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Southern Rail Commission Sees Big Wins in Omnibus Bill

COMMISSIONERS

Last week, President Trump signed the FY18 omnibus appropriations bill that provides big wins and great opportunities for the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) and for the return of Amtrak's Gulf Coast service. The bill provides significant increases in funding for passenger rail capital and operating programs, and includes report language that is supportive of the ongoing work by SRC to support passenger rail projects across the southern coast.

ALABAMA
Gov. Kay Ivey
Jerry Gehman
Governor's Designee

Claire H. Austin
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Gregory B. White

"The Southern Rail Commission is grateful to Senator Thad Cochran, Appropriations Committee Chair and Senator Roger Wicker of the Commerce Committee - as well as the Congressional delegations from Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi - for the commitment to the restoration of passenger rail service across America's Gulf Coast. These programs can provide the resources that will get passenger rail up and going," said SRC Mississippi Commissioner, Vice Chairman Knox Ross.

LOUISIANA
Gov. John Bel Edwards
Tommy Clark
Governor's Designee

The final bill represents the largest single year increase for the full Amtrak budget as well as the national system. It includes the following funding:

Rep. Stephen Carter
Rep. Walter Leger, III
John Spain
D. Jerome Wall, III
Shawn Wilson
Roy Woodruff

- CRISI (Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements): \$592,547,000 including \$35,547,000 set aside to restore lost passenger rail service such as the Gulf Coast route.
 - This represents an increase of over \$68 million from FY17
 - Includes \$250 million for PTC (Positive Train Control)
- REG (Restoration and Enhancement Grants): \$20 million which provides operating support for new passenger rail service
 - This represents an increase from \$5 million in FY17
- Amtrak:
 - National Network (includes the Crescent and City of New Orleans that serve SRC states)- \$1.292 billion
 - Includes \$50m for PTC
 - Increase over FY17 level of \$1.1b

MISSISSIPPI
Gov. Phil Bryant
Blake Wilson
Governor's Designee

Ashley Edwards
Kay Kell
Jack Norris
Knox Ross
Patrick Sullivan

Previously the SRC has championed a report by a FRA Working group which facilitated an Amtrak feasibility study ([here](#)) that was completed in December 2015. This study found the estimated annual operating assistance for long-distance trains from New Orleans to Orlando is \$5.48 million and adding a state-supported route from New Orleans to Mobile would cost an additional \$4 million per year.

Work is underway in collaboration with the FRA, the States of LA, MS, AL, and FL, the Gulf Coast Congressional leadership, CSX, Amtrak and the SRC to identify needs and specific funding for phasing capital construction and operations for the restored passenger rail service. Some of this funding could be acquired through the newly appropriated federal rail programs, CRISI and REG. The SRC has also received significant interest and initial commitments from private sector partners across the gulf coast interested in contributing to the rail project.

Also, the SRC and FRA are currently providing \$1.33M in grant funds to communities in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama for station area planning and rail safety improvements. These communities have contributed their own cash match, resulting in more than \$2.6M in projects underway in preparation for service restoration.

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About the Southern Rail Commission

The SRC engages and informs public and private rail interests to support and influence southeast passenger rail initiatives. They promote the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods to enhance economic development along rail corridors; provide transportation choices; and facilitate emergency evacuation routes.

The Commission was founded in June of 1982 by the 97th Congress which enabled the formation of an interstate rail compact, which was subsequently approved by the Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama legislatures. The Southern Rail Commission is comprised of governor-appointed commissioners from each member state. **For more information, visit www.SouthernRailCommission.org**