



OFFICERS

John Spain  
Chairman

Knox Ross  
Vice-Chairman

Wiley Blankenship  
Secretary-Treasurer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MEDIA CONTACT: Dan Dealy  
Email: [ddealy@dsservicesgroup.com](mailto:ddealy@dsservicesgroup.com) Tel: 251-510-7143

BLANKENSHIP NAMED TO SOUTHERN RAIL COMMISSION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

COMMISSIONERS

(MOBILE, Ala., Sept. 13, 2018) -- The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is pleased to announce the election of Commissioner Wiley Blankenship, President and CEO of the Coastal Alabama Partnership, to the Executive Committee as Secretary/Treasurer. Commissioner Blankenship joins SRC's Vice-Chairman Knox Ross, former Mayor of Pelahatchie, MS and Chairman John Spain, Executive Vice President of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation in leading the Southern Rail Commission.

ALABAMA  
Gov. Kay Ivey  
Wiley Blankenship  
Governor's Designee

With a mission to advance economic resilience through improving rail services, one of the Southern Rail Commission's current projects is the restoration of passenger rail service for Gulf Coast states. The SRC is currently working to support its member states (Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana) in securing federal funding for infrastructure and operations that would facilitate the return of passenger rail service from Mobile to New Orleans.

Claire H. Austin  
Corbett Bennington  
Larry Watts  
Gregory B. White

Mr. Blankenship was appointed to the Southern Rail Commission by Governor Kay Ivey in 2017. Officer positions on the Commission are two-year terms, rotating through Secretary/Treasurer, Vice-Chairman, and Chairman. The Commission held Officer nominations and elections at the regular quarterly meeting on Friday, September 7 in New Orleans, LA.

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

Mr. Blankenship takes over the Executive Committee position from Greg White, Partner with White and McClung CPAs, who represented Alabama in SRC leadership and served as Chair from 2015-2017. The full list of Commissioners can be found at [southernrailcommission.org/leadership](http://southernrailcommission.org/leadership).

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

Commissioner Blankenship brings to the SRC Executive Committee great depth and influence within the state of Alabama, having worked across the state in all areas of economic development since 1996. The mission of the Coastal Alabama Partnership (CAP) where Blankenship is President and CEO is to enable and unify regional business and political leadership to improve this area's quality of life, and to realize the vision of Coastal Alabama as a globally competitive destination recognized around the world.

MISSISSIPPI  
Gov. Phil Bryant

His experience includes:

- Appointed in 2016 to the Federal Railroad Administration's Gulf Coast Passenger Rail Working Group, which provided recommendations to Congress in 2017 on the restoration of daily passenger train service across America's Gulf Coast.
- Past State Director of Alabama for the Southern Economic Development Council (SEDC) Board of Directors. SEDC is a 17-state 990 member, non-profit organization composed of a broad cross-section of active and influential industrial and economic developers from

Ashley Edwards  
Kay Kell  
Melinda McGrath  
Jack Norris  
Alice Perry  
Knox Ross  
Patrick Sullivan

business and industry, utilities, transportation, financial and education institutions, chambers of commerce, and local, regional and state development agencies.

- Past Director, Center for International Business and Economic Development - Troy University
- Past President/CEO, Coastal Gateway Regional Economic Development Authority

Commissioner Blankenship has been instrumental in the SRC's efforts to restore daily passenger rail service to the Gulf Coast. In June, an economic impact study presented by the Trent Lott Center at the University of Southern Mississippi outlined potential economic benefits for Mississippi and Alabama. The report noted annual benefits from increased tourism for Alabama between \$11 million to more than \$100 million. For Mississippi, projected annual revenue benefits from increased tourism associated with daily rail service is between \$24-\$486 million. From New Orleans, across the Mississippi Gulf Coast to Alabama's southern coastal communities, more than 15 million people visit our region annually. Daily passenger rail service provides an alternative travel option and support to a congested interstate system.

###

#### 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 97<sup>th</sup> 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 comprises governor-appointed commissioners from each member state. For more information, visit [www.SouthernRailCommission.org](http://www.SouthernRailCommission.org)