

**SOUTHERN RAIL COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING
Friday, June 27, 2014**

MINUTES

A meeting of the Southern Rail Commission was held on Friday, June 27, 2014 at the South Beach Hotel in Biloxi, Mississippi. Committee members in attendance were Chair Knox Ross, John Spain, Larry Watts (Proxy for Aubrey Miller), Charles Ozier, Greg White, Kay Kell, Phil Jones, Roy Woodruff, Representative Steve Carter, John Robert Smith by phone (Transportation for America), Natalie Cook by phone (Accountant, Southeast Alabama Regional Planning) Rachel Diresto and Tim Basilica (Center for Planning Excellence).

I. WELCOME/CALL TO ORDER

Knox Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chairman Knox Ross led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Meeting minutes were approved from the March 7, 2014 Full Southern Rail Commission Meeting. John Spain motioned to approve minutes, Steve Carter seconded, motion approved by all.

III. FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Natalie Cook updated the Southern Rail Commission on the financial report. Ms. Cook asked the Southern Rail Commission to approve the format in which she has organized the SRC finances. Ms. Cook explained that auditor, Mark Ferguson, has not yet completed the financial review because he questioned how to classify deferred funds. Greg White made a motion, seconded by Phil Jones authorizing Chairman Knox to speak to the auditor and respond to his questions in writing with the answer representing the position of the Southern Rail Commission.

II. NEW BUSINESS

John Robert Smith with Transportation for America, thanked the Southern Rail Commission for allowing him to be the consulting voice for them. Mr. Smith was joined by Beth Osborne who proceeded with a presentation via phone to give an update from Washington, DC on recent votes by the House and Senate legislators from LA, MS and AL on key issues related to funding for Amtrak. The commissioners requested that T4 America draft letters of thanks to those who supported the funding proposals and letters to express displeasure for those who voted no. In particular, Mr. Smith encouraged outreach to Steve Scalise to soften his stance.

Mr. Smith also explained that there is no consensus on how to fund the transportation trust fund although various transportation funding proposals have been discussed.

Florida is interested in joining the SRC and the Mayor from Tallahassee is willing to work with the legislative delegation and governor to make appointments and pay the dues.

Ms. Osborne reported that the TIGER applications are currently being rated and calls of support by congressional members to Secretary Foxx should be made towards the end of July. The National Association of Rail Passengers needs to be enlisted to express their support. Dan Deely reported that the SRC's TIGER application had strong support in Northwest Florida with support from 21 communities, RPCs from LA, AL & MS, 6 casinos, chambers, regional EDOs and mayors across each state.

John Spain reported that the recent meeting in DC with the DOT Executive staff and the FRA was very successful, and resulted in a commitment to have monthly update calls with FRA staff. Mr. Smith said this was an indication that SRC has successfully positioned itself as the go-to organization about passenger rail in the South. The FRA has expressed interest in hosting a multi-state workshop in New Orleans and SRC will work with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission to set a date in September. The workshop will allow each state to present recent passenger rail studies underway, discuss long-term visions for cross-state connectivity and to build relationships with representatives working on these projects. The FRA will also present an updated version of its CONNECT planning tool.

Mr. Smith reported that Mayor Marks is working with Canadian National and Amtrak on a trial basis to get a siding in Batesville.

Rachel DiResto and Tim Basilica of CPEX gave an update on the deliverables related to communications support. The new SRC logo is completed and the website and social media pages are almost completed, pending some additional information to be contributed by commissioners. Also completed are power point presentation, letterhead and business card templates. John Spain will represent the SRC in granting approval on future requests for press releases and website postings.

Status of Dues:

Alabama is willing to pay but no funding is available. SRC needs to send Mississippi an invoice.

IV. NEXT DATES

Mr. Ross brought the next dates of the Southern Rail Commission meetings to the attention of the commissioners. It was decided that the next meeting will be in on September 12, 2014 9am-12pm at the Regional Planning Commission in Birmingham, Alabama.

V. ADJOURN

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00am.