

Gulf Coast Passenger Rail Restoration  
Filed by the Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Coalition

**Re: Docket No. FD 36496**

Application of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation  
Under 49 U.S.C. § 24308(e) – CSX Transportation, Inc., and  
Norfolk Southern Railway Company

Dear Chairman Oberman,

The Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Coalition comprises advocates in the Greater Northwest Region of the United States stretching from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Coast. We support restored and expanded passenger rail service in our region—a region long underserved by national passenger rail service. The resolution of the above-referenced docket will set the tone for restoration of passenger rail services throughout the entire nation.

We urge the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to establish a clear and strong framework that ensures that Amtrak, state and local passenger agencies, and host railroads can cooperate effectively with each other to enhance and expand passenger rail nationally as envisioned in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The STB should issue a decision establishing:

- Clear guidelines for determining what constitutes “fair and reasonable compensation” for the costs of railroads to host passenger rail services,
- Standards of transparency and good faith to be met by host railroads and Amtrak, and
- Other key parameters governing the relationship between host railroads and Amtrak.

Our coalition seeks positive, open and cooperative relationships with the host railroads in the Greater Northwest to the mutual benefit of both freight and passenger rail transportation in our region. The STB should take effective action supporting the highest level of cooperation between passenger rail interests and host railroads, fulfill the policy goals for rail transportation in the IIJA, and maximize public benefits.

The action we request is consistent with the “Grand Bargain” of 1970 that created Amtrak, relieved railroads of the responsibility to operate passenger rail services themselves, but continued their common carrier obligations of hosting and accommodating passenger rail service for fair and reasonable compensation. It is clear from the current case that the STB needs to establish clear guidelines and procedures for determining what is fair and reasonable in a transparent and cooperative manner.

The severe conflict in the Gulf Coast region over the resumption of passenger rail service is a product of insufficient guidelines and regulations governing the passenger rail/host railroad relationship. If the STB establishes a strong framework for cooperation, which includes the key elements described above, it will help ensure this conflict will not spread across the nation. If it

does not establish that framework, this unfortunate, damaging Gulf Coast dispute will likely recur and frustrate the IJIA goals and the aspirations of communities and citizens across the nation for the mutual expansion and improvement of passenger rail and freight service.

In conclusion, the STB should not merely address the specific disputes of the parties in this case. It should also effectively define the framework for cooperation between passenger rail and host railroads.

We thank the STB for its consideration of these comments.

#### Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Coalition Signatories

All Aboard Minnesota, Brian Nelson- President, [allaboardminnesota@gmail.com](mailto:allaboardminnesota@gmail.com)

All Aboard Northwest (AANW), Dan Bilka – President & Co-Executive Director,  
[dan@allaboardnw.org](mailto:dan@allaboardnw.org)

All Aboard Washington (AAWA), Charlie Hamilton – Co-Executive Director,  
[chamilton@allaboardwashington.org](mailto:chamilton@allaboardwashington.org)

Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA), Art Poole -  
President, [president@aortarail.org](mailto:president@aortarail.org)

Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA), Dave Strohmaier – Chairman,  
[dstrohmaier@bigskyrail.org](mailto:dstrohmaier@bigskyrail.org)

The City of Boise, ID; Lauren McLean – Mayor, [LMcLean@cityofboise.org](mailto:LMcLean@cityofboise.org); Elaine Clegg – City  
Council President (on behalf of the city council), [EClegg@cityofboise.org](mailto:EClegg@cityofboise.org)

Utah Rail Passengers Association, (UPRA), Mike Christensen – President, [mike@utahrpa.org](mailto:mike@utahrpa.org)

#### Main Contact

Dan Bilka

Coordinator of the Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Coalition

All Aboard Northwest, President & Co-Executive Director

[dan@allaboardnw.org](mailto:dan@allaboardnw.org)

(605) 480-2532

Cc' All Parties of Record

I hereby certify that I have caused the attached letter to be served electronically or by firstclass mail on all parties of record in this proceeding.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Bilka". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

3-9-22

Dan Bilka

Coordinator of the Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Coalition

3/9/2022