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SOUTHERN RAIL COMMISSION AND AMTRAK ANNOUNCE PROGRESS ON PASSENGER RAIL CORRIDORS ACROSS THE SOUTH

The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) welcomed elected officials and stakeholders from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida to New Orleans for the commission's quarterly stakeholder meeting. The SRC, along with Amtrak, announced key project milestones for passenger rail projects within the I-20 Corridor and along the Gulf Coast.

I-20 Corridor Passenger Rail

In November 2022, the SRC, Senator Cassidy and Monroe Mayor Friday Ellis hosted a workshop in Monroe and since then, the cities of Monroe, Ruston, Vicksburg have worked collaboratively to advance the project.

"This is another example of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act paying off for Louisiana. The partnership between Amtrak, the Southern Rail Commission, Mayors Walker, Ellis, and Arceneaux connects north Louisiana cities with all points East and West," said Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA).

Amtrak announced it will lead the [Federal-State Partnership Program](#) application for the I-20 Corridor to submit to the FRA in April of 2023. The application will support the extension of passenger rail service from Meridian, Mississippi to Dallas/Fort Worth along the I-20 corridor.

"As the entity responsible for providing the nation's long-distance intercity passenger rail service, Amtrak will work with our partners to seek the funds needed to study expansion and improvement options where strong stakeholder support exists and initial analysis show opportunity." said Amtrak Vice President of Network Development Nicole Bucich. "With the encouragement and support of federal, state and local officials, this application is the first step in determining the feasibility of this concept and the benefits and challenges, including federal funding commitments, of expanding Amtrak service to the I-20 route."

"This has the potential to be the first new Amtrak service of its kind in more than 25 years and it would come in an area that has long been underserved by passenger rail, said SRC Chairman Knox Ross. "Now that we have a way forward for new state-sponsored corridor service between New Orleans and Mobile, the I-20 route has been identified by the SRC as its next priority."

Amtrak has reached an agreement with Canadian Pacific Railway to conduct the study, pending STB approval of the acquisition of Kansas City Southern, who currently owns the existing rail line.

Gulf Coast Passenger Rail

Amtrak is currently running familiarization trips for the highly anticipated return of passenger rail service between New Orleans and Mobile. The SRC announced they are in current discussions with Amtrak to name the service, with expectations to share the final naming decision in the near future.

The SRC also discussed a partnership with Pensacola Mayor D.C. Reeves as Amtrak prepares to re-establish rail service between New Orleans and Mobile, to establish through feeder bus services. Bus services will connect Pensacola and surrounding communities to the station in Mobile and increase mobility throughout the Gulf Coast.

Baton Rouge to New Orleans Passenger Rail

Representatives from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) discussed federal funds the state is currently pursuing to advance the Baton Rouge to New Orleans Passenger Rail project. The state has hired consultants to conduct federally required environmental studies along the route.

LADOTD submitted a grant application for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program funding to support the replacement of the Bonnet Carré bridge in addition to an application for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program.

While LADOTD is developing the Corridor Identification and Development Program application for this project, Transportation for America and the SRC are leading application development for the New Orleans to Mobile, Meridian to Dallas/Fort Worth, and the Shreveport to Baton Rouge corridors.

More information on the SRC's priority projects and recent progress can be found online at southernrailcommission.org

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About the Southern Rail Commission

Created by Congress in 1982, the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) was designed to engage and inform public and private rail interests to support and influence Southeast rail initiatives. The SRC is led by governor-appointed commissioners from Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and promotes the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods to enhance economic development along rail corridors; provides transportation choices; and facilitates emergency evacuation routes.