

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2022

304110

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

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
March 16, 2022
Part of
Public Record

To the Members of the Surface Transportation Board:

We write to you to express our concerns with Amtrak's interest in utilizing freight rail lines as a conduit for expanded passenger service on the Gulf Coast between Mobile, Alabama and New Orleans, Louisiana. As this nation continues to grapple with supply chain disruptions, it's critical that freight takes precedence over passenger rail projects.

Sound logistics and reliable transportation play a significant role in encouraging capital investment. Amtrak's proposed use of freight rail for passenger service, without studying the impacts and building infrastructure, would set a harmful precedent that would undermine the significance of freight rail infrastructure. Amtrak's proposal will harm our state's ability to attract new investment, while also making it more difficult for existing business and industry to compete.

The potential impacts would be particularly pronounced for the manufacturing sector, which depends heavily on freight rail to access both domestic end users and export markets through the International Port of Memphis or the Port of Mobile. Given the severe challenges currently facing our supply chain, it's important that the Surface Transportation Board prioritizes the stability of existing freight infrastructure before supporting new passenger rail service.

Increasing passenger rail should not come at the expense of the reliability of freight rail. Adding passenger trains to rail lines currently devoted to freight stands to create complicating factors for all shippers, impacting among other things, shipping timelines and competitiveness.

We thank the Board for its consideration of this issue and ask for both further study and continued focus on the economic impacts of Amtrak's proposal.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty
United States Senator