SLS 22RS-1325 **ORIGINAL** 

2022 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 467

BY SENATOR CARTER

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TRANSPORTATION/DEV DEPT. Requires DOTD to initiate the necessary engineering, financial, and other studies to begin passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. (8/1/22)

AN ACT

2	To enact R.S. 48:385, relative to passenger rail service connecting the parishes of East Baton
3	Rouge, St. John the Baptist, Ascension, Jefferson, and Orleans; to direct the
4	Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to initiate the necessary
5	engineering, financial and other studies to begin passenger rail service between
6	Baton Rouge and New Orleans; to pursue the federal funds provided for in the
7	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021; and to provide for related matters.
8	Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:
9	Section 1. R.S. 48:385 is hereby enacted to read as follows:
10	§385. Passenger rail service
11	A. The legislature finds and declares:
12	(1) Passenger rail service connecting Baton Rouge and New Orleans is
13	supported by current federal policy and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs
14	Act of 2021, which provides billions of dollars for passenger rail improvements
15	and service nationwide.
16	(2) Passenger rail service connecting Baton Rouge and New Orleans with
17	key stops in Jefferson Parish, LaPlace, and Gonzales is a key project in the

1	2021, More Trains. More Cities. Better Service: Amtrak's Vision for Improving
2	Transportation Across America.
3	(3) A recent survey which drew in over four thousand six hundred
4	completed responses, primarily from parishes which would be directly served
5	by the proposed rail service, found strong support region-wide for passenger
6	rail as well considerable interest in multimodal travel locally.
7	(4) The Department of Transportation and Development Rail Plan
8	provides that the department, based on input received from stakeholders and
9	the public during the preparation of the plan, shall work toward the following
10	initiatives:
11	(a) Work with neighboring states on rail initiatives which benefit the
12	region.
13	(b) Participate in the Southern Rail Commission on both passenger and
14	freight initiatives.
15	(c) Support the improvement of existing Amtrak services and Amtrak
16	stations.
17	(d) Support the development of new intercity rail initiatives that enhance
18	mobility options for Louisianians.
19	(5) Now is the ideal time to explore the opportunity to electrify passenger
20	rail, clarify who the owners and operators of the track and rail line will be, and
21	determine whether or not the track should be passenger only or shared with
22	freight, and what the safest, most efficient manner would be to best utilize the
23	railway.
24	B. The Department of Transportation and Development shall initiate a
25	project development program aimed at securing all necessary approvals and
26	permits to begin passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans,
27	and shall apply for grants and other funds typical for passenger rail, as
28	appropriate, and to facilitate development of the necessary platforms or stations
29	to support passenger service.

1 C. In implementing the provisions of Subsection B of this Section, the 2 department shall: 3 (1) Identify a team of internal staff, and professional consultants only as 4 necessary, to complete the preparations for service to commence. (2) Minimize the length of time required for the completion of the study 5 and the initiation of service. 6 7 (3) Seek approval for the lowest, most simplified class of action consistent 8 with the National Environmental Policy Act. 9 (4) Complete only those analysis, studies, and engineering required to 10 establish initial service. 11 (5) Initiate processes needed to obtain federal approvals for the more 12 long-term, and more costly improvements including rail upgrades, grade 13 crossing improvements, and replacement of the Bonnet Carre' spillway bridge. D. Compliance with Subsections B and C of this Section shall not be 14 construed to preclude the department from concurrently pursuing funding for 15 16 railway and station improvements identified in any other state or local railway 17 improvement plan. The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Archana Cadge.

SB 467 Original

DIGEST 2022 Regular Session

Carter

Proposed law provides a passenger rail service is a key project in 2021.

<u>Proposed law</u> further provides a passenger rail service is supported by current federal policy and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

<u>Proposed law</u> provides the department shall work toward working with neighboring states, participate in the Southern Rail Commission on both passenger and freight initiatives, support the improvement of existing Amtrak services and Amtrak stations and support the development of new intercity rail initiatives.

<u>Proposed law</u> further provides the department shall initiate a project development program aimed at securing all necessary approvals and permits to begin passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

<u>Proposed law</u> further provides the department shall apply for grants and other funds typical for passenger rail, as appropriate, and to facilitate development of the necessary platforms or stations to support passenger service.

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Coding: Words which are struck through are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

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Effective August 1, 2022.

(Adds R.S. 48:385)