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April 13, 2021

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

Re: Surface Transportation Board Docket FD_36496 ID 301767
- National Railroad Passenger Corp Under 49 U.S.C.
Section 24308(e) - CSX Transportation, Inc., and Norfolk
Southern Corporation.

Dear Ms. Davis

The Mississippi Railroad Association (MRRA) is a trade organization that represents all railroads in Mississippi, from short lines to Class I railroads

We are writing to urge the Surface Transportation Board to deny Amtrak an Order to implement new passenger service between Mobile, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana, without completion of its Rail Traffic Control (RTC) Study with supplemental engineering and cost report.

Although this particular proposal for new passenger service only impacts one member railroad in Mississippi, our other member railroads fully support completion of the RTC modeling, which is the long established means of implementing new service without degrading existing freight service and protecting capacity for freight growth. Further, our members are not opposed to new passenger service but unanimously support implementing it in a way that ensures safety and efficiency for both systems, and doing so hinges on the data provided by RTC modeling.

As you are aware, this Gulf Coast rail route is important and unique. It is single track, runs through an environmentally sensitive area, serves many customers along a chemical production corridor, and handles traffic interchanged with the western carriers at the New Orleans Gateway. Additionally, at-grade crossings are very dense along this corridor and there are twelve moveable rail bridges that intersect with water traffic, including both pleasure and commercial vessels traveling a water corridor that is already highly affected by weather. Therefore, many modes of transportation, both private and commercial, will be impacted in Mississippi. Supply chains and transportation rates well beyond the borders of this state stand to be affected as well.

MRRA member companies work closely with state and local economic development agencies to recruit new jobs to the state. We have deep reservations regarding the impact that allowing new passenger service to be implemented without proper study would have not only along the Gulf Coast but also the impact this precedent could have in terms of industrial recruitment on rail lines statewide. MRRA respectfully asks the Board to require Amtrak to complete the modeling study and supplemental rail infrastructure and cost assessments to identify the improvements necessary to safely and efficiently support both freight rail and passenger service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Yelverton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joel Yelverton
Executive Director, Mississippi Railroad Association

C: Parties of Record
