May 15, 2018

Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my support for the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) who is requesting funding through the FY17 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) and the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grants Program.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with members of the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) in which they provided me with briefings on the status of passenger rail service restoration along the Gulf Coast, the commitments by Louisiana and Mississippi, the estimated cost of improvements necessary to make this valuable operation a reality and the potential benefits it can bring to our region in terms of economic development, workforce, tourism and public safety.

Should the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) be awarded funding through these programs, I believe it would be a worthy investment as it will benefit 3 states and have a positive impact on numerous communities within those states. Therefore, I respectfully request that you give their application every consideration for funding.

If you feel that I may be of further assistance or can provide you with any additional information, please don’t hesitate to let me know.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely,

Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress

BB:bj
The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Ronald Batory  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Support for Southern Rail Commission FY17 CRISI, R&E Grants

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Batory:

In February, the FRA made available funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants (REG) Program. These two programs benefit the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger rail service to America’s Gulf Coast, suspended since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 - which includes the area I represent in southwest Alabama. The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is actively preparing the necessary grant applications to access funding through these programs that will support needed infrastructure improvements and offset state-level initial operational costs to restore a daily passenger service between Mobile and New Orleans. These Federal investments will leverage significant state funding and help create jobs, economic development opportunities, improved connections for residents, and additional travel options for tourists. This daily passenger rail service will enhance mobility, reduce highway environmental impacts, and allow for safer and more efficient hurricane evacuations and response.

With this letter, I want to express my support for the restoration of passenger service to the Gulf Coast, and to the SRC as it seeks funding commitments from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama for the FY17 CRISI and R&G grant applications.

Respectfully,

Alan Baker  
State Representative
May 17, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

As Governor of the State of Alabama, I am writing in support of the Southern Rail Commission’s (SRC) efforts to secure federal funding from the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program as well as the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grants Program. I believe that restoring passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast is an issue that is worth pursuing with further analysis and studies. I support these applications and always search for avenues to partner with our neighboring states to further the economic recovery of the Gulf Coast region.

As you may know, the Gulf Coast had passenger rail service from 1894 to 2005. However, because of the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina, the long-distance Amtrak train between New Orleans and Orlando was suspended indefinitely. The Gulf region has gone without any passenger rail service since.

The governors of Mississippi, Louisiana and I are members of the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) through our appointed designees. The SRC is the only multi-state rail compact created by the U.S. Congress. Since its creation in 1982, the SRC has worked to expand passenger rail service across the South, and for the past five years this has included restoring rail service along the Gulf Coast.

Through the FAST Act of 2015, our Gulf Coast congressional delegation and others created the Gulf Coast Working Group (GCWG) to determine a path forward for passenger rail service in the region. The group included the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Amtrak, the host railroad, SRC, elected officials and business leaders from the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The GCWG final report, released on July 17, 2017, identified as one of its preferred service options a daily regional business train, making two round trips a day between New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama that also links Mississippi coastal cities. The report identified the capital costs and operating costs to restore this level of service and also identified potential sources of federal funding to cover the projected costs of restoration. The first segment of a daily regional business train service recommended to be restored would be
between New Orleans to Mobile, with potential future segments to Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Atmore, Alabama. This regional service will connect a coastal region of more than 4 million residents, with a tourism economy supported by more than 10 million visitors a year, an energy economy that provides more than 60 percent of the nation’s petroleum-based exploration and production, three of the busiest ports in the U.S. and a growing aerospace, maritime, and military economy.

Ever since the suspension of passenger rail service in 2005, the State of Alabama and its citizens have looked for ways to effectively restore passenger service along the Gulf Coast. Federal assistance would go a long way toward making that dream a reality. Therefore, I respectfully request your favorable consideration of this multi-state endeavor to bring back passenger rail service to the Gulf Coast. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kay Ivey
Governor
May 22, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Ronald Batory
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for Southern Rail Commission FY17 CRISI, R&E Grants

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Batory:

In February, the FRA made available funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants (REG) Program. These two programs benefit the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger rail service to America’s Gulf Coast, suspended since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which includes all of Southwest Alabama and portions of Alabama Senate District 22. The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is actively preparing the necessary grant applications to access funding through these programs that will support needed infrastructure improvements and offset state-level initial operational costs to restore a daily passenger service between Mobile and New Orleans. These Federal investments will leverage significant state funding and help create jobs, economic development opportunities, improved connections for residents, and additional travel options for tourists. This daily passenger rail service will enhance mobility, reduce highway environmental impacts, and allow for safer and more efficient hurricane evacuations and response.

With this letter, I want to express my support for the restoration of passenger service to the Gulf Coast, and to the SRC as it seeks funding commitments from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama for the FY17 CRISI and R&G grant applications.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Greg Albritton, Senator
Alabama Senate District 22

GA/dg

Courtesy Copy to:
John Robert Smith, Chair, Transportation For America
1152 15th St NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20005
May 22, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Ronald Batory  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Support for Southern Rail Commission FY17 CRISI, R&E Grants

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Batory:

In February, the FRA made available funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants (REG) Program. These two programs benefit the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger rail service to America’s Gulf Coast, suspended since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 - which includes Baldwin County, Alabama, and the Baldwin County Commission. The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is actively preparing the necessary grant applications to access funding through these programs that will support needed infrastructure improvements and offset state-level initial operational costs to restore a daily passenger service between Mobile and New Orleans. These Federal investments will leverage significant state funding and help create jobs, economic development opportunities, improved connections for residents, and additional travel options for tourists. This daily passenger rail service will enhance mobility, reduce highway environmental impacts, and allow for safer and more efficient hurricane evacuations and response.

With this letter, we want to express our support for the restoration of passenger service to the Gulf Coast, and to the SRC as it seeks funding commitments from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama for the FY17 CRISI and R&E grant applications.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Commissioner Frank Burt, Jr., Chairman  
Commissioner Charles F. Gruber, Vice Chairman

[Signatures]

Commissioner T. Christopher Elliott

Commissioner J. Tucker Dorsey

Courtesy Copy to:
John Robert Smith, Chair, Transportation for America  
1152 15th St NW, Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20005
May 21, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Ronald Batory
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Batory:

Subject: Support for Southern Rail Commission FY17 CRISI, R&E Grants

In February, the FRA made available funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants (REG) Program. These two programs benefit the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger rail service to America’s Gulf Coast, suspended since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 - which includes Alabama. Coastal Alabama Partnership (CAP) is focused on gathering leadership of Mobile and Baldwin counties to advocate for coastal Alabama’s top priorities, including transporation issues.

The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is actively preparing the necessary grant applications to access funding through these programs that will support needed infrastructure improvements and offset state-level initial operational costs to restore a daily passenger service between Mobile and New Orleans. These Federal investments will leverage significant state funding and help create jobs, economic development opportunities, improved connections for residents, and additional travel options for tourists. This daily passenger rail service will enhance mobility, reduce highway environmental impacts, and allow for safer and more efficient hurricane evacuations and response.

With this letter, I want to express our support for the restoration of passenger service to the Gulf Coast, and to the SRC as it seeks funding commitments from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama for the FY17 CRISI and R&G grant applications.

Sincerely,

Wiley Blankenship
President/CEO
Coastal Alabama Partnership

CC: John Robert Smith, Chair, Transportation For America

1 South Royal Street, 2nd Floor • P.O. Box 881 • Mobile, AL 36601
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

May 21, 2018

Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

Please accept this letter in support of the Southern Rail Commission, which is requesting funding through the FY17 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) and the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grants Program.

I met recently with members of the Southern Rail Commission in Mobile and received an update on their efforts to restore passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast. I believe this initiative can bring tremendous benefits to our region in terms of economic development, workforce, tourism and public safety.

Should the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) be awarded funding through these programs, I believe it would be a worthy investment as it will benefit the Gulf Coast region and have a positive impact on the City of Mobile.

I respectfully request that you give their application every consideration for funding.

Sincerely,

William S. Stimpson
Mayor
May 21, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Ronald Batory
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Support for Southern Rail Commission FY17 CRISI, R&E Grants

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Batory:

In February, the FRA made available funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants (REG) Program. These two programs benefit the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger rail service to America’s Gulf Coast, suspended since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 - which includes Mobile County Commission District 2. The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is actively preparing the necessary grant applications to access funding through these programs that will support needed infrastructure improvements and offset state-level initial operational costs to restore a daily passenger service between Mobile and New Orleans. These Federal investments will leverage significant state funding and help create jobs, economic development opportunities, improved connections for residents, and additional travel options for tourists. This daily passenger rail service will enhance mobility, reduce highway environmental impacts, and allow for safer and more efficient hurricane evacuations and response.

With this letter, I want to express my support for the restoration of passenger service to the Gulf Coast, and to the SRC as it seeks funding commitments from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama for the FY17 CRISI and R&G grant applications.

Sincerely,

Connie Hudson
Commissioner, District 2

Courtesy Copy to:
John Robert Smith, Chair, Transportation For America
1152 15th St NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20005

205 Government Street • Mobile, Alabama 36644 • Post Office Box 1443 • Mobile, Alabama 36633
May 29, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

SUBJECT: Support for Southern Rail Commission FY17 CRISI R&E Grants

In February, the FRA made available funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants (REG) Program. These two programs benefit the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger rail service to America’s Gulf Coast, suspended since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 - which includes the Mobile County Commission. The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is actively preparing the necessary grant applications to access funding through these programs that will support needed infrastructure improvements and offset state-level initial operational costs to restore a daily passenger service between Mobile and New Orleans. These Federal investments will leverage significant state funding and help create jobs, economic development opportunities, improved connections for residents, and additional travel options for tourists. This daily passenger rail service will enhance mobility, reduce highway environmental impacts, and allow for safer and more efficient hurricane evacuations and response.
With this letter, we want to express our support for the restoration of passenger service to the Gulf Coast, and to the SRC as it seeks funding commitments from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama for the FY17 CRISI and R&G grant applications.

Yours truly,

Connie Hudson
President

Jerry Carl
Vice President

Merceria Ludgood
Commissioner

JFP: sos

Cc: John Robert Smith, Transportation for America
May 23, 2018

Mr. Steve Pelham  
Office of the Governor  
Montgomery, AL

Steve:

I am writing on behalf of the Southern Rail Commission to express our gratitude for Governor Ivey’s May 18, 2018 letter of support. The Governor’s letter was included in our grant application submitted yesterday, along with letters from Mississippi Governor Bryant and Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards. Also included were letters received from mayors, county commissioners, as well as federal and state elected officials from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Just from Alabama, written expressions of support were received and provided in the application package from leaders such as Congressman Bradley Byrne, State Senator Greg Albritton, State Rep. Alan Baker, The Baldwin County Commission, Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, and Coastal Alabama Partnership President/CEO Wiley Blankenship.

The Federal Railroad Administration also has in its files previously received support documents showing many years of consistent support from the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission, the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Bay Minette Mayor Bob Wills, Atmore Mayor Jim Staff, and the Poarch Band Creek Indian Tribal Council.

The next grant application deadline is June 22nd. We are continuing to search for funding support from both private and public sources. For these two grants, Alabama’s match share is $3.045 million over a three-year period for the Restoration & Enhancement (RE) operations cost support grant, and $3.393 million for the Consolidated Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grant. The CRISI grant includes funding for an assessment and preliminary engineering study of rail congestion issues at the Port of Mobile, along with needed track and switching improvements from the Mississippi-Alabama state line to the Mobile Amtrak station located at the foot of Government St.

Since our meeting with you on May 10th, the SRC received an economic impact study on the restoration of daily New Orleans to Mobile Amtrak service, which was prepared by the University of Southern Mississippi’s Trent Lott National Center. For the Alabama tourism impact component, Dr. Reid Cummings of the University of South Alabama provided the study’s leaders with conservative visitor counts based on lodging night information from only the City of Mobile. Of note – for Alabama’s match investment of approximately $6.5 million, the overall potential economic output to Alabama from construction, train operations, and tourism ranges from $19.18 million to $227.76 million annually, depending on growth factors for tourism from 1% to 20%. So, our $6.5 million investment returns $20 million per year!

Please express our sincere appreciation to Governor Ivey for her support. We hope to have another meeting with you after the June Primary and provide you an update on our progress.

With greatest regards,

Greg White

SOUTHERN RAILCOMMISSION.ORG