

United States Senate

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SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

April 26, 2021

Mr. William Flynn
CEO
Amtrak
1 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Mr. James Squires
Chairman, President & CEO
Norfolk Southern
1200 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30309

Mr. James Foote
President and CEO
CSX Corporation
500 Water Street, 15th Floor
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Mr. Martin Oberman
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423

RE: Gulf Coast Passenger Rail Service / STB Finance Docket No. 36496

Dear Mr. Flynn, Mr. Foote, Mr. Squires, and Mr. Oberman:

Before Hurricane Katrina devastated much of the Gulf Coast in 2005, Amtrak provided passenger rail service from Louisiana to Florida, with stops in Mississippi and Alabama. Although Amtrak discontinued the service immediately after Hurricane Katrina, I understand that Amtrak recently filed notice with the Surface Transportation Board ("STB") to allow new passenger rail operations for four daily passenger trains from New Orleans to Mobile on the Norfolk Southern ("NS") and CSX lines during peak hours starting in January 2022.

At about the same time that Amtrak filed its notice with the STB, it also announced that it has no plans to complete the ongoing modeling study that was being conducted to determine, among other things, (1) the potential impacts along the rail line and (2) the needed infrastructure to ensure both freight and passenger rail can meet operational expectations and legal requirements. Because I am told that (1) the modeling study is the standard process for adding new or modified service and (2) Amtrak had previously agreed to conduct the study in cooperation with NS and CSX prior to the start of any service, I am very concerned by Amtrak's abandonment of the study.

Additionally, I am concerned about the financial implications to the federal government of adding the proposed new service because Amtrak is dependent on annual appropriations from

the federal government to cover its capital and operating costs. I am also concerned about any possible financial implications to the relevant state governments.

For all of these reasons, I believe that the study determining the impacts of the proposed new service on existing freight rail service, as well as its impacts on the ports currently served by this existing freight rail service and the relevant communities, should be completed before approving new passenger rail service.

In conclusion, I encourage all of the parties involved to amicably resume the study and see it through to conclusion so that the best possible decision for all concerned can be made.

Finally, I ask that you please keep me posted on any developments in this matter.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Kennedy", with a stylized, flowing script.

John Kennedy
United States Senator

cc: Service List for Finance Docket No. 36496