

SOUTHERN RAIL COMMISSION AND AMTRAK ANNOUNCE PROJECT PROGRESS

Amtrak Update

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

New Orleans to Mobile Service:

Amtrak is currently running familiarization trips for the highly anticipated return of passenger rail service between New Orleans and Mobile. Amtrak Vice President Nicole Bucich provided an overview of the numerous steps that must be completed before new service between New Orleans and Mobile can start.

SRC Chairman Knox Ross stated, "All these plans involve partnership agreements, whether it is with Federal Railroad Administration for grants we and others have applied to receive, state departments of transportation for matching support and guidance, with our statehouses for legislation, the City of Mobile for the terminal location, with host railroads, CSX and NS, and of course, with Amtrak. All of these plans and partnerships are moving forward and must be in place for us to start service next year between Mobile and New Orleans. When all the elements have been finalized between the parties, the schedules, fares, and even the start date and official name of the train service will come via a joint formal announcement from Amtrak and the Southern Rail Commission. Until then, we have work to do."

New Orleans to Baton Rouge:

Gov. Edwards recently announced that his office will allocate \$20.5 million in funds that became available after a settlement with HUD for repayment of Road Home program funds toward the local match requirement for federal grants the state is pursuing to fix the Bonnet Carre spillway bridge and implement the new passenger rail service.

I-20 Corridor Service:

Amtrak, in partnership with the SRC, applied for a Federal-State Partnership program grant to study passenger rail service routes connecting New York City, Atlanta, and Dallas/Fort Worth. The proposed service would extend the Amtrak Crescent Train from Meridian, Mississippi, with stops across Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

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 across the I-20 Corridor expressed their support for the project during the meeting.

"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.

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

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.

CONTACT:

Knox Ross

Chairman

601.692.3569

info@southernrailcommission.org