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May 24, 2016

Chairman Daniel R. Elliott III
Vice Chairman Deb Miller
Member Ann D. Begeman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20423

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Dear Chairman Elliott, Vice Chairman Miller and Ms. Begeman:

The National Association of Railroad Passengers appreciates the opportunity to share our members' support for the Texas Central project.

Representing tens of millions of fare-paying rail passengers nationwide, NARP's long-term goal is to put 80% of Americans within 25 miles of a rail station within 25 years, using a combination of high-speed/high-performance, long-distance intercity rail, commuter trains, light rail, transit and even bike share. This is our vision for A Connected America, in which U.S. entities, including public/private partnerships and private industry, invest appropriately to create a 21st century network to power the economy of the new century.

NARP believes the Texas Central initiative is an important demonstration of the role private capital can and must play in building our new transportation economy, and is thus an important private project of national significance, introducing a new high-speed rail option between the two largest metropolitan regions in Texas. Connecting these two regions by passenger rail for the first time will have a significant, positive effect on the entire interstate rail network.

Credible studies underscore the impressive benefits this project will bring to the region's economy, injecting \$4.3 billion into the region during the 2018-2021 construction phases and \$352.4 million each year once operation begins in 2022. Moreover, this privately held operation can be projected to contribute \$3.11 billion in city, county, state, school and transit taxes through 2040.

Most of the objections to this project are ill-founded and don't survive close scrutiny. Despite claims by some parties opposed, nothing in the Texas Central petition will shunt public comment on Texas Central's STB petitions, nor will it change or remove protections afforded to Texas landowners under Texas law. STB's decision can't and won't let Texas Central use condemnation to acquire land it doesn't need for the rail right-of-way. Like any business, Texas Central is simply turning to regulators before it begins work to seek clarity on how the federal rules enforced by STB will relate to the first steps of acquiring land under the processes outlined in Texas law.

NARP strongly encourages the Board to take jurisdiction over this project as an important element of the overall interstate rail network, and to expedite Board review of Texas Central's application so this exciting project can move forward and the traveling public can realize the benefits of high-performance rail without delay.

Sincerely,

Jim Mathews
President & CEO

cc: Parties of Record