

# Amtrak wants to bring more trains to more people by expanding and improving passenger rail service. CSX & NS are fighting to stop that.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) is considering whether to allow Amtrak to restore train service between New Orleans and Mobile, which will influence whether Amtrak can grow service to new corridors throughout the country.

→ Already registered to speak at the public hearing on February 15-16, 2022? The STB will notify you regarding your scheduled timeslot.

→ Planning to submit written comments? We encourage you to submit them by February 15 - here's how:

## Instructions to submit written comments

Upload a letter to the STB Docket here: <https://www.stb.gov/proceedings-actions/e-filing/other-filings/>

- In "Docket Number," select "FD" from the dropdown menu and then enter the number 36496.
- In "Filing Type," select "Comment" from the dropdown menu.
- Fill out the "Party Information" using your contact information.
- At the bottom of the page, select "Choose File," make sure the "Public" button is selected.
- Then, attach your letter, which should include the following:
  - Your name.
  - Affiliated organization (if applicable).
  - Comments.
- Then hit "Submit."

## Background

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina washed away much of CSX's Gulf Coast tracks and Amtrak was forced to suspend *Sunset Limited* service between New Orleans and Florida. Since 2006, the railroad has been rebuilt and freight service has returned, yet Gulf Coast communities are still being deprived of essential passenger rail. CSX and NS have done everything in their power to block restoring passenger service unless hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars are spent to improve their railroad, far beyond estimates by the Congressionally-established Gulf Coast Working Group.

Congress created the STB to settle disputes among railroads. Now, after six years of negotiations and 16 years without service, it is time for the STB to hear the case for Gulf Coast service.

## Let's get the facts straight

1. **Amtrak has the right to access any rail line in the US.** Freight railroads agreed to that condition when Amtrak was created by Congress over 50 years ago to relieve freight railroads of the obligation to provide passenger service.
2. **From New Orleans to Mobile, the Gulf Coast has been loud, clear, and united: they want their trains back.** For 16 years, residents and local, state, and federal officials have tirelessly advocated for the return of Amtrak service – passing resolutions, testifying in Congress, and turning out massive crowds to support Amtrak's Gulf Coast service.
3. **All parties have spent 6 years studying and preparing for Gulf Coast passenger service.** The Gulf Coast Working Group was established by Congress in 2015, bringing together the FRA, the Southern Rail Commission, CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Amtrak to collaborate on a thorough data-driven study, which identified pathways for restoring service in the Gulf Coast.
4. **Gulf Coast service would not "unreasonably impair" freight service.** The route is far from its capacity. In 2017, the Gulf Coast Working Group found that CSX operated approximately 11 trains per day on the corridor.
5. **Funding has already been committed to invest in CSX infrastructure.** Mississippi, Louisiana, the City of Mobile, the federal government, and Amtrak have all committed funds to invest in CSX infrastructure.

## Amtrak service will benefit the Gulf Coast

1. With over 2.3 million residents, Gulf Coast cities between New Orleans and Mobile deserve efficient Amtrak service to address traffic congestion, air quality, and economic development challenges.
2. The region sees 20+ million visitors annually, including 700,000 international visitors, who would benefit from better travel options. Convenient Amtrak service would encourage visitors to explore more of the region, utilizing a transportation mode many are accustomed to.
3. The train will link the busy New Orleans, Gulfport, and Mobile region, which has no direct air service connecting them today.
4. Amtrak service will provide a safe, accessible, affordable, downtown-to-downtown, low-emission travel alternative to driving for residents and visitors.
5. Amtrak service would create new good-paying jobs and improve access to employment for residents in the region.

### Projected economic impact from tourism spending

|              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| Alabama      | up to \$220 million      |
| Mississippi  | up to \$486 million      |
| Louisiana    | up to \$365 million      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>up to \$1 billion</b> |

Source: University of Southern Mississippi (2018)

## What's at stake?

The STB's decision will have an impact on Amtrak's ability to expand beyond where passenger rail service exists today, and could adversely affect Amtrak's ability to provide more trains for more people across America. Many of the country's biggest and fastest growing metropolitan areas, with diverse populations, don't have the rail service they need and deserve. Major cities like Houston, Atlanta, and Cincinnati have service that is simply inadequate, with trains that only stop once a day and often in the middle of the night. Other cities like Las Vegas, Nashville, Columbus, Phoenix, and Wichita don't have Amtrak service at all!

Our *Amtrak Connects US* vision would grow service across America together with state and federal partners and within the framework of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, adding 39 new routes, 25 enhanced routes, and 160+ new communities, in addition to the 500+ stops served today.

We want both freight and passenger rail to succeed! However, Amtrak cannot provide the passenger rail service America deserves if freight railroads can unilaterally reject new passenger service.

## Don't let CSX and NS veto America's chance to use once-in-a-generation funding to serve more of the country with safe and reliable passenger rail service.

Map of New Orleans - Mobile route and proposed funded improvements to CSX infrastructure  
 Prior to service start, a station track at Mobile would need to be built and repairs made at stations.  
 Future improvements have been studied and are funded at more than \$60 million going forward.

