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January 17, 2024

Surface Transportation Board
Attn: Docket No. EP 774 (Sub-No. 1)
395 E Street, S.W.,
Washington, DC 20423-0001

307858

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
January 30, 2024
Part of
Public Record

Re: Passenger Rail Advisory Committee Application

To whom it may concern,

I, Knox W. Ross, Jr., CPA, am pleased to submit an application for membership candidacy to the Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (PRAC). By way of this application, I nominate myself to fill the vacancy of a representative from an existing intercity passenger rail operators other than Amtrak, or developers of new intercity passenger rail lines other than Amtrak.

I have extensive experience in transportation and economic development projects at the local, state, and federal levels, including grants, public policy, coalition building, and project management. My career has spanned over 20 years, beginning with Ernst & Young, an international accounting firm, and leading to owning and operating Ross & Betts, PLLC, for the last 14 years. Additionally, I currently serve as Chairman of the Southern Rail Commission (SRC), President of ArkLA Tex Investment and Development Corporation, and a Managing Member at Ross Management Partners, LP, a Managing Member at Crooked Creek, LLC.

From 2001 – 2017, I served as the Mayor and CEO of the Town of Pelahatchie, Mississippi. During my time as Mayor, the Town enjoyed unprecedented growth and recognition. As a result, the Town was the recipient of five Mississippi Municipal League Excellence Awards, two North American Development Organization Awards, a Governor's Award of Excellence for the best Rural Impact Project, a Mississippi Economic Development Council Award, a regional Governor's Cup Award, a Southeastern Economic Development Award, and is now a member of the Keep Mississippi Beautiful Hall of Fame.

As an experienced spokesperson and advocate for passenger rail projects, I lend my experience to the SRC by leading community engagement and coalition efforts to expand passenger rail service across the Southeast region of the U.S. During my time with SRC, I've met with congressional delegations, committees, mayors, and other leadership groups advocating for passenger rail projects. I've also presented at numerous federal hearings and conferences involved with infrastructure and transportation, and forged SRC's strong partnership with FRA and Amtrak resulting in the completion of numerous feasibility studies and joint federal/state grant applications. Notably, the SRC was most recently successfully awarded a CRISI grant to implement service on the corridor between Mobile and New Orleans.

I am deeply aware of and involved with the issues impacting the planning, development and operation of railroad passenger services. I understand that improving efficiency on passenger rail routes, reducing disputes between passenger rail carriers and freight rail hosts, and improving regulatory processes related to intercity passenger rail are the priorities of the Surface Transportation Board (Board). As such, I believe I am uniquely suited to provide information, advice, guidance, and recommendations to the Board on these matters.

I am willing and excited for the opportunity to serve as a member of the PRAC and agree to serve in a representative capacity, should I be selected.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KWR', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Knox W. Ross, JR., CPA

Chairman of the Southern Rail Commission

Partner Ross & Betts, PLLC

President of ArkLA Tex Investment and Development Corporation

Managing Member at Ross Management Partners, LP

Managing Member at Crooked Creek, LLC.

KNOX W. ROSS, JR.

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EDUCATION

Mississippi State University – Bachelor of Professional Accounting, 1988

University of Alabama – Master of Business Administration, 1990

Certified Public Accountant, Mississippi, 1992

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Southern Rail Commission: Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, Federal Railroad Administration Appointee to Gulf Coast Working Group

Amtrak Mayors Advisory Council

Mississippi Municipal League: President (2008-2009), Executive Committee, Elections Committee Chair, Small Town Conference Chair, Investments Committee Chair

Central Mississippi Planning and Development District: President (2009-2013), Metropolitan Planning Organization Chair

Mississippi Wireless Commission Member

Mississippi Guaranty Bond Pool Member

Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership: Executive Committee Member, Transportation Advocacy Committee Chair, Vision 2020 Project Committee Member

Mississippi Municipal Service Company: Board Member, Stennis Institute of Government Board Member

Rotary Club Paul Harris Fellow

Pelahatchie Volunteer Fire Department: Fireman, Treasurer

SKILLS

- Extensive experience in transportation and economic development projects at local, state, and regional level, including grants, public policy and project management
- Leads community engagement and coalition building for Southern Rail Commission
- Experienced spokesperson and advocate for passenger rail projects
- Seasoned executive in both public and private sectors, managing real estate and investment portfolios and operations of public and private organizations

WORK EXPERIENCE

Partner, Ross & Betts, PLLC, Pelahatchie, MS: 1996-Present

President, ArkLaTex Investment and Development Corp, Bossier City, LA: 2020-Present

Managing Member, Ross Management Partners, LP, a real estate and investment limited partnership 1996-Present

Managing Member, Crooked Creek, LLC. Coshatta, LA: 1996-Present

President, Coordinating and Development Corporation, Shreveport, LA: 2016-2017

Mayor, Town of Pelahatchie, MS: 2001-2017

Staff Accountant, Tony Chance & Company, Forest, MS: 1993-1996

Staff Accountant, Breazeale, Saunders & O'Neil, Ltd., Jackson, MS: 1992-1993

Senior Accountant, Ernst & Young, Jackson, MS: 1990-1992

AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mississippi Society of Certified Public Accountants: Public Service Award Recipient

Mississippi Beautiful: Hall of Fame Award Recipient

Mississippi Municipal League Municipal Excellence Awards: Five Time Recipient, Overall Best Project Recipient

Other Awards Include:

- North American Development Organization
- Southeastern Economic Development Alliance
- American Council of Engineering Companies of Mississippi Honor Award
- Regional Governors Cup
- Governor's Award of Excellence
- Mississippi Development Authority Best Project
- Mississippi Economic Development Council Best Project

ACHIEVEMENTS WITH THE SOUTHERN RAIL COMMISSION

Leads efforts to provide Amtrak service to the I10 and I20 Corridors:

- Made presentations to mayors of all major cities across two corridors from Meridian to Ft Worth, Texas; and New Orleans to Jacksonville, Florida.
- Partnered with Amtrak executives to complete feasibility studies and inspection train from New Orleans to Jacksonville.
- Continue to meet with Congressional delegations from all affected states and leadership of committees that influence passenger rail.
- Spokesperson generating media and national attention resulting in hundreds of press articles and television reports throughout the region and country.
- Facilitated SRC's successful award of a CRISI grant to implement service on the I-10 Corridor between Mobile and New Orleans.
- Forged SRC's strong partnership with Amtrak resulting in joint Federal/State Partnership grant applications and CRISI Grant applications on the I10, I20, and Baton Rouge/New Orleans corridors with strong financial commitments from Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.
- Played a key role with Amtrak in securing agreements with Canadian Pacific Kansas City allowing the study and eventual implementation of passenger service on the I20 and Baton Rouge/New Orleans Corridors.

PRESENTATIONS

Presented at the following federal hearings:

United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

United States House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Railroads Subcommittee

Surface Transportation Board Gulf Coast Passenger Rail Hearings

Presented at the following conferences:

Texas Rail Advocates Southwestern Rail Conference

West Florida Regional Planning Commission Transportation Symposium, Destin, Florida

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Safety Summit, Fort Worth, Texas

Amtrak "Cardinal Conference", Cincinnati, Ohio

Federal Railroad Administration Rail Program Delivery Conference, Washington, DC

Mississippi State University Extension Service City Clerk Certification

Mississippi Department of Transportation Coordination Summit, Jackson

Smart Growth America Local Leaders Policy Forum, Washington, DC

Katrina + 10 Passenger Rail Panel, Biloxi

Mississippi Development Authority Selected to Serve Facilitator

Bike Walk Mississippi Annual Conference, Jackson

Mississippi Municipal League Annual Conference, Biloxi

Mississippi Association of Planning and Development Districts Conference, Biloxi

Stennis Institute of Government: Your Town Conference & Mayors Forum

Butler Snow Retail Development Seminar, Jackson

Empowering Communities for a Healthy Mississippi, Jackson

North American Development Organization Conferences, Anchorage and Key West