

**ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA***The Voice of Florida Business Since 1920*

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By E-Filing

Cynthia T. Brown
Chief of the Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Re: Gulf Coast Passenger Service Between New Orleans and Mobile STB Finance Docket
No. 36496

Dear Surface Transportation Board Members:

On behalf of the Associated Industries of Florida (AIF), I am writing today to express our concerns regarding the impact that Amtrak's proposed Gulf Coast passenger service between New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama could have on freight rail service and, ultimately, on businesses in Florida that rely on that service.

Known as "The Voice of Florida Business" in the Sunshine State, AIF has represented the principles of prosperity and free enterprise before the three branches of state government since 1920. A voluntary association of diversified businesses, AIF was created to foster an economic climate in Florida conducive to the growth, development, and welfare of industry and business and the people of the state.

Many Florida businesses rely heavily on the freight rail service provided by CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) to not only receive supplies, but to also ship their products to destinations elsewhere in the country or the world. For this reason, freight rail service is critical to their success.

As such, AIF is deeply concerned about the impact of Amtrak adding four passenger trains per day during peak hours over the largely single-track Gulf Coast Corridor that is burdened with multiple moveable bridges. We are especially concerned given the prospect that the passenger train service might commence without additional infrastructure to support it. It is our belief that without proper study and infrastructure improvements, freight rail service will be adversely impacted by this change. Recurring freight train delays and decreased train speeds are certain to create additional problems in the supply chain and further hamper businesses' ability to keep up with already high demand.

While we do not oppose Gulf Coast passenger service, we believe it is critical that the introduction of this new passenger service not decrease the quality of freight rail service over the heavily used Gulf Coast Corridor. We believe that the addition of passenger service must be done with regard to the businesses that rely on the freight rail service operating on the same corridor. Otherwise, the burden of any decrease in the quality of freight rail service will inevitably fall on businesses that are already grappling with significant supply chain challenges.

For these reasons, we urge the Board to protect the interests of all parties that rely on the national rail network, including the business community.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bevis', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Brewster Bevis
President & CEO
Associated Industries of Florida

cc: FD 36496 Service List