



SANTA ROSA COUNTY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

6051 Old Bagdad Highway, Suite 202 | Milton, Florida 32583

BECKIE CATO
Planning and Zoning Director
beckiec@santarosa.fl.gov

RHONDA C. ROYALS
Building Official
rhondar@santarosa.fl.gov

TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Shawn Ward, AICP, Long Range Planning Manager
THROUGH: Beckie Cato, AICP, Planning Director
SUBJECT: Amtrak Resolution of Support
DATE: November 7, 2016

DISCUSSION

Discussion of providing a resolution in support of restoring passenger rail service between New Orleans, LA and Orlando, FL with designated stops in Pensacola and Crestview, Florida.

BACKGROUND

At the Regional TPO meeting on October 19, 2016, West Florida Regional Planning Council Staff gave a presentation regarding the restoration of passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast. It was mentioned that Santa Rosa County had not adopted a resolution of support. Below is a summary of the presentation:

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (or "FAST Act") includes authorization for passenger rail for the first time. In the FAST Act, a mandate appears in Section 11304 for the Federal Railroad Administration to convene a working group to evaluate the restoration of intercity rail passenger services in the Gulf Coast region between New Orleans, Louisiana and Orlando, Florida. West Florida Regional Planning Council staff member, Vikki Garrett, was recommended by Knox Ross (Pelahatchie, Mississippi Mayor and Southern Rail Commission Secretary-Treasurer) and approved by the FRA to serve on the Gulf Coast Rail Service Working Group, often times referred to as the Gulf Coast Working Group (GCWG).

An inaugural meeting of the GCWG was held on February 16, 2016. The GCWG has been meeting via monthly conference calls as well as monthly in-person meetings. The meetings have been hosted by various cities along the Gulf Coast (i.e., New Orleans, LA; Biloxi, MS; Atmore, AL; Pensacola, FL; Tallahassee, FL; Mobile, AL; and Jacksonville, FL).

On September 2, 2016, the GCWG provided a status update letter to Senator Wicker as well as to Chairman Bill Shuster and Ranking Member Peter DeFazio of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Chairman John Thune and Ranking Member Bill Nelson of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

The GCWG will be submitting a final report to the above mentioned congressional committees. The report is to include: (1) preferred option and reasons for selecting such option; (2) prioritized inventory of capital projects and other actions required to restore such service and cost estimate for such projects or actions; (3) identification of Federal and non-Federal funding sources required to restore such service, including options for entering into public-private partnerships to restore such service; (4) the costs and benefits of restoring intercity rail passenger transportation in the region; and (5) any other information the GCWG determines appropriate.

Next Steps

Upon approval by the board, the enclosed resolution will be forwarded to West Florida Regional Planning Council Staff and included in the final report to Congress.

RESOLUTION NO. 2016 - ____

A RESOLUTION BY SANTA ROSA COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO SUPPORT RESTORATION OF PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE BETWEEN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA AND ORLANDO, FLORIDA; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, before Hurricane Katrina, Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* passenger line served railroad travelers as the only transcontinental passenger rail service from Los Angeles passing through New Orleans and Mobile to Orlando; and

WHEREAS, Hurricane Katrina damaged a portion of the rail infrastructure along the Gulf Coast as well as caused the loss of other portions of the infrastructure, including the total loss of Mobile's passenger rail terminal facility; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak suspended all service on the eastern portion of the *Sunset Limited* line from New Orleans through Mobile, Pensacola, Crestview, Chipley, Tallahassee, and Jacksonville to Orlando; and

WHEREAS, CSX, and Norfolk Southern (the freight railroad companies that own the tracks on which passenger rail service on the Gulf Coast will operate) have both committed to cooperating with Amtrak in providing this vital service along the eastern Gulf Coast and to do so in a more efficient manner than prior to Hurricane Katrina; and

WHEREAS, restoration of passenger rail service to the eastern Gulf Coast will facilitate job creation through development opportunities, enhance tourism, and reduce environmental and roadway impacts due to personal automobile use, thereby having a positive economic and environmental impact to the coastal states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida; and

WHEREAS, such resumption of passenger rail service will also benefit the entire nation by providing a link to the Gulf Coast from the Midwest and West Coast; and

WHEREAS, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 called for Amtrak to study the potential return of passenger rail service from New Orleans to Orlando;

WHEREAS, Section 11304 of Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (or "FAST Act") of 2015 mandates the Federal Railroad Administration to convene a working group to evaluate the restoration of intercity rail passenger services in the Gulf Coast region between New Orleans, Louisiana and Orlando, Florida; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY SANTA ROSA COUNTY THAT: we recommend and support the restoration of dependable, reliable passenger rail service along the suspended route between New Orleans, Louisiana and Orlando, Florida with designated stops in Pensacola and Crestview, Florida.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by Santa Rosa County on this 10th Day of November, 2016.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SANTA ROSA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Attest:

BY: _____
Lane Lynchard, Chairman

Donald C. Spencer
Clerk of Court