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March 4, 2021

Judith Adams
Vice President, Internal/External Affairs
Alabama State Port Authority
P. O. Box 1588
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Via email only

Re: Amtrak RTC Study

Dear Ms. Adams:

Elizabeth Lawlor asked me to respond to your March 4, 2021 request to her for information concerning a study that Amtrak has been discussing – specifically a Rail Traffic Control (RTC) study concerning the introduction of service between Mobile and New Orleans. In your correspondence, you asked the following specific questions: (1) Has NS been engaged in the study? (2) Has NS asked Amtrak to finish the study? (3) Why does NS think this study is necessary? Further, you asked if NS could provide any additional insight as a host railroad.

With respect to your questions regarding a study, NS has partnered with Amtrak and CSX to progress the RTC analysis for the proposed passenger service. As you may know, an RTC analysis is necessary to ensure that any planned passenger service, when introduced into the host freight rail system with the existing and anticipated freight service, is transparent to that freight traffic. The fundamental goal is to ensure that neither the passenger service, nor the freight services, adversely affect the other. The history is clear that passenger services introduced after an RTC analysis, and implementation of the recommendations arising from that analysis, tend to be significantly more reliable than heritage services that did not benefit from that process. Moreover, such studies balance the public interest of both reliable and predictable passenger rail service and a freight rail service.

For this particular case with the proposed Gulf Coast service, the focus is not only on the cross-state service, but – as you note – also on the terminal areas of the proposed passenger service: the Port of Mobile and the New Orleans gateway. The New Orleans gateway route of the proposed Amtrak service carries the cross-country freight traffic of six of the seven Class I freight carriers. It is a particularly complex junction which will require dispatchers of the three railroads – CSXT, NS, and Amtrak – in just a short three and a half mile stretch.

The RTC analysis remains to be completed. And in correspondence between Amtrak and NS, NS has continued to reiterate our willingness to collaborate with Amtrak on instituting the proposed

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service. However, in our view, the completion of the RTC analysis, and implementation of its results, remains a necessary element before the institution of new passenger rail service. Specifically, in a February 8, 2021 letter to Amtrak, NS identified the individuals at NS with whom Amtrak should contact for further discussions on completing the RTC analysis and to institute the proposed passenger rail service.

As to any additional insight from a host railroad perspective, I can only reiterate that the introduction of passenger rail service into a vibrant and critical freight rail network is extremely complicated and requires extensive planning and careful integration. That is why the RTC analysis is critical for the success of the proposed passenger service. NS remains willing to complete the analysis and to work collaboratively with CSXT and Amtrak to ensure that the introduction of this passenger rail service is mutually beneficial for all.

Sincerely,

/s/

John V. Edwards
General Director Passenger Policy