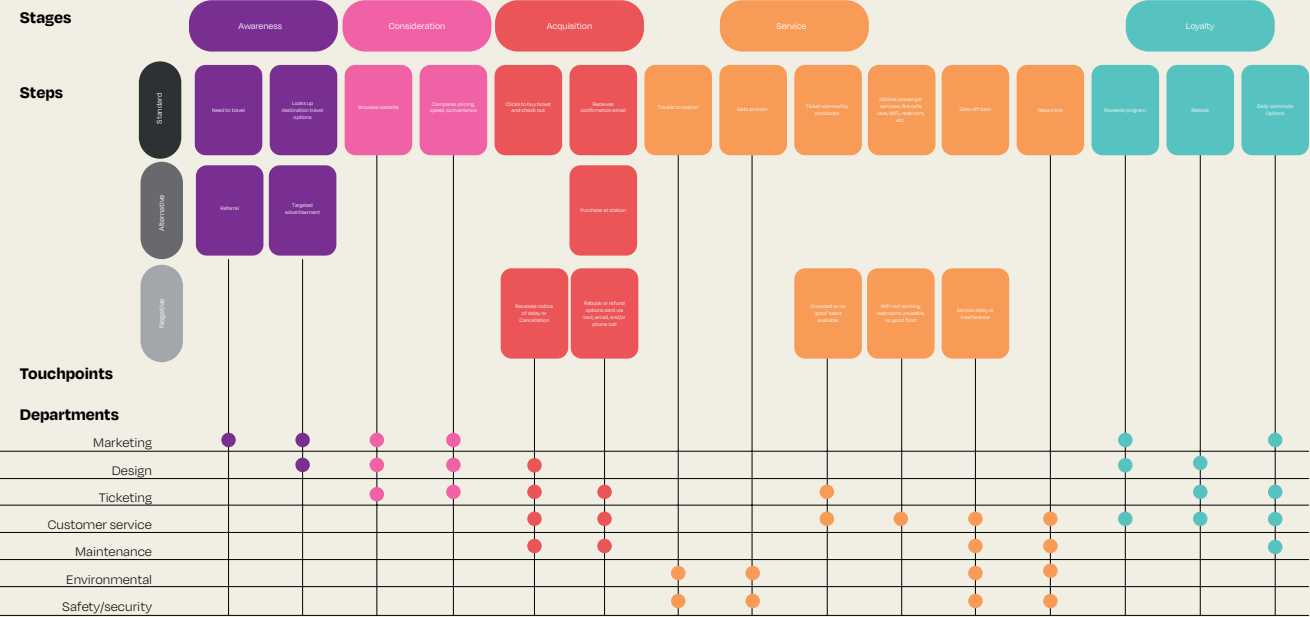
#### Pain Points

- Wayfinding
- Boarding consistency

#### Successes

- Ease and experience

USER JOURNEY MAPPING



AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS AND PSYCHOGRAPHICS

**Primary Research: Who Are They Really?**  
Through extensive interviews with actual Amtrak riders, clear patterns emerged:

**Demographics**  
Age: 25-45 years old (primary), 45-65 (secondary)  
Income: \$50,000-\$150,000 annually  
Education: College-educated, often with advanced degrees  
Location: Urban and suburban residents  
Employment: Knowledge workers, professionals, students

**Psychographics**  
Values: Sustainability, efficiency, authenticity, work-life balance  
Lifestyle: Busy, tech-savvy, socially conscious  
Travel Motivations: Both necessity and leisure, value experiences  
Pain Points: Time constraints, unclear information, unpredictable service

INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

“The US lost **history and efficiency** when it lost trains.”  
“Traveling by train was worth it for all those years; for the **convenience and price...**”  
“**Convenience** – that’s the whole thing. Point A to point B **without delay.**”  
“Train travel is more **fun** than a plane!”  
“Even with traffic, **driving is faster.**”  
“I saw everything on the train, and at the stations, it became **unbearable.**”



## DESIGN TARGET DEFINITION

After analyzing all audience segments, the primary design target emerged as the aspirational version of the Amtrak rider.

### The On-The-Wayfarer

The standard 9 to 5 remote worker has nothing on these 5 to 9, 9 to 5, 5 to 9 and back again commuters. They are time-poor, experience-rich world citizens who you can always count on to RSVP “Yes!” and to strike up a conversation. Their life is a carefully curated whirlwind of productivity, social engagements, and cultural exploration. Their laser focus mindset sees that they stay on-track in their career and daily life. These xenophiles have an eclectic taste and broad interests, but they manage to do it all on a realistic budget, adding approachable and accessible to their long list of achievements. To put it simply they are on their way.

### Needs

- **Reliable and Punctual Service:** Consistent train schedules to plan their day with precision, ensuring they arrive where they need to when they need to.
- **Productive Commute Environment:** Access to high-speed Wi-Fi, power outlets, and quiet workspaces to work, read, or plan during commutes.
- **Comfort:** Clean, modern train cars and seats for their journey.
- **Seamless Travel Integration:** Easy ticketing (e.g., mobile apps), real-time updates, and multi-modal connections for first/last mile ease.

### Values

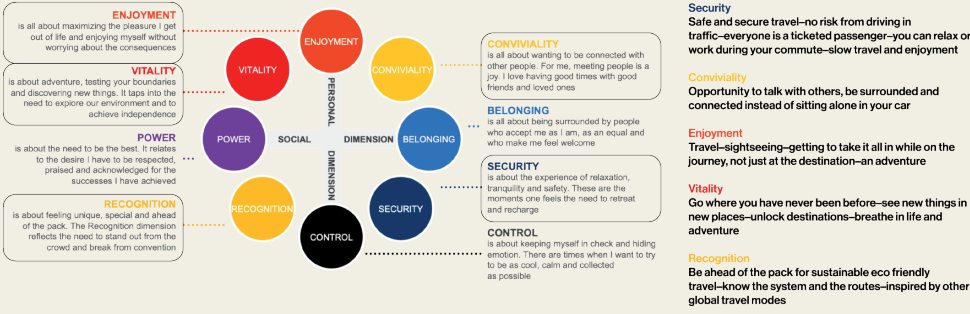
- **World Citizenry:** Travel is always on their list, not just their bucket-list. They travel for work, to work, and while off work. Luxury travel is not in the budget, but they know that true richness is not found at a resort, but on the streets, in local markets, and spoken from foreign lips in foreign tongues that Duolingo woefully unprepared them for.
- **Laser-focus:** Productivity and ambition are key to their 5-year plan. They know exactly where they are going and how long it takes to get their. They really enjoy staying on-track.
- **Tastemaking:** As an aspiring athlete they are taking the approachable route to sophistication. They are curious and keen, but never a try-hard, they deeply engage with an eclectic curation of art, food, experiences, and knowledge.
- **RSVPing ‘Yes!’:** Their 5 to 9 after their 9 to 5 is stacked. This weekend? Booked and busy. Its a carefully curated whirlwind.
- **Realistic Mindfulness:** They appreciate eco-friendly options and value moments of calm amidst their busy schedules, but realistically they are only vegan on Wednesdays, and sometimes you just have to Uber 3 blocks.

### Pain Points

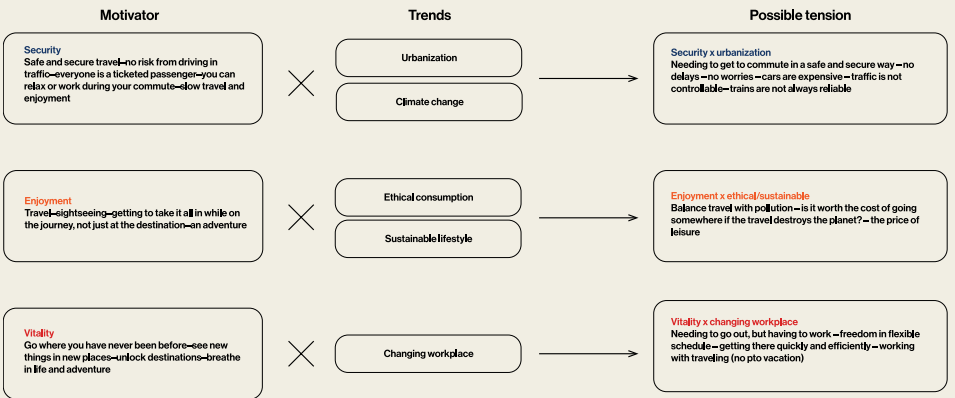
- **Unreliable Schedules:** Delays or cancellations disrupt their tightly packed schedules, causing stress and impacting work or social commitments.
- **Inconsistent Amenities:** Spotty Wi-Fi, limited power outlets, or lack of quiet spaces hinder their ability to use commutes productively for work or personal growth.
- **Crowded or Uncomfortable Trains:** Overcrowded cars or outdated/uncomfortable seating makes the commute stressful.
- **Complex Ticketing and Navigation:** Cumbersome ticketing processes with app failing and web disconnects paired with unclear connections to other transit modes add friction to their time-sensitive routines.
- **Safety and Cleanliness Concerns:** Perceived or real issues with train cleanliness or safety, especially on late-night commutes, detract the needed element of security vital for success.



HUMAN MOTIVATORS



CORE TENSION IDENTIFICATION



AUDIENCE DISCOVERY

**Audience Segmentation**

- More men than women (safety concerns)
- 25-44 years old
- High income
- Higher education
- Densely populated city
- Single or nuclear family
- Tech savvy (69% online ticket sales)
- Expect sustainable and efficient integration
- Interest in travel as a hobby (high disposable income)
- Innovators or early adopters

**Staggering Statiitscs**

21,000 miles of Amtrak routes

97% of those rails are owned by host railroads (20,758/642 miles)

300 trains a day

Longest route: 65 hours from Chicago to LA

**Societal Impact**

Urbanization

Changing workplace

Ethical consumption

**Aspirational Audience Insights**

Taking the most economical route

economical = money x time x security

**Subcultures**

Super Commuters

Globetrotters

**Trends & Timeline**

1950s: Removal of local trolleys and railways to make room for modern highways post WWII

1960-1970: Private rails failing / Rise of commercial jet service

1980s: Rise of the urban commuter / Infrastructure investment / Stabilization

1990s: Tech integration / Rise of the personal computer

2000s: High Speed Rail introduction / Sustainability awareness

2010s: Connectivity / Stay-cations

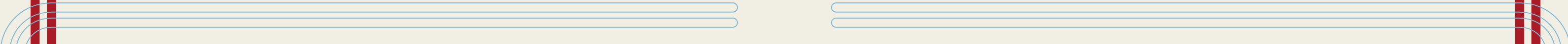
2020s: Political upheaval / Federal funding / Full tech integration for personal and business

Future: Air train integration and expansion / Tech meets accessibility / Urban commute changes with shifting workplaces and home purchasing

**Design Target**

On-The-Way-Farer

The standard 9 to 5 remote worker has nothing on these 5 to 9, 9 to 5, 5 to 9 and back again commuters. They are time-poor, experience-rich world citizens who you can always count on to RSVP “Yes!” and to strike up a conversation. Their life is a carefully curated whirlwind of productivity, social engagements, and cultural exploration. Their laser focus mindset sees that they stay on-track in their career and daily life. These xenophiles have an eclectic taste and broad interests, but they manage to do it all on a realistic budget, adding approachable and accessible to their long list of achievements. To put it simply they are on their way.



# Insights

## KEY RESEARCH INSIGHTS

From all aspects of research, several critical insights emerged that would drive the strategic direction

### Insight

Customers want “the most effective mode of travel” but effectiveness means different things in different contexts.

#### Implications:

- Can't be everything to everyone
- Must clearly communicate what kind of effectiveness Amtrak delivers
- Need flexible messaging for different trip types

### Insight

Unlike other transportation, train travel time can be productive, restorative, or social—it's not “lost time.”

#### Implications:

- Position travel time as valuable, not just necessary
- Design services that enhance productivity and comfort
- Market the journey, not just the destination

### Insight

Amtrak's service limitations stem from infrastructure they don't control, but customers don't understand this context.

#### Implications:

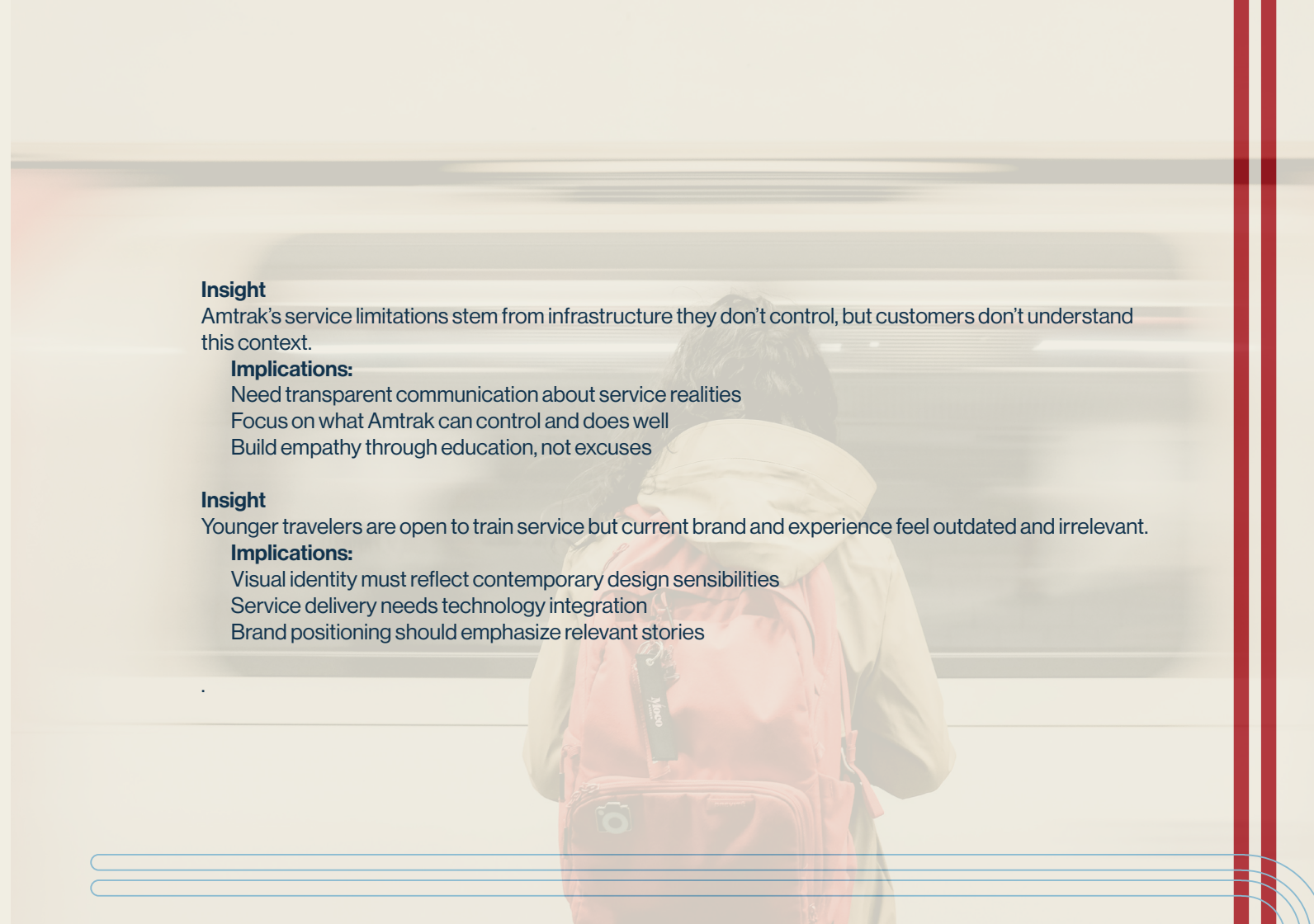
- Need transparent communication about service realities
- Focus on what Amtrak can control and does well
- Build empathy through education, not excuses

### Insight

Younger travelers are open to train service but current brand and experience feel outdated and irrelevant.

#### Implications:

- Visual identity must reflect contemporary design sensibilities
- Service delivery needs technology integration
- Brand positioning should emphasize relevant stories



# Opportunities

## WHAT'S WITHIN AMTRAK'S POWER?

Proceed with strategic focus by excelling at what you can control, and communicate honestly about what you can't.

### Can Control

- Brand perception and positioning
- Visual identity and customer communications
- Station experience and wayfinding
- On-train service and amenities
- Technology integration and digital experience
- Staff training and service culture

### Cannot Control

- Track infrastructure and ownership
- Weather and mechanical delays beyond their system
- Congressional funding decisions
- Freight train prioritization on shared tracks

# Cultural Context

## THE AMERICAN TRANSPORTATION MINDSET

### Car Culture Dominance

- Individual ownership as status symbol
- Freedom and flexibility associations
- Infrastructure built around automobile use
- Challenge:** Position rail as choice, not compromise

### Efficiency Obsession

- Time is money mentality
- Multitasking as lifestyle requirement
- Productivity guilt during "downtime"
- Opportunity:** Reframe travel time as productive time

### Sustainability Awakening

- Growing environmental consciousness
- Particularly strong among target demographic
- But not willing to sacrifice significantly for it
- Opportunity:** Sustainability as added benefit, not primary selling point

## Part III

# Strategic Development

## Brand Strategy

Based on research insights, Amtrak's fundamental brand strategy emerged.

### BRAND POSITION

Amtrak is the only transcontinental rail for wayfarers to connect across America.

### BRAND PURPOSE

We route for the people.

### TAGLINE

We're routing for you.

### BRAND ACTION

We connect riders

### BRAND BELIEF

Rail service unites us

### DESIGN TARGET TRUTH

People who are on their way

### BRAND PILLARS

#### **Backbone of America**

Amtrak anchors the nation's transportation network, linking urban and rural communities both far and wide

#### **Time is of the Essence**

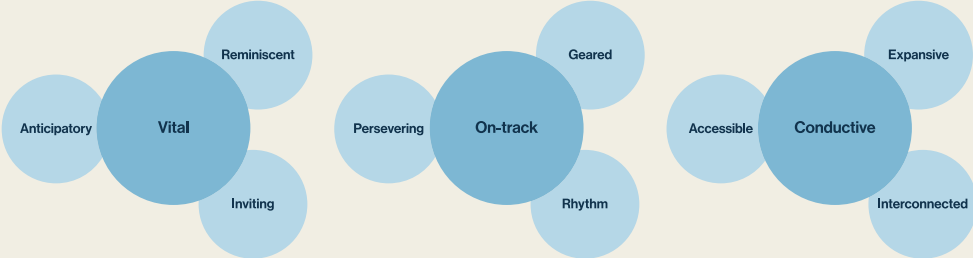
Amtrak ensures punctual, dependable travel, prioritizing efficiency to meet passengers' schedules

#### **Connection Conduit**

Amtrak connects more than just people and places, but people to people through accessible rail services that unites diverse regions



VALUES



Amtrak embodies American freedom—vital and inviting—calling to those seeking new adventures. Its rhythmic allure welcomes passengers into a nostalgic pace where anticipation builds with each beckoning mile.

With intuitive systems designed for efficiency, Amtrak serves today's fast-paced travelers. From rush-hour commutes to weekend escapes, it seamlessly integrates into America's demanding daily rhythm.

Through accessible travel, Amtrak connects people to places and communities together. Its expansive network creates interconnected possibilities, linking destinations while fostering meaningful human connections.

TONE OF VOICE

Value	Do	Don't
Conductive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use warm, inviting language that emphasizes unity and shared experiences</li><li>Highlight the sense of adventure and possibility</li><li>Emphasize accessibility ensuring all travelers feel welcome</li><li>Use positive, uplifting words to inspire excitement about travel</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Avoid exclusive or elitist language</li><li>Don't employ overly technical or jargon-heavy terms</li><li>Avoid generic or uninspiring phrases (e.g., "get from a to b").</li><li>Avoid focus solely on destinations without emphasizing the connections made along the way</li></ul>
On-track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use confident, reassuring language to highlight mobility and efficiency</li><li>Reflect the energy of modern life with dynamic, active words</li><li>Emphasize adaptability to travelers' needs</li><li>Acknowledge resilience with positive, forward-looking language</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Avoid cold or overly mechanical language that feels impersonal</li><li>Don't imply rigidity or inflexibility; keep the tone adaptable and supportive</li><li>Avoid vague or generic terms that don't convey efficiency</li><li>Don't dwell on challenges or obstacles in a negative way; focus on positive perseverance</li></ul>
Vital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use vivid, sensory language to evoke the romance of train travel</li><li>Infuse warmth and enthusiasm to create anticipation</li><li>Blend nostalgic references with modern vitality</li><li>Emphasize Amtrak's essential role with purposeful language</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Avoid overly sentimental or outdated language that feels disconnected from modern travel</li><li>Don't use generic or clichéd phrases that dilute the unique charm of train travel</li><li>Avoid focusing solely on nostalgia without highlighting vitality and relevance</li><li>Don't use cold, uninviting, or transactional language</li></ul>



# Identity Synthesis

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**Connection:** Visual elements that suggest linking and bridging

**Movement:** Dynamic forms that imply forward progress

**Reliability:** Stable, confident geometry

**Scalability:** Clear at both large environmental and small digital sizes

## TYPOGRAPHY

### Considerations:

High legibility in transportation environments

Multiple weights and styles available

Excellent performance at small sizes

Distinctive character without being trendy

## GRAPHIC ELEMENTS

### Connection Graphics

Route line patterns that suggest rail networks

Bridging elements and linking shapes

## COLOR PALETTE: INSPIRED BY AMERICA

Moving beyond traditional Amtrak blue, the new palette draws inspiration from America's diverse geography and culture with both national and regional color schemes.

## TYPOGRAPHY

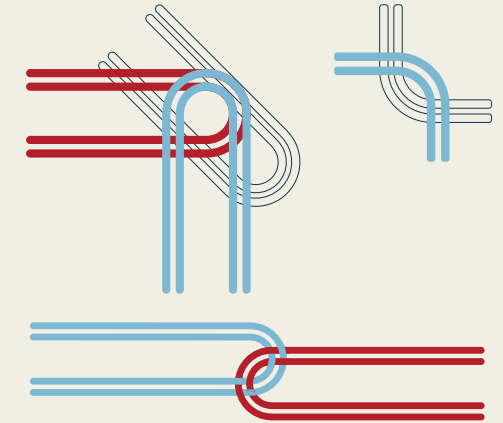
ALTERNATE GOTHIC NO. 3

**Neue Haas  
Grotesk Bold**  
**Neue haas grotesk medium**

Neue haas grotesk roman for the mass text. With 1.2x pt of leading, and 0 kerning.

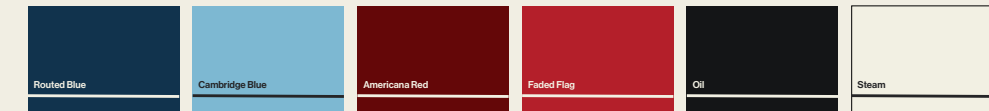
OHM BOLD

## GRAPHICS



## COLOR

### National Color Scheme



### Regional Color Schemes



## LOGO



Amtrak's revolutionary logo redesign, captures audiences moving through life at speed. The energetic yet solid mark uses a custom logotype based on Ohm Bold, embodying motion and reliability.

## ICONS AND ARROWS



## Applications

### TOUCHPOINT STRATEGY: FROM FIRST INTERACTION TO LAST

The new visual identity must work across every customer touchpoint, creating a cohesive experience that reinforces brand values and improves usability. This can be seen in the following applications:

- Train exterior
- Train Interior
- Train Interior Wayfinding
- Station Wayfinding
- Digital Ticketing
- Analog ticket
- New branding campaign





AMTRAK

1 First Class

2 Business Class







←

Irvine Station

Los Angeles  
San Francisco

San Diego  
Mexico Border

→













# FIFA 2026

## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY CAMPAIGN

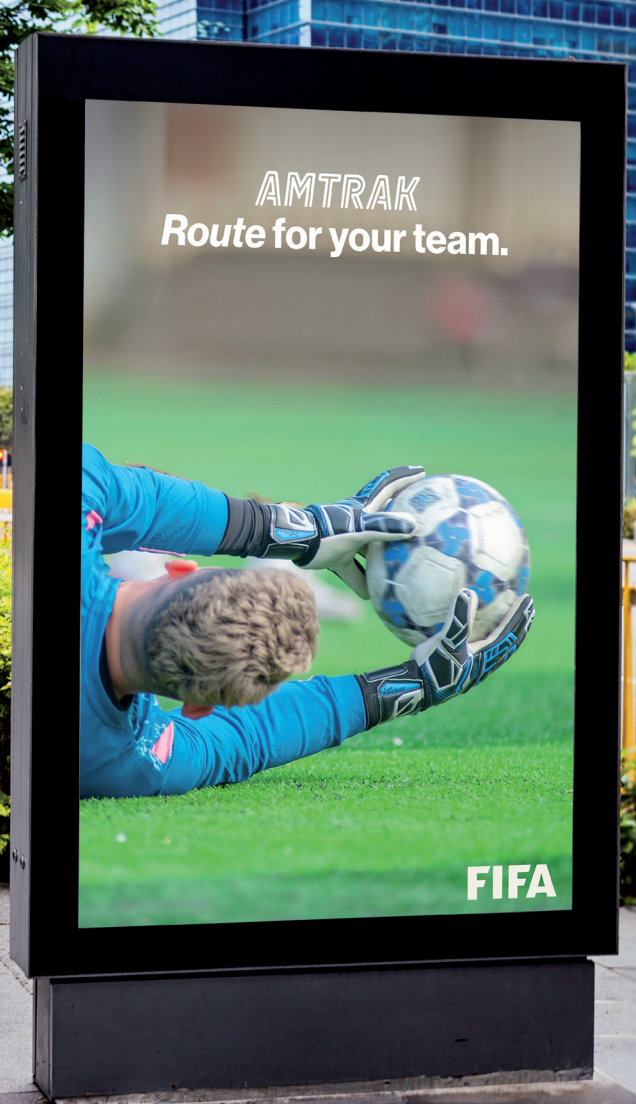
The 2026 FIFA World Cup represents the largest sporting event ever held in North America, with 48 teams playing 104 matches across 16 cities in three countries, projected to generate over \$5 billion in economic impact and attract millions of international and domestic attendees. For Amtrak, this event perfectly aligns with their design target — the on-the-wayfarers who value culturally relevant, engaging events. Unlike the typical American sports fan, World Cup attendees are internationally minded, sustainability-conscious, and comfortable with rail travel, making them ideal candidates for conversion to regular Amtrak ridership.

### Critical Event

- **Perfect Audience Match:** International visitors and younger Americans attending matches align exactly with Amtrak's target demographic
- **Geographic Advantage:** Amtrak serves every single US host city plus Canadian connections, giving them unmatched coverage
- **Credibility Moment:** Successfully moving millions of World Cup attendees would demonstrate Amtrak's capability
- **Conversion Catalyst:** First-time riders during the tournament represent the largest single opportunity to build lifelong customers from Amtrak's exact target market
- **Cultural Relevance:** Association with the world's most popular sport elevates Amtrak's brand beyond utility transportation to cultural participation and global connectivity
- **Media Amplification:** Global media attention during the tournament provides unprecedented opportunity for brand awareness









We'll route the way  
to the next match.

AMTRAK

we're routing for you

Routes to the next match,  
and 500 more destinations.

AMTRAK





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