



Reagent Chemical & Research, Inc. 303686

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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 Ms. Brown:

Reagent Chemical & Research, Inc. is located at Geismar, LA in Ascension Parish, and relies on the freight rail service provided by CSX Transportation, Inc. I write on behalf of Reagent Chemical to express concerns regarding the impact on the freight rail service of Amtrak's proposed Gulf Coast passenger service between New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama.

Reagent Chemical distributes hydrochloric acid, of which one use is water treatment, and relies on CSXT to transport rail cars to our customers. Freight rail service is critical to the success of our business and CSXT provides us access to destination markets in the Eastern USA. Timely and consistent rail service is critical to avoid adding cost associated with delays or other modes of transportation.

CSXT and Norfolk Southern Railway Company have submitted evidence, including a Rail Traffic Controller study, which shows the introduction of Gulf Coast passenger service between New Orleans and Mobile will cause significant harm to freight service. This harm will manifest itself through decreased freight train speeds and delay as well as extreme operational variability. CSXT's local trains, the very trains that directly serve our facility, will be hit the hardest. Reagent Chemical is concerned about our ability to meet the demands of our customers and remain profitable if this harm to CSXT's freight rail service materializes.

Reagent Chemical does not oppose Gulf Coast passenger service and expresses no opinion on the merits of that service. However, it is important that the introduction of this passenger service does not decrease the quality of freight service provided by CSXT. It is our understanding that CSXT and NSR have proposed infrastructure projects that would support Amtrak's desired passenger service while protecting the quality of freight service that Reagent Chemical relies on. Reagent Chemical urges the Board to seriously consider the merits of these projects.



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It is unfair for Amtrak to insist on operating passenger service without regard to the existing freight business. If Amtrak is permitted to commence passenger service without paying its own way, the cost of that service will inevitably fall on the shoulders of shippers. Shippers like Reagent Chemical will either be forced to turn to more expensive and less efficient alternatives to rail or will wind up subsidizing passenger service through increased rail service costs as CSXT and NSR are pressed to add infrastructure to stem the degradation to freight service.

The Board has an obligation to protect the interests of all parties that rely on the national rail network, not just those of passenger rail. Amtrak's desire for access to the Gulf Coast Corridor with no strings attached is not only harmful to freight rail service, but untenable given the substantial funding it received from Congress last year. Reagent Chemical requests that the Board require Amtrak to fund and facilitate the construction of infrastructure projects so as to avoid any harm to freight rail service.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Molek



Director Rail Transportation

cc: FD 36496 Service List



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