

## SHSRC Vision

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, promoting economic development along rail corridors, improving air quality, providing transportation choice, and facilitating alternative emergency evacuation routes.

## What is the Difference Between Corridor Service and Long-Distance Service?

Long-distance trains typically do not perform as well because they serve much longer, multi-state routes connecting numerous markets both small and large.

Corridor trains have smaller service areas and typically connect major city pairs. The way of the future is to enhance some of the long-distance route segments with a series of corridor trains to provide improved service at peak travel times with a higher frequency of trains. States will be required to subsidize new corridor operating costs not covered by fare box revenues and contribute capital match for upgrades needed to support more frequent and/or higher speed passenger trains.

The Southern High-Speed Rail Commission (SHSRC) serves the states of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi in promotion of passenger rail transportation, regionally and nationally.

The membership consists of the Governor of each member state, a representative from each state's Department of Transportation and five citizen members appointed by the Governor of each state.

### MEMBERSHIP

#### OFFICERS:

Richard Finley  
*Chairman*

#### Alabama

Gov. Robert Riley  
Richard Finley  
Noah Flanagan  
Hoyt Howell  
Robert Lake  
Joseph McInnes  
Elizabeth Sanders

Dewitt Jerome Wall, III  
*Vice-Chairman*

#### Louisiana

Gov. Bobby Jindal  
Col. Thomas Atkinson  
Martin Bruno  
Gary Devall  
Rep. Wayne Waddell  
Dewitt Jerome Wall, III  
Roy Woodruff

Mayor John Robert Smith  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

#### Mississippi

Gov. Haley Barbour  
Larry Brown, Sr.  
Gil Carmichael  
Mayor Johnny Dupree  
Kay Kell  
Charles Ozier  
Mayor John Robert Smith

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*There's something about the sound of a train that's very romantic and nostalgic and hopeful.*

*[Paul Simon](#)*

## Southern High-Speed Rail Commission Goals

**Service** – Lead the effort to establish intercity passenger rail service between key destination cities and towns

**Planning** - Provide for intercity passenger rail transportation as an integral part of statewide intermodal transportation planning

**Financing** - Create opportunities for innovative financing for rail and secure state portion of funds for federal matching programs

**Infrastructure** - Facilitate infrastructure improvements resulting in faster commute times, improved reliability, and increased safety for passenger rail services

# CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

## SPRING 2009

## A BIG THANK YOU

The Southern High-Speed Rail Commission would like to thank the members of Congress who demonstrated their vision and high expectations for passenger rail through support of HR 2095, the Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act. This new federal policy and funding source brings passenger rail light years forward, answering many of our policy requests presented to you over many past visits. Through HR 2095 a dedicated and substantial multi-year 80/20 funding source exists for the first time for intercity and high-speed passenger rail planning and construction. The structure creates a stable federal/state partnership that follows planning guidance employed currently under Title 23, an important step in instituting passenger rail projects in State Rail Plans and guaranteeing public outreach.

In addition, we are appreciative of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which included an extensive package for passenger rail at \$8 billion dollars. A fund of this size will jumpstart nationwide progress and allow many regions to realize passenger rail transportation as a strong and stable service from the first train, providing the frequency and reliability required to strengthen the nation's national passenger rail system and infuse local economies.

## GETTING TO WORK

The Southern High-Speed Rail Commission got down to work last year. In the fall we underwent a facelift to modernize our name (formerly the Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission), our logo (to reflect our true planning purpose) and we updated our Strategic Plan. In October 2008 the newly named Southern High-Speed Rail Commission organized

a one-day Rail Summit in Meridian, Mississippi to educate and galvanize elected officials and business leadership of the states of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The success of the Rail Summit was reflected in the notable speakers including Alex Kummant (then President and CEO of Amtrak), Mark Yachmetz (FRA Deputy Administrator), Warren Erdman, (Kansas City Southern Railway), Frank Busalacchi (Wisconsin Secretary of Transportation) and Shelly Poticha (Executive Director, Reconnecting America) among other prominent figures of U.S. rail. The timing was outstanding as only days prior to our Rail Summit Congress passed HR 2095, ushering in the first federal/state program for passenger rail construction projects. The excitement was palpable as local and state officials realized what the bill could mean for their jurisdictions to broaden and improve transportation choice.

As a result of the success of the Rail Summit and driven by the Strategic Plan, the SHSRC embarked upon presentations to the Mississippi and Louisiana Joint Transportation Committees. In Mississippi, HR 1713 is underway to fund up to \$3.5 million for passenger rail projects and to strengthen passenger rail planning in the State Rail Plan. The SHSRC and the Louisiana DOTD are working together to evaluate ridership, equipment, and capital needs for the Baton Rouge to New Orleans Rail Corridor, 80 miles in length. The SHSRC will hold a smaller Summit in Birmingham in April 24, 2009 for officials and business leadership in preparation for the Alabama legislative session. Finally, the Texas State legislature is considering a bill that would enable Texas to join the Southern High-Speed Rail Commission as well!



LEGEND	SUNSET LIMITED SERVICE	CRESCENT SERVICE
Not on High Speed Rail Corridor	1. Atmore, AL	1. New Orleans, LA
Existing Service Extensions	2. Mobile, AL	2. Slidell, LA
Train Station	3. Pascagoula, MS	3. Picayune, MS
	4. Biloxi, MS	4. Hattiesburg, MS
	5. Gulfport, MS	5. Laurel, MS
	6. Bay St. Louis, MS	6. Meridian, MS
	7. New Orleans, LA	7. Tuscaloosa, AL
	8. Schriever, LA	8. Birmingham, AL
	9. New Iberia, LA	9. Anniston, AL
	10. Lafayette, LA	10. Atlanta, GA
	11. Lake Charles, LA	
	12. Beaumont, TX	
	13. Houston, TX	

**Southern High-Speed Rail Commission**



**POLICIES**

**CLEAN-TEA/ Clean, Low-Emission, Affordable, New Transportation Efficiency Act**

The Clean, Low-Emission, Affordable, New Transportation Efficiency Act (CLEAN-TEA) would lower emissions from the transportation sector by setting aside 10% of funds generated from the auction of carbon emissions allowances from a future cap and trade climate bill to fund a Low Greenhouse Gas Transportation Fund. The bill would require States and regional and local governments with a population over 200,000 to establish a goal of reducing emissions from the transportation sector and develop a transportation greenhouse gas reduction plan, with a prioritized list of projects within that plan, to meet the emissions goal. The plan would be integrated into existing state and regional transportation plans and approved by the USDOT and EPA. This bill substantiates the value of passenger rail and helps give it a higher priority within the existing transportation planning process. It creates a new source of funding for passenger rail (Low Greenhouse Gas Transportation fund).

**Sunset Limited Train-Restoration of Service Encourage new or renewed service**

The Sunset Limited Train serving communities east of New Orleans to Sanford, Florida was halted by Hurricane Katrina. The tracks were quickly repaired but the service has never been reinstated by Amtrak. Residents along the coast are anxious and angry that they have been left out. Encourage Amtrak to include funds for new service between New Orleans and Sanford, Florida in their annual budget.

**FEDERAL SUPPORT REQUESTED**

**Grade Crossing Hazard Elimination Program / Section 1103 (f) \$4.5M (\$1.5 per state)**

These funds will be utilized to address critical highway-rail crossing safety problems that affect the safety and operation of passenger rail service on the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor. The State Departments of Transportation work with the host railroad to implement needed upgrades at these intersections such as installing cross bucks and improving wiring or signals. This funding source is especially important to the commission because no state match is required. Funds are generally shared equally among the three states (Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama).

**FY 2010 Appropriations /Priority State Projects**

**MISSISSIPPI:**

▶ **Hattiesburg Highway/Rail Grade Separations \$2.5M**

Funding for design and engineering at five Hattiesburg grade crossings. These crossing cause both rail and highway congestion and pose a public safety threat.

▶ **Construction of the Carriere Siding \$3.0M**

A 2-mile siding is needed near Picayune, Mississippi to allow freight and passenger trains to meet and pass unhindered on the Crescent route. The SHSRC has found no barriers in the MS constitution to stop public investment on private right-of-way when there is a public benefit to MS residents.

**ALABAMA:**

▶ **Construction of a Grade Separation of CSX/US 90 at Hamilton Blvd. \$4.0M**

This project continues to be a high priority for the Mobile community due to its proximity to local school traffic. The Sunset Limited east of New Orleans is suspended, not noticed and freight trains continue to increase. Amtrak is in the middle of a study to evaluate costs associated with reinstatement of the service. Safety and reliability would be served.

**LOUISIANA:**

▶ **UPT Track Reconstruction \$2.5M**

The SHSRC and the Louisiana Department of Transportation are finalizing an evaluation of the Baton Rouge to New Orleans corridor for the potential start up of a new high speed intercity passenger rail service, likely submitted for Stimulus funding request. At the same time the New Orleans RPC is concluding an evaluation of the track capacity for needs at the New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal to accommodate future trains. The Amtrak commissary must be moved and rebuilt to allow for an expanded track at the UPT. If unfunded, the current location of the commissary may thwart track expansion and the new Baton Rouge to New Orleans service. Please support funding for track upgrades and for a new commissary at the UPT.