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Office of Proceedings
February 9, 2022
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February 7, 2022

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Cynthia T. Brown
Chief of the Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Re: Gulf Coast Passenger Service Between New Orleans and Mobile (STB Finance Docket No. 36496)

Dear Ms. Brown:

The Michigan Railroads Association writes to express our concern regarding the impact on freight rail service resulting from Amtrak's proposed Gulf Coast passenger service between New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama. Michigan is home to many companies who rely on freight rail service along this corridor.

The Michigan Railroads Association does not oppose Gulf Coast, or any other, passenger service and expresses no opinion on the general merits of any passenger rail service. However, it is critically important the introduction of this, and any other passenger service, does not decrease the quality of freight service provided by freight railroads.

We believe it is unfair for Amtrak to insist on operating passenger service without regard to the businesses with whom it will share the corridor. If Amtrak is permitted to commence – or increase - passenger service without paying for and completing required infrastructure, safety and capacity enhancements, the cost of that service will inevitably fall on the shoulders of freight railroads and Michigan shippers.

Furthermore, the Board's current review process could set a precedent for future passenger rail development, including here in the Great Lakes State. It is our view that the Board has an obligation to protect the interests of all parties that rely on the national rail network, not just those of passenger rail.

Amtrak's desire for access to any freight rail corridor must follow an established process to identify and complete any and all infrastructure, safety and rail capacity needs prior to implementation of passenger rail service, including here in Michigan.

Sincerely,



Jon Cool, President
Michigan Railroads Association

cc: FD 36496 Service List