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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GULF COAST PASSENGER RAIL RESTORATION RECEIVES FEDERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

BATON ROUGE, LA, May 3, 2020 — In an announcement by U.S. Senators Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), and Representative Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.), passenger rail restoration efforts along the Gulf Coast received a \$5.45 million grant through the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grants Program. Passenger service between New Orleans, LA and Mobile, AL has been suspended since 2005 when Hurricane Katrina destroyed critical rail infrastructure. This award will fund operating expenses for the first and second years of service along the restored rail line and also leverages commitments from the States of Louisiana and Mississippi and the City of Mobile.

This announcement follows other recent federal awards to the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) for Gulf Coast passenger service restoration, including \$33 million through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program to complete major infrastructure and capital improvements necessary for service restoration. The Commission was also awarded a R&E grant of \$4.36 million in 2019 to support operating expenses for a portion of the first year of service along the new rail line. These investments confirm the regional and national support for rail restoration along the Gulf Coast and show confidence in the anticipated benefits of the returned service.

Special recognition for obtaining this funding goes to U.S. Senators Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith of Mississippi. The SRC would also like to thank U.S. Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama for his leadership in the Senate Appropriations Committee, as well as the Appropriations staff who issued announcement of the award. Securing operating funds for the restored passenger rail line has been a bipartisan effort of the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama Southern Rail Commission members, the populace of the states, and Congress. The SRC submitted the successful R&E grant application with the assistance of Transportation for America.

SRC Chairman Wiley Blankenship celebrated the R&E award announcement, saying "On behalf of the entire Southern Rail Commission, especially my fellow Executive Committee members John Spain and Knox Ross, I would like express my gratitude for continued support at the federal, state, and local levels as we work to bring passenger rail back to the Gulf Coast. This award brings us one step closer to realizing the many benefits that restored passenger service will have for our communities in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana."

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About the Southern Rail Commission

Created by Congress in 1982, the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) was designed to engage and inform public and private rail interests to support and influence Southeast rail initiatives. The SRC is led by governor-appointed commissioners from Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and promotes the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods to enhance economic development along rail corridors; provides transportation choices; and facilitates emergency evacuation routes.