

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0904

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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 Surface Transportation Board Members:

CSX plays a significant role in our region, state, and national economies through the supply chain, as they currently connect to 23 states and more than 70 coastal and inland ports that serve more than two thirds of the U.S. consumption market. Additionally, a majority of CSX's 3,000 Florida employees either work or reside in my Congressional District, and I am proud to represent them in Washington.

CSX has a strong record throughout their network, including in Florida, of working with Amtrak and passenger rail. Amtrak, CSX, and Florida DOT worked together through studies and infrastructure to create the new SunRail system in central Florida. In fact, CSX has the most passenger rail operating over its 23-state system of any U.S. railroad. CSX is also helping us reach climate goals, as they are the first U.S. freight railroad to average more than 533 miles per gallon per ton of freight moved.

CSX transports raw materials, finished goods, intermodal, and other commodities to facilities in the Gulf Coast as well as destinations around North America. CSX connects to the West Coast through rail gateways, such as the one in New Orleans, which is the second largest transfer point behind Chicago. Tropicana Orange Juice, UPS, Amazon, Ford Motors, Volvo, and numerous other businesses rely on CSX to provide an efficient service to meet their business needs. We are all able to see the significant impact issues with the supply chain can create on our individual localities and the goods we rely on for our daily lives.

Now more than ever, to fully recover from the pandemic, we need initiatives that improve supply chain capacity. Amtrak's current proposal before the Board moves away from the standards that have worked well and threatens the regional and national supply chain by diverting limited freight capacity to passenger service, impacting freight customers in this corridor and beyond.

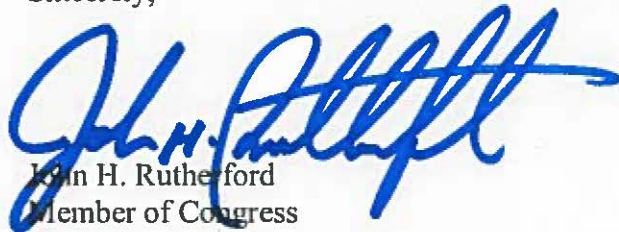
Fortunately, there is a better way. The affected railroads, CSX and Norfolk Southern, have come to the Board with proposed infrastructure improvements that will preserve freight capacity and service levels while allowing Amtrak to operate a quality passenger service on the line. The railroads have done so by embracing what I understand to be best practices in transportation planning. They have created a detailed operations simulation that accounts for the growing needs of freight customers in the region over a reasonable 20-year period, in accordance with federal guidelines and comparable studies.

In light of Amtrak's failure to provide a detailed operational study of its own, I urge the Board to carefully evaluate the CSX/NS proposal. It is imperative that adequate infrastructure be in place before the start of passenger service so that freight customers and communities are not harmed.

These costs are real: to the federal government that has invested in ports and terminals to enhance the supply chain; to the freight railroads to build infrastructure to restore lost capacity; to shippers to accept service delays, lower reliability, or higher shipping costs; to communities to accept longer wait times at blocked railroad crossings; and to air quality when freight trains must excessively idle in wait for passenger trains. Just a few months ago, Amtrak received billions in new funding from Congress, and thus, have the funding to cover the full cost of its new service.

I appreciate the Board's attentive and thorough consideration of this matter. Pursuant to the STB's regulations and policies, I request that you carefully weigh the impacts of adding a new passenger service with the precedents being proposed, against your charges of resolving disputes in support of an efficient, competitive, and economically viable surface transportation network that meets the needs of its users. Thank you for looking out for a reliable supply chain and an efficient freight and passenger rail network.

Sincerely,



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress