



SOUTHERN RAIL COMMISSION



**GREATER NEW ORLEANS**  
INC  
REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Baton Rouge Area Chamber®

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## **Poll Shows Wide Support of New Orleans to Baton Rouge Passenger Rail Service**

**Baton Rouge, La. (April 17, 2019)** – A new poll being released today shows that 85% of the respondents think it is very important or important to have an intercity rail service between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. The poll also found that 63% said they would use the train and more than 80% supported the state including passenger rail in the transportation options they currently provide along with highways and airports.

Other findings in the poll showed that 80% thought a passenger rail service between the states' largest cities would bring economic development, while 82% said they thought it would reduce congestion on I-10. More than 80% of the respondents were more likely to support passenger train service if the trains were used for evacuation of citizens in a future hurricane.

Residents living along the train route agreed that they would ride the train to sporting events in each city. More than 70% said they would use the train for events at the Superdome and Arena for sporting events and more than 60% said they would ride the train to see LSU sporting events in Baton Rouge.

The federal government currently has a program that will provide matching funds for infrastructure improvements needed for new inter-city passenger rail services and 79% of respondents said they would support using state funds to match the federal funds.

75% reacted positively to the train as an alternative to driving because it would take one hour and fifteen minutes to travel between the two cities, and have Wi-Fi and food service.

The proposed passenger train would operate on existing freight tracks with stops in Baton Rouge, Gonzales, LaPlace, Louis Armstrong International airport, Kenner and the Union Passenger Terminal (UPT) in downtown New Orleans. According to a 2014 study, the capital investment for starting the service would be \$262 million with federal funds underwriting up to half of that amount. Existing rail infrastructure owned by Kansas City Southern and Canadian National would be improved to provide for safer movement of cargo and passengers along the

80-mile corridor. Crossings would be upgraded, and rail lines doubled in some sections to allow freight and passenger trains to move efficiently on the same lines. Many bridges would be strengthened or replaced so trains could travel at higher speeds. Replacing the 1.8-mile wooden rail bridge across the Bonnet Carre Spillway is the largest capital cost item at \$62.1 million.

Initially, the service will have two daily round trips at speeds of 79 mph but more than 60% of the respondents in the poll said they would like to see more trips each day. The ticket price would be between \$10 and \$15 each way.

Reestablishing passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is critical to the continued economic growth of the southeast Louisiana Super Region which includes more than 2.2 million people and over 1 million jobs. For this region to remain nationally and globally competitive, connectivity between the major population, employment, social and cultural centers must be enhanced. High-quality rail service can be a critical component of the transportation network connecting these two metropolitan areas.

The poll was conducted in February with 1,050 registered voters in the parishes along the proposed route of the rail service between New Orleans and Baton Rouge and a margin of error of +/-2.9%. The poll was sponsored by the Southern Rail Commission, the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and Greater New Orleans Inc.

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### **About the Baton Rouge Area Chamber**

The Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) leads economic development in the nine-parish Baton Rouge Area, working to grow jobs and wealth and to improve the business climate and competitiveness in the region. Today, BRAC investors include more than 1,500 small businesses, mid-sized firms, large industry and entrepreneurial startups, as well as individuals and organizations that support business and economic development. In this capacity, BRAC serves as the voice of the business community, providing knowledge, access, services and advocacy.

For more information, visit [www.brac.org](http://www.brac.org)

### **About GNO, Inc.**

Greater New Orleans, Inc. (GNO, Inc.) is a regional economic development alliance serving the 10-parish region of Southeast Louisiana that includes Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington parishes. Our mission is to create a region where our children and grandchildren can live and prosper, a region with abundant job opportunities and excellent quality of life. The ultimate indication of our success will be the presence of a robust, accessible, and growing middle class in Southeastern Louisiana. GNO, Inc. works together with the business community; local, state, and federal governments; and other regional stakeholders to coordinate, consolidate, and

catalyze action on key issues and opportunities that maximize job and wealth creation and retention, are relevant to the region as a whole, and create systematic impact.

For more information, visit [www.gnoinc.org](http://www.gnoinc.org)

### **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](http://www.SouthernRailCommission.org)