

MARCH 9-10, 2010

CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING INFORMATION

GULF COAST HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR



PREPARED BY: SOUTHERN HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION In cooperation with the



Phone: 251-433-6541 Fax: 251-433-6009 Cell: 251-472-7535 E-mail: cmiller@sarpc.org Web-site: www.southernhsr.org

c/o SARPC 110 Beauregard St., Ste 207 P.O. Box 1665 Mobile, AL 36633



Linking Communities by Passenger Rail

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CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFINGS

MARCH 9, 2010 THROUGH MARCH 10, 2010

On behalf of the Southern High Speed Rail Commission (SHSRC), we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the consideration given by the many Congressional offices representing the States of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi during our Congressional Briefing visit.

In particular members of the SHSRC, officials from the three states and citizens along the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor have benefited greatly from the continued support at the federal level for regional rail passenger service. In addition, funding has been critical to the elimination of hazards on the rail lines in our region and in enabling progress towards completion of the Rail Corridor Plan. SHSRC has completed technical planning for track segments between Lake Charles, Louisiana and Meridian, Mississippi and between New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama using Next Generation High Speed Rail Program planning funds.

Our current Improvement Program which is outlined in this booklet describes the SHSRC 's vision for continuing these efforts into the coming years. Through the local funding support of the States of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, the SHSRC has been able to pay for its internal operations and maintain regional interaction. However, the longer term goals involving technical planning, environmental clearance, engineering design and facility construction necessitate that the SHSRC call upon federal resources to fund our unique multi-state approach to regional passenger rail development.

We appreciate the time and attention that is provided by our friends and supporters in the U.S. Congress and look forward to working diligently within our respective states to fully and effectively utilize the resources provided to us to advance our common vision for a more efficient and flexible transportation system.

Chairman
D. Jerome Wall, III
(Louisiana)

Vice Chairman
Kay Kell
(Mississippi)

Secretary-Treasurer
Robert B. Lake
(Alabama)

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THE SOUTHERN HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

COMMISSION MEMBERS

OFFICERS

Chairman
D. Jerome Wall, III
(Louisiana)

Vice Chairman
Kay Kell
(Mississippi)

Secretary-Treasurer
Robert B. Lake
(Alabama)

MEMBERS

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Joe McInnes, ALDOT
Robert Jilla, ALDOT
Craig Thomas, ALDOT
Richard Finley
Hoyt Howell, Jr.
Robert B. Lake
Elizabeth Sanders
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Rep. Wayne Wadell
D. Jerome Wall, III
Rep. Michael Jackson

Mississippi

Gov. Haley Barbour
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Steven K. Edwards, MDOT
Robby Burt, MDOT
Monica Ramsey, MDOT
Gilbert Carmichael
Kay Kell
Charles T. Ozier
Mayor Johnny DuPree

GOVERNORS' DESIGNEES

Alabama: Noah Flanagan

Louisiana: Camille Conaway

SARPC STAFF

Russell Wimberly, Executive Director
Chris Miller, Deputy Executive Director
Grace Crawford, Program Assistant

INTRODUCTION

The Gulf Coast from the Mexican /Texas border to Pensacola, Florida is identified as one of ten emerging mega regions in the United States by the America2050 initiative (www.America2050.org). Like the nine other mega regions, the Gulf Coast area should experience rapid population growth and even greater economic expansion in coming years.

This forecast provides insight into the need to strengthen federal investment and policy making for passenger rail. The Southern High-Speed Passenger Rail Commission (SHSRC) is uniquely positioned to assist in facilitating this increased federal investment in passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast. Since its inception in 1982, the Commission has proven to be an effective collaboration among three states (Alabama,



Gulf Coast High-Speed Rail Corridor

the nation, the interrelationship between the three states as well as contiguous states, such as, Texas, Georgia and Florida, will serve as a catalyst in the development and implementation of high speed rail services within the area. With such an increased emphasis at the federal, state and local level, the need for productive communication between members of the SHSRC and federal and state officials is paramount. This briefing brochure is for the benefit of our federal elected and appointed officials and their respective staffs to assist in their work with members of the SHSRC in developing high speed passenger rail services along the Gulf Coast.

Louisiana and Mississippi) in drawing upon common resources and meeting various challenges associated with passenger rail services and rail services in the area. As the federal government moves forward with a renewed commitment to passenger rail service throughout

VISION OF THE SOUTHERN HIGH SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

The Southern High-Speed Rail Commission (SHSRC) will

- lead the development of a world-class, higher speed passenger rail system for the Southeast United States
- promote economic development along rail corridors
- improve air quality
- provide transportation choices, and
- facilitate alternative emergency evacuation routes.

MISSION OF THE SOUTHERN HIGH SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

The mission of Southern High-Speed Rail Commission (SHSRC) is to facilitate the development of higher speed passenger rail services on the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail (HSR) Corridor and to establish transportation connectivity to the national rapid passenger rail system.

GOALS OF THE SOUTHERN HIGH SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

- Lead the effort to establish/increase intercity passenger rail service between key destination cities and towns.
- Identify the type of equipment, optimum train consists, and least cost for the Baton Rouge-New Orleans and New Orleans-Mobile service as well as other future corridor services in the South Gulf Coast.
- Support multi-year federal funding for AMTRAK and work closely with AMTRAK to improve and expand existing intercity rail passenger operations in the South Gulf Coast.
- Facilitate connectivity for passengers at rail stations to all modes of transportation (bus transit, streetcar, taxi, bicycle routes and pedestrian sidewalks) and improve understanding of the positive impact this will have on economic development.
- SHSRC will work to establish itself as the body that speaks for the South Gulf Coast and is a resource for local, state and federal government on passenger rail issues.
- SHSRC will eliminate impediments and create opportunities for financing of intercity passenger rail.
- Improve safety and performance of passenger rail operations.

SHSRC REQUEST FOR PLANNING FUNDING FISCAL YEAR 2011

Summary of Funding Requests

Planning and Development (PRIIA Funds - FY 2011)

- **Total Planning and Development Program**
Funds Requested \$4,350,700

I. Meridian to Alabama/Georgia State Line Planning Project

Total Request: \$2,247,700

Summary of Meridian-Alabama/Georgia State Line Planning Project

The Planning project consists of three general phases of work:

Corridor Development Plan for the approximately 230 mile segment between Meridian and Alabama/Georgia State Line \$1,035,000

Service Level Environmental Impact Statement for the 230 mile-long corridor between Meridian and Alabama/Georgia State Line..... \$1,032,700

General Financial / Business Plan focusing on the requirements and potential source(s) of funding for annual passenger rail operations for the long-term future for the 230 mile-long corridor. A companion document will be an *Economic Impact Analysis*. \$180,000

Sub-Total Planning Cost and Request for Funding

Based on the foregoing descriptions, the SHSRC will be requesting \$2,247,700 for the Planning Project via the Federal Highway *Surface Priorities Program*.

II. Baton Rouge-Houston Planning Project

Total Request: \$2,103,000

Background

In June 2007 the Southern High-Speed Rail Commission (SHSRC) completed the *Lake Charles to Meridian Corridor Development Plan*. That planning process followed the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) guidelines and included the approximately 130 mile-long Baton Rouge - Lake Charles stretch. The latter city was selected as the western terminus of the route because the state of Texas did not participate in the project. However, Houston, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States, is the logical western terminus of the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor and the FRA has designated it as such.

Intention and Conditions

Partially in response to the foregoing situation, Texas H.B. No. 646 was passed on May 26, 2009, authorizing the state to join Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama on the SHSRC. This forms the basis for the completion of the Corridor Development Plan and preparation of related documents needed to put this important segment on par with Baton Rouge – New Orleans.

Louisiana and Texas will each bear a pro rata share of non-federal planning costs.

Summary of Baton Rouge – Houston Planning Project

The Planning project consists of several major elements that, in total, will bring the Baton Rouge – Houston segment to the same level of planning as provided by the currently completed information for the Baton Rouge – New Orleans project. The effort is divided into three general phases of work:

Corridor Development Plan for the approximately 145 mile segment between Lake Charles and Houston. The ridership information from the 2007 project will be incorporated into the document for consistency and efficiency. \$653,000

Service Level Environmental Impact Statement for the 275 mile-long corridor between Baton Rouge and Houston. \$1,235,000

General Financial / Business Plan focusing on the requirements and potential source (s) of funding for annual passenger rail operations for the long-term future for the 275 mile-long corridor. A companion document will be an *Economic Impact Analysis*. Both the business plan and the economic impact analysis will incorporate and build on similar efforts from the 2009 Baton Rouge – New Orleans project for consistency and efficiency. \$215,000

Sub-Total Planning Cost and Request for Funding

Based on the foregoing descriptions, the SHSRC will be requesting \$2,103,000 for the Planning Project via the Federal Highway *Surface Priorities Program*.

LIST OF NEEDS BY STATE

ALABAMA

Grade Crossing Hazard Elimination Program(1103(f) Funds) - FY 2011
Total Request: \$1,000,000

Amount Requested for all segments of the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor within the State of Alabama to be earmarked to the State of Alabama administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation.

Capital Development Project—FY 2011

**Grade Separation of CSX/
US 90 at Hamilton Blvd. \$4,000,000**

This project is located at the intersection of Hamilton Boulevard in Mobile, Alabama and the CSX railroad at Highway 90 in Mobile, Alabama. This segment is also on the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor. This intersection contains a grade crossing located on the CSX (former Amtrak Sunset Limited Service) line with an average daily traffic count of 8,361 vehicles per day (March 2007 SRRTC Briefing Book). A high volume of school buses and trucks travel across this location daily. The flow of traffic is adversely affected when a train uses the crossing during morning/evening rush hours.

LOUISIANA

Grade Crossing Hazard Elimination Program(1103(f) Funds) - FY 2011
Total Request: \$1,000,000

Amount Requested for all segments of the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor within Louisiana to be earmarked to the State of Louisiana administered by the Louisiana Department of Transportation.

Capital Development Project—FY 2011

New Orleans Corridor Capital Improvement
Total Request: \$447,800,000

Background

The Baton Rouge – New Orleans passenger rail project is an 80 mile long segment that is part of the larger federally designated Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor. That “Y” shaped corridor connects Houston with Atlanta and New Orleans with Mobile. While it is part of a larger corridor, the Baton Rouge – New Orleans project has independent utility as a stand-alone intercity passenger rail corridor as the two route end-points and the intervening stations have long-established business, recreational, cultural and other ties.

The Southern High-Speed Rail Commission (SHSRC) has recently completed the draft documents evaluating the feasibility of the Baton Rouge – New Orleans Intercity Passenger Rail project. The set consists of a summary report, ridership forecast, business plan, economic impact analysis and service level/programmatic environmental assessment. This information is being forwarded to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and SHSRC staff for review and comment.

Intention and Conditions

Based on the work now completed in draft format, the SHSRC, with the participation of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, will apply for federal funding of capital improvements in the KCS, CN and UPT corridor between Baton Rouge and New Orleans in the next round of ARRA, TIGER and/or PRIIA if the following two conditions are met:

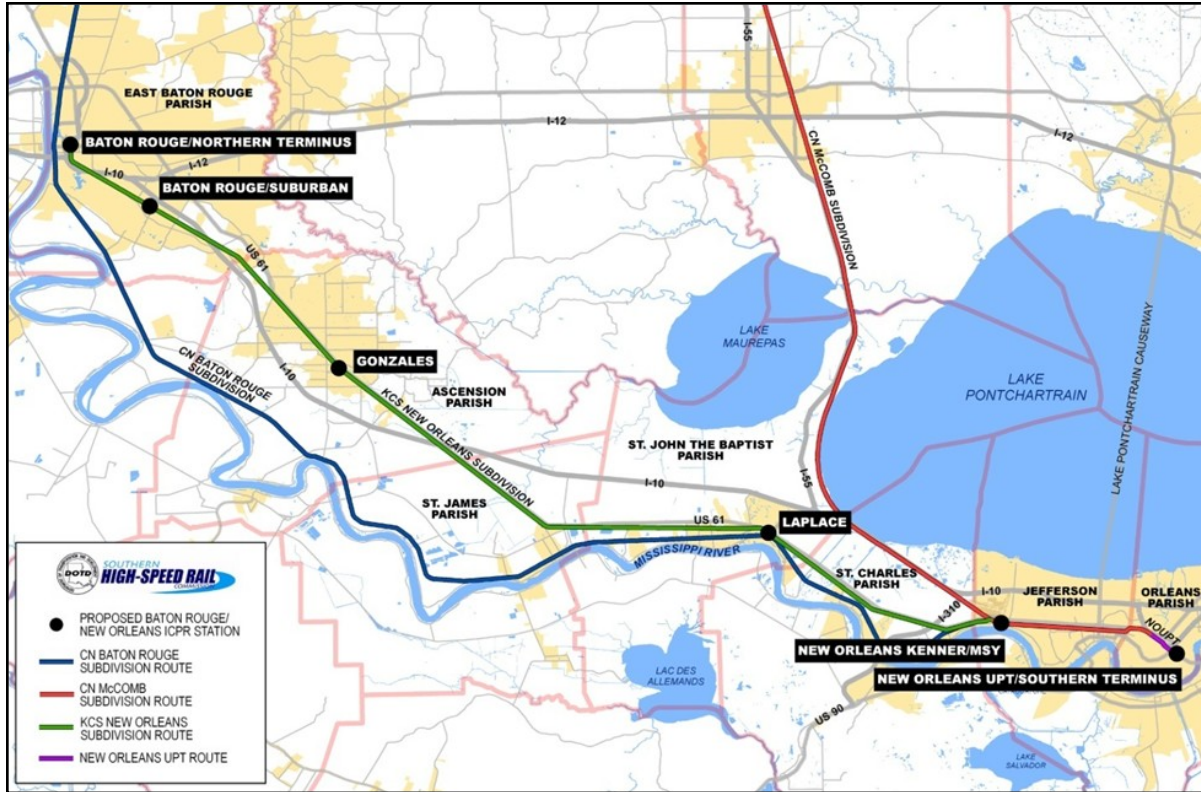
- Local entities – parishes, municipalities, businesses and other non-state entities – will guarantee to provide the annual operating deficit (total annual operating cost – annual fare box revenue = annual operating deficit).
- The FRA will accept the local entities’ funding guarantee.

Summary of Baton Rouge – New Orleans Corridor Capital Improvements

The “improvements” to the corridor include adding capacity (i.e., new track) to the line to support both freight and passenger services, raising the track to provide more sub-base and ballast, replacing cross-ties, straightening curves, rebuilding bridges, upgrading the ABS signal system to Centralized Train Control (CTC) - and, ultimately, Positive Train Control (PTC) - and upgrading highway/rail at-grade crossings. The project has three signature features:

- Construction of a new 2-mile long bridge across the Bonnet Carré Spillway,
- Realignment of track and installation of new switches and signal systems at East Bridge Junction, and
- Addition of a second track into New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal (NOUPT) and other track improvements.

Baton Rouge—New Orleans Corridor



The initial service envisions six platform stops, new ones in downtown Baton Rouge, suburban Baton Rouge, Gonzales, Laplace and Kenner/LANOIA, and the existing NOUPT in downtown New Orleans. For planning purposes we have identified potential stop locations in this report, but the actual sites will have to be planned in conjunction with local governments.

Service Summary

The vision is to commence the 79 mph service with four round trips per day, two in the morning peak hours and two in the afternoon peak hours. The service will be expanded as warranted to six round trips, then eight, with commensurate increases in train speed to 90 and 110 mph respectively.

Working with local transit agencies, it is believed that a total travel time of around an hour and a half can compete with the automobile when the transit authorities along the corridor provide feeder routes coordinated with the train schedules to provide seamless connectivity between the origin and destination. The intention is to provide state-of-the-art styling and comfort, with wireless internet and TV. Food and beverage service is also an option.

Preliminary Order-of-Magnitude Cost Estimate

Work Item	KCS	CN	CN-EBJ	NOUPT	Corridor	Total
Site & Track Work	\$107,233,905	\$34,871,980	\$3,958,988	\$6,000,000	0	\$152,064,874
Structural Work	\$129,719,162	0	0	0	0	\$129,179,162
Signal Work	\$45,825,000	\$25,696,000	\$2,860,000	0	0	\$74,381,000
Engineering and Mgmt	\$19,878,933	\$5,506,180	\$839,260	0	0	\$26,224,373
Rolling Stock	0	0	0	0	\$57,900,000	\$57,900,000
Stations	0	0	0	0	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000
Total	\$302,657,001	\$66,074,160	\$7,658,248	\$6,000,000	\$65,400,000	\$447,789,409

Sources: HDR Engineering, Burk – Kleinpeter, Inc., Railroad Professionals, Inc., Design Nine, Inc.

MISSISSIPPI

Grade Crossing Hazard Elimination Program(1103(f) Funds) - FY 2011

Total Request: \$1,000,000

Amount Requested for all segments of the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor within Mississippi to be earmarked to the State of Mississippi administered by the Mississippi Department of Transportation.

Capital Development Projects—FY 2011

Total Request: \$15,700,000

Lengthen the gates on 39 crossing Each location presumes two complete new flasher and gate assemblies to be installed requiring re-cabling to accommodate for the new gate mechanisms.	\$3,600,000
Upgrade 11 locations from flashers only to flashers and gates with Constant Warning Time, and 8 new Crossing Warning Systems installations (complete) with Constant Warning Time. Each location is presumed to be a complete new installation with consideration for one remote DAX house.	\$5,500,000
Upgrade of 14 locations to 4 quadrant gate systems, and 1 location to a 3 gate system equipped Constant Warning Time. Each location will presume a complete new warning system with 8’x8’ house with CWT and one remote DAX house.	\$5,700,000
Upgrade 6 locations from Phase Motion Detection to Constant Warning Time. Each location presumes a new control house with upgraded detection system and one remote DAX house with no improvements to field equipment, flasher, gates or cantilevers.	\$900,000
Total	\$15,700,000

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Phone: 251-433-6541
Fax: 251-433-6009
Cell: 251-472-7535
E-mail: cmiller@sarpc.org

c/o SARPC
110 Beauregard St., Ste 207
P.O. Box 1665
Mobile, AL 36633

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