

Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers

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Statement Regarding Gulf Coast Rail Service Restoration

30 July 2024

The Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers (LARP) has been a staunch advocate for passenger rail throughout the state of Louisiana since our founding in 1980.

We believe that passenger rail, both long-distance and intercity, is vital to the economic well-being of all those whom it serves. Practical and well-planned rail corridors are equally vital to the economy and riders.

To build and sustain ridership, well planned corridors must provide on-time, reliable, frequent service to the convenience of the rider. Without solid planning and execution, reliability is impossible, sustained ridership cannot be maintained, and the economic value of the corridor is severely diminished.

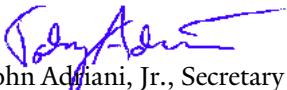
Over the course of the past several years, LARP has monitored the New Orleans to Mobile passenger rail corridor with heightened interest. We visited each planned stop along the corridor on several occasions; we witnessed aluminum platforms being erected, signage being installed, and we observed, with anticipation, a project we hoped that the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) and Amtrak could get right.

We also note, unfortunately, not one inch of rail has been spiked down to alleviate the most fundamental flaw of the entire corridor: the insufficient number of passing sidings. Moreover, no other significant improvements have been made along the corridor which would improve the travel time between New Orleans and Mobile.

As passenger rail advocates, the Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers cannot endorse the commencement of the New Orleans to Mobile service as the corridor exists at this present moment. Without significant improvement to the corridor, the addition of capacity, and the construction of passing sidings, the actual travel time between the two cities by rail becomes incalculable.

Operating a passenger train service should be about the riders. The passenger train rider must be guaranteed on-time arrival at every stop along the way, every trip, every day. If this guarantee cannot be made, ridership will dwindle, and the corridor will wither.

LARP ardently urges the SRC, Amtrak, and all other interested parties along the corridor, to upgrade the corridor to a standard which ensures not only reliable on-time performance, but also at speeds which are competitive to the drive time between New Orleans and Mobile, before the inception of service.


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