

Transportation
for America

Washington Legislature's Rail Caucus

March 26, 2021

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Covid Relief)

- The House passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, a budget reconciliation bill, was passed and signed by the President last week.
- The law provides \$1.9 trillion aimed at responding to the pandemic
 - \$30 billion for transit
 - \$1.7 billion for Amtrak
 - This funding required Amtrak to restore daily long-distance service within 90 days of the bill becoming law and recall all furloughed employees by October 1
 - Amtrak announced they will restore long-distance service starting in May
 - This will restore daily service to the *Empire Builder* route that connects Wisconsin to Chicago and the Pacific Northwest will start on May 24

Surface Transportation Reauthorization

- **House:** the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will reintroduce a similar version of the INVEST Act that was passed in the House last Congress.
 - Transportation for America has shared legislative language to incentive the creation of ten passenger rail commissions with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and are working with committee staff to include this language in the next reauthorizations The language was also shared with:
 - Rep. Donald Payne (NJ, Chairman of the Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials), Rep. Price (NC, Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development), Rep. Moulton (MA), Rep. Blumenauer (OR), and Rep. Cohen (TN)

Surface Transportation Reauthorization

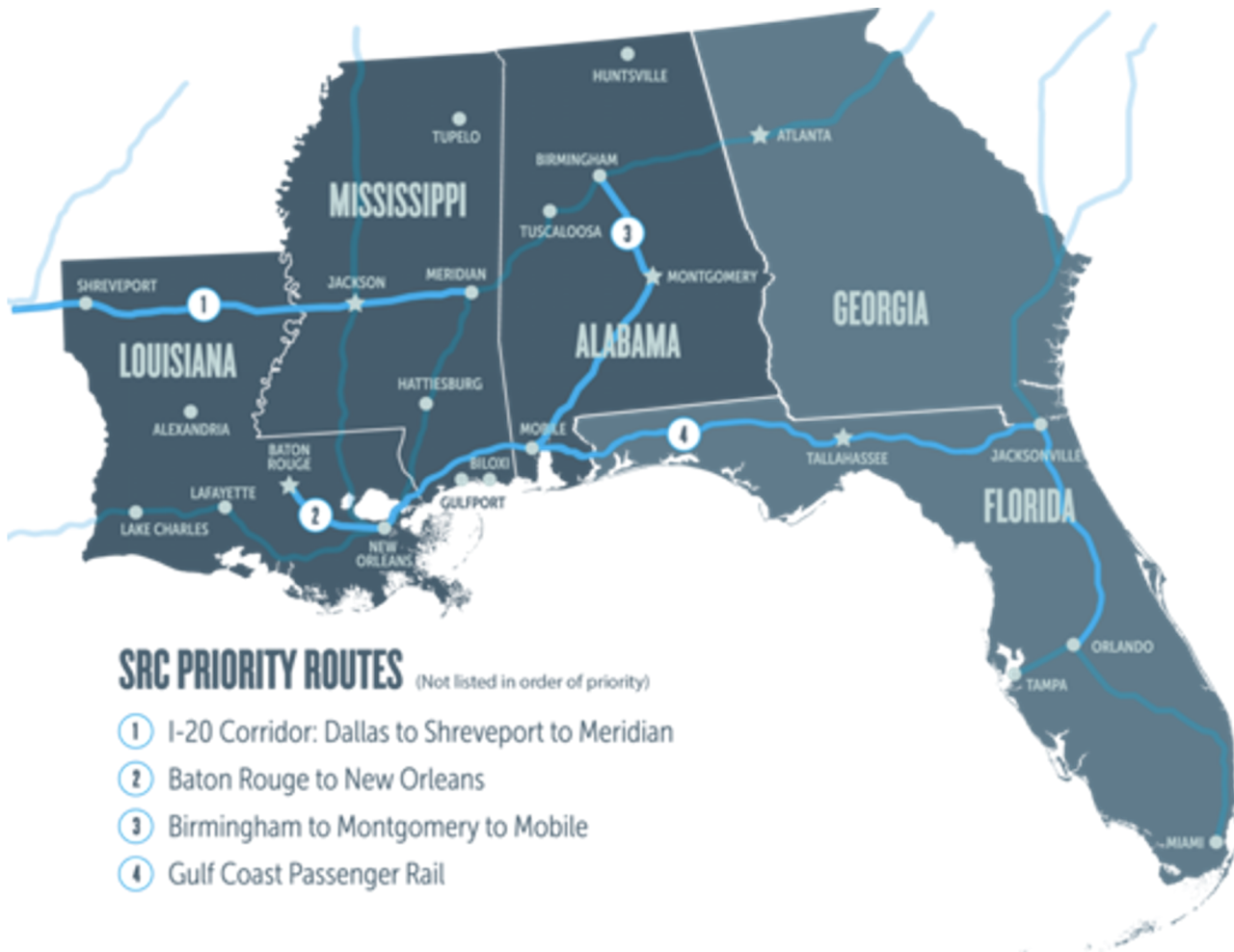
- **Senate:** Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) will allow committees of jurisdiction to introduce their respective reauthorization titles
 - The committees and their jurisdictions are:
 - Commerce Committee: Rail
 - Banking and Finance Committee: Transit
 - Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW): Roads and Highways
 - Transportation for America have been working closely with the Commerce Committee over the last 2 years with reauthorization ideas and expect language to establish 10 passenger rail commission to be included in reauthorization

Second Budget Reconciliation

- If a Surface Transportation Reauthorization cannot receive bipartisan support, they will move to a second budget reconciliation that will focus on infrastructure with a focus on passenger rail
- Rep. John Yarmuth (KY), House Budget Chairman, announced this process will likely begin in July in the House
- Earlier this week, it was reported the Biden administration has completed drafting their request for a second budget reconciliation with a total of \$3 trillion. This will likely be released in the next few weeks

Southern Rail Commission (SRC)

- The Southern Rail Commission is a multi-state rail commission that includes Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama
 - The commission was established in 1982 by an act of Congress (Public law 97-213) and approved by each respective state's legislatures
 - There are 15 commissioners and are appointed by the Governor of each respective state, with three Executive Committee members - one from each state
 - Executive Committee Members:
 - Knox Ross, Mississippi
 - John Spain, Louisiana
 - Wiley Blankenship, Alabama
 - SRC has successfully advocated for the restoration of Gulf Coast service. Amtrak announced service will begin early 2022



SRC PRIORITY ROUTES (Not listed in order of priority)

- ① I-20 Corridor: Dallas to Shreveport to Meridian
- ② Baton Rouge to New Orleans
- ③ Birmingham to Montgomery to Mobile
- ④ Gulf Coast Passenger Rail

Interstate Rail Commission Bill

- Advantages of Interstate Commissions:
 - Once appointed, commissioners act as an independent body which means
 - Commissions can apply directly for federal grants and loans without needing to be attached to an MPO, State DOT, etc.
 - Commissions can sustain a passenger rail vision amidst changes of Governors, State DOT Leadership, State Legislatures and Local Government leaders
 - The United States Department of Transportation, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Amtrak understand the commission structure and have demonstrated a desire to work with commissions

Interstate Rail Commission Bill

- In order to expand and improve intercity passenger rail, Transportation for America has drafted legislation in partnership with the Senate Commerce Committee and Members of Congress on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to incentivize the creation of **ten** multi-state passenger rail commissions. These commissions can improve regional collaboration to support passenger rail service and:
 - Receive up to \$500 thousand in federal operating matching funds to carry out their work
 - Receive preference when applying to federal grants
 - Negotiate with freight railroads, the federal government, and local stakeholders, and sustain a regional vision of passenger rail transportation
- The Southern Rail Commission is an existing commission that would be eligible under this program and can serve as a model for other commissions

Thank you

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