



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

April 1, 2021

301878

Allison Davis
Director, Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
April 2, 2021
Part of
Public Record

Re: Gulf Coast Passenger Rail Service/STB Finance Docket No. 36496

Dear Ms. Davis:

As a City Councilman in Mobile, Alabama, I have followed the issue of restoring passenger rail service between New Orleans and Mobile with keen interest. I understand that in recent weeks Amtrak filed an application with the Surface Transportation Board seeking an order to restore passenger service along the Gulf Coast, and has done so without the benefit of an impact study regarding freight commerce in our region. I write today to urge the STB to require Amtrak to complete a study of the impacts of this service before it further considers Amtrak's application.

The Port of Mobile is the primary driver of Mobile's economy and one of the primary drivers for the State of Alabama. According to an economic impact study from the University of Alabama's Center for Business and Economic Research, conducted several years ago, the port is responsible for 134,608 direct and indirect jobs in the state with a direct and indirect tax impact of \$486.9 million. To date over \$1.3 billion has been invested in the port and another \$715 million in state and federally funded improvements are underway, all with the expectation of reliable and safe freight service upon the very lines which Amtrak proposes to operate. Simply put, we must understand the impact of Amtrak's proposal in order to identify the negative impacts of the proposed service and any infrastructure enhancements that can mitigate those impacts.

The passenger rail issue has been before the Mobile City Council on several occasions over the past few years, and on each of those occasions I have maintained the position that we must first know how passenger rail would impact the Port of Mobile and freight rail operations along the Gulf Coast corridor. Recent media reports indicate that Amtrak has declined to renew a joint

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agreement with CSX and Norfolk Southern for the impact study that was nearing its conclusion. It is my hope that the STB will not allow Amtrak to restore service until the suspended study has been resumed and completed. Without a completed impact study, I will continue to oppose the restoration of passenger rail service and any funding which may be sought from the City of Mobile in support of this service.

Thank you for consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Daves', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Joel Daves
City Councilman – District 5
City of Mobile, Alabama

cc: Service List for Finance Docket No. 36496

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 2nd day of April, 2021, a copy of the foregoing Letter was served by email or U.S. mail on the service list for Finance Docket No. 36496.

/s/ Joel Daves
Joel Daves
City Councilman – District 5
City of Mobile, Alabama