

April 16, 2021

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

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
April 19, 2021
Part of
Public Record

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

Dear Ms. Davis:

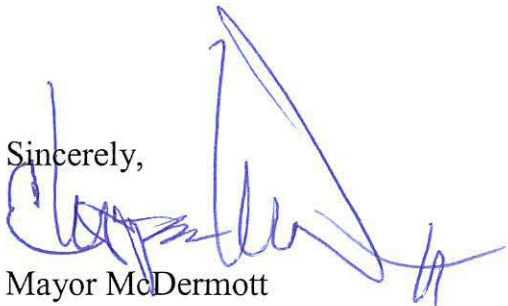
I, Leo McDermott, Mayor of the City of Pass Christian fully supports launching passenger rail service between Mobile and New Orleans and requests an expeditious and fair hearing by the Surface Transportation Board of Amtrak's petition to start service in January 2022.

Since 2005, Mississippi residents have worked to recover from Hurricane Katrina, one of the strongest storms on record. This storm devastated the entire Gulf Coast region and impaired local rail infrastructure, resulting in a halt to passenger rail service. Since then, all other forms of transportation have returned to the Gulf Coast, except for passenger rail. More recently, Hurricane Zeta caused further damage to our coastal cities, which further compounded the negative economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our local economies are in dire need of the economic energy that passenger rail could bring by attracting tourists and business travelers.

For Mississippi, restoring passenger rail service is a symbol of the huge strides our state has made to recover from Katrina. Reconnecting the Gulf Coast to our nation's passenger rail network can also help revive the coastal economy as it emerges from the pandemic – attracting tourists, facilitating business travel, providing a safe alternative to highway travel, and improving the overall quality of life in Mississippi.

Passenger rail is an essential and permanent part of our national transportation network. Amtrak has the right to access the necessary freight rail infrastructure, and Mississippi residents deserve to benefit from passenger rail service. Amtrak is prepared to begin operating two daily trains on the Gulf Coast route beginning in 2022. I hope STB will look favorably on Amtrak's request.

Sincerely,


Mayor McDermott

cc: Service List for Finance Docket No. 36496