

October 14, 2022

EI-32545

In response to : Draft EIS for Docket No. FD 36500

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board, OEA

Dear Honorable Surface Transportation Board and all Parties of Record,

I think the greatest disappointment regarding this phase of the merger proposition was the lack of engagement with Louisiana residents. A public meeting within the State of Louisiana would have been truly appreciated. In terms of the draft EIS, we were unable to understand the vision for passenger rail within Louisiana in particular, and the role this merger would play in helping the State of Louisiana achieve its climate goals and improve the environmental well-being of residents and communities living in nonattainment areas, regardless of their identities, as well as potential for more robust improvements to our rail to help us achieve a strong passenger rail network, improvements like double track instead of just additional sidings. It is important to begin developing a transparent, accessible relationship with on-the-ground organizations and local officials and communities.

We also lift up the concerns expressed during the September 19th public hearings/KCS merger online meeting regarding the environmental impact and bad practices employed by the involved companies in the past, along with the increased risks, risks that were minimized, when materials that will be carried on these trains are hazardous, dangerous, or polluting to our surrounding communities. We support freight and passenger rail but ask that the STB and Amtrak consider the consequences of the merger and more transparently engage with those of us who will be impacted about it. We need to do this well, not just merge companies for the sake of merging and for the sake of profit at the expense of our communities. There are issues, existing issues present prior to the merger proposition and the United States needs to get serious about addressing in real-time the current issues that impact access to emergency services or that exacerbate environmental harms even if this merger itself does not dramatically, quantifiably shift what is already problematic. We must see this all comprehensively and cumulatively and not bifurcate this merger from the larger environmental concerns and risks that already exist. Even the minor, additional spills or accidents have real, tangible impacts. Beyond this, we uplift the concerns of consolidation that impact workforce environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration and the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

**Angelle Bradford**

Sierra Club, Delta Chapter Executive Committee

Intern Manager and Sierra Student Liaison