June 21, 2018

Honorable Kay Ivey
Governor of Alabama
600 Dexter Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

RE: Support of the Restoration of Amtrak Passenger Rail Service

Dear Governor Ivey:

Today, the opportunity exists to potentially bring many additional millions of dollars in annual tourism spending to Alabama through the restoration of Amtrak passenger rail service between Mobile and New Orleans. As members of Mobile’s State Legislative Delegation, we urge you to commit to allocating the necessary funding to support the federal grant programs being sought by the Southern Rail Commission which will fund bringing Amtrak back to Mobile. Our region and this state will see a tremendous economic benefit over many years from a relatively small investment in funding commitment.

Tourism from the southern counties of Alabama provides significant revenues to help meet this state’s needs. Since Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, our part of the state has made great strides in building more and more opportunities to bring visitors into this state and enjoy all of its wonderful recreational, cultural, and entertainment offerings.

The population growth of the southern counties is among the highest in the nation, and leads the state. We already have a traffic congestion issue with the singular interstate that provides the primary travel connection for both residents and visitors. Having another daily transportation option for travelers between Mobile, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and New Orleans will only add to our capacity to promote and sustain business and tourism.

Amtrak service was vital to the emergency response in Texas last year as Hurricane Harvey devastated coastal regions. Amtrak also provided evacuation and response support to eastern Florida as Hurricane Irma created another path of storm-related devastation. New Orleans did NOT use Amtrak to assist evacuation prior to Katrina’s landfall – and today, Amtrak is a required part of Louisiana’s hurricane response planning by FEMA and State planners. The southern counties of Alabama deserve to have passenger rail as an emergency response option.
The request of $6.438 million for match support for the two grants currently under application, the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program ($3.393 million in match) and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants (REG) Program (a total of $3.045 million in potential funding support to be expended over a three-year period), is well worth the investment for the economic benefits this state will receive. A recent economic study estimates that by restoring this daily service, the state might see an annual additional tourism spending benefit from $11+ million to over $100 million and a job creation potential over more than 100 new, well-paying jobs.

Your leadership is essential to continue the economic growth which our state has enjoyed. Here in our region, we completely endorse and support the funding necessary for the proposed federal grant programs and operating support to restore Amtrak’s plan for daily passenger service. We request you provide the needed commitment for funding support for this fantastic opportunity.

Sincerely,

Representative Barbara Drummond
Representative James E. Buskey
Representative David Sessions
Representative Randy Davis
Representative Adline Clarke
Representative Napoleon Bracy
Representative Chris Pringle
Representative J.M. (Margie) Wilcox

Senator Greg Albritton
Senator Vivian Davis Figures
Senator Rusty Gover
Senator Bill Hightower
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.
The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
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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
June 20, 2018

Honorable Kay Ivey  
Governor of Alabama  
600 Dexter Avenue  
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Governor Ivey:

As members of the Mobile City Council, we urge you to commit to allocating the required funds necessary to bring Amtrak service back to our city. Through that commitment and the return of service, the region and state will see a tremendous positive impact resulting from both increased tourism and economic development opportunities.

Over the past few years, Mobile has made great strides rejuvenating our city with a major infrastructure program funded locally. These efforts have spurred incredible growth and investment in the city. The return of a passenger train is critical in fully realizing the opportunities presented and would provide a much-needed increase in transportation options for our citizens.

As you know, your leadership on this issue is essential to ensure we do not miss this incredible opportunity for our city, region and state. We appreciate your consideration and prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Levon C. Manzie  
Council Vice President

Fredrick D. Richardson, Jr.  
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C. J. Small
District 3

Joel Daves
District 5

Gina Gregory
District 7
June 20, 2018

Honorable Kay Ivey, Governor of the State of Alabama
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Governor Ivey,

I am writing in support of restoring Amtrak passenger rail service to Mobile. Restoration of this service along the Gulf Coast will create economic development opportunities, in addition to the immediate impact of tourism dollars flowing into the state. A University of Southern Mississippi study demonstrates Alabama would experience an economic output of between $11.9 and $200 million from increased tourism spending in the state. As an organization that directs downtown redevelopment, we know this would have a significant impact on our city center, however, this is money desperately needed to support programs throughout Alabama.

Without this first Mobile-New Orleans passenger rail link, citizens from the southern part of the state will forever be dependent on cars and a costly highway system to access cities to the north. This is not the way to attract 21st century talent to our state. We must be willing to invest in the modes of transportation desired by younger generations if we have any hope of prospering in the future.

I respectfully request your commitment to the funding necessary to restore Amtrak service to Mobile. By almost any measure, this project will be a boost to both the coffers and citizens of Alabama.

Highest regards,

Elizabeth P. Stevens
President & CEO
Honorable Kay Ivey, Governor of the State of Alabama
600 Dexter Avenue, Montgomery, AL, 36130

June 20, 2018

Dear Governor Ivey,

I write to you in support of returning Amtrak passenger rail services to Mobile. It is my understanding from the Southern Rail Commission that in order for this concept to become a reality, you must approve the necessary funding. When you examine the 2018 feasibility and economic impact study, prepared by the University of Southern Mississippi, the initial cost of returning rail services to Mobile will quickly be outpaced by the benefits. According to the report, “For the construction of the railway infrastructures, Alabama’s projected investment is roughly $3.02 million ($2.89 million for capital investment from the state of Alabama and $130,781 from city of Mobile for station renovation) and that investment leads to an economic benefit of $5.48 million to Alabama, a 1.81:1 benefit/cost ratio.”

Economic connectivity of the Gulf Coast is crucial for Mobile to compete regionally and expand its economic base. Mobile is a unique city within Alabama and often requires infrastructure considerations that differ from the rest of the state in terms of cross-state interconnectivity. Amtrak services would connect Mobile to the Mississippi coast and New Orleans, which would allow both business travel and expanded avenues for tourism. The new terminal would be constructed in Downtown Mobile, allowing for quick access to the Carnival Cruise terminal, Brookley Field, hotels and attractions, and the commercial business district.

Returning passenger rail services to Mobile would be another step towards Mobile moving past the “city of perpetual potential” and becoming a regional economic center. With the possibility of constructing the new I-10 bridge and relocating commercial airline services to Brookley Field, the timing of this decision is crucial for the synergy of Mobile’s transportation and infrastructure upgrades. This is possible, but only if federal, state, and local officials coordinate their efforts. According to a report released today by the Mobile Airport Authority, Mobile would benefit greatly from dual passenger rail and commercial airline access at Brookley Field, both of which would lead to additional economic recruitment to Mobile and the retention of existing businesses.

All of the aforementioned infrastructure projects are located within District 97, and my goal is to work with you and your administration to ensure the necessary state funding and support can be secured to make these projects become a reality for the people of Alabama. I look forward to serving as a strong voice for District 97 in the Legislature and working with your administration to find solutions that benefit everyone in south Alabama. I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to meeting with you soon.

Highest Regards,

Stephen McNair, Ph.D.