



PHIL BRYANT
GOVERNOR

May 21, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue
Washington D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

As Governor of the State of Mississippi, I am writing in furtherance of restoring passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast. As you may know, the Coast had passenger rail service from 1894 to 2005. However, because of the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina, the long distance Amtrak train between New Orleans, Louisiana and Orlando, Florida was suspended indefinitely. The Gulf region has gone without any passenger rail service since and its absence continues to hurt the communities once served.

A University of Southern Mississippi (USM) study indicates that there is the potential for a significant economic benefit to the State of Mississippi and its residents from increased tourism generated from passenger rail service across the Gulf Coast. The restored passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast would service six cities directly and over 30 communities indirectly along the 138-mile route between New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama. This service will provide jobs, economic development opportunities, and improved connections for residents and additional travel options for tourists. If implemented properly, passenger service will not only create economic success for the Gulf Coast states but will bring connectivity and build communities.

I commend the efforts of the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) of beginning the process for the states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana to partner with Amtrak to restore service. The SRC is the only multi-state rail compact created by the U.S. Congress and since 1982, the SRC has worked to expand passenger rail service across the South, including restoring rail service along the Gulf Coast. I support a coordinated effort between SRC along with local, state, federal, and private entities that finds a common sense approach through consensus and negotiation that allows for the restoration of passenger service but does not hinder existing freight operations.

I am very encouraged by the possibilities passenger rail service may provide for Mississippi and the entire Gulf Coast. It is my understanding that the Mississippi Department of Transportation has committed to providing operating support for the project. I look forward to working with your team and all interested parties in the months ahead on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phil Bryant".

Phil Bryant
Governor

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI • OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR