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## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Mac McCutcheon**  
Speaker of the House

11 SOUTH UNION STREET  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130  
334.261.0505

April 5, 2021

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

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

Dear Ms. Davis:

In early 2019, the Alabama Legislature passed a long-negotiated and much-overdue investment in our state's infrastructure. This legislative package, better known as the Rebuild Alabama Act, included input from a variety of stakeholders, including the Alabama State Port Authority – who, with great bipartisan support, were able to secure critical state funding for the deepening and widening of the Port of Mobile. Those dollars will be leveraged with substantial federal funding secured by our Congressional delegation over the course of several years. These improvements will undoubtedly enhance Alabama's economic and industrial development and will further afford new export opportunities for commercial shippers who utilize our state's only seaport.

According to ongoing media reporting, the Alabama State Port Authority has raised many substantive questions regarding a proposal from Amtrak to resume passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast between Mobile and New Orleans. I was very concerned to learn that Amtrak has recently chosen to pursue relief through your agency with a goal of compelling this service to begin in January of 2022, just eight short months from now. My understanding had been that Amtrak was working in good faith with freight rail carriers to complete an impact study which would determine the true infrastructure costs needed to ensure the successful operation of passenger rail service on the coast. It appears that study is no longer on the table.

I know that many other elected officials and private sector leaders around Alabama are concerned by these developments. Governor Kay Ivey's long-held position has been that before the state commits funding for this service that the freight impact study should be completed so

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that the full impact on freight rail service and underlying commerce is known. US Senator Richard Shelby has articulated a very similar position and just last week called on Amtrak and the freight railroads to resume the study. Local leaders in Mobile have likewise expressed concerns and made financial support contingent on no adverse impact to the Port of Mobile.

While it is possible there will not be adverse impact and costly infrastructure required to begin the proposed passenger rail service, we simply do not know one way or another at this time. For that reason, I believe it would be unwise to proceed with this service without the benefit of full and complete information the joint study will provide.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter and the concerns outlined herein.

Serving you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mac McCutcheon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mac McCutcheon

MM/mh

cc: Service List for Finance Docket No. 36496

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 5th 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/ Mac McCutcheon  
Mac McCutcheon  
Alabama Speaker of the House of  
Representatives