

November 18, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590
United States

Reference: **North Louisiana Passenger Rail Plan**– An application by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development for funding under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments (NLCOG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Shreveport-Bossier Urban Area is in total support of the application for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program funding submitted by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) for implementation of the **North Louisiana Passenger Rail Plan**.

Rail service is essential to Louisiana’s economy, and Louisiana’s rail system plays an essential role in linking Louisiana freight shippers and passenger train travelers to markets throughout North America. The availability of rail transport not only provides cost and logistical advantages to Louisiana companies that enable the state to compete effectively in the global marketplace, but it also offers expanded access and increased economic development and benefits for both urban and rural areas that are presently underserved due to limited available transportation options. The proposed study will detail project plans to establish intercity passenger rail service on the Interstate 20 (I-20) Corridor between Shreveport, Louisiana, and Vicksburg, Mississippi as part of the Dallas, Texas to Meridian, Mississippi passenger rail corridor.

Consistent with the LADOTD vision statement included in the 2020 Louisiana Rail Plan, LADOTD seeks funding to prepare a study detailing passenger rail services development plans and corresponding environment analyses. The study will provide updated demographics and traffic data and identify critical infrastructure needs associated with the proposed Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor, while also addressing barriers such as capacity constraints, competition from auto, truck, and air, and lack of engagement between passenger rail carriers and freight railroads. Planned outcomes include the development of operational scenarios, predicted ridership and farebox revenues, estimated capital and operating costs, and an evaluation of funding sources and financing options.

Rail improvements, both freight and passenger, can significantly improve economic development and provide quantifiable positive environmental impacts. Railroads can use fuel up to four times more

efficiently than trucks and using rail to move freight rather than trucks can lower greenhouse gas emissions by 75%. Amtrak, the nation's preeminent passenger rail carrier, is on average 36% more energy efficient per passenger-mile than automobiles, 46% more efficient than personal trucks, and 11% more efficient than commercial aviation. Rail is also one of the safest transportation modes and is a proven remedy for highway congestion and, by extension, highway safety. Through inter-modal connections, the proposed passenger rail service will provide future transportation and economic benefits for populations, including disadvantaged persons, throughout north Louisiana.

NLCOG respectfully supports granting funding from the CRISI program for implementation of this important project.

Sincerely,

Bruce Blanton
Board Chair

Carlotta Askew-Brown
MPO Chair

J. Kent Rogers
Executive Director