

2022 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 467

BY SENATOR CARTER

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 and along the Interstate 20 corridor. (8/1/22)

1 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, Gonzales, and the Louis Armstrong New**

1 Orleans International Airport is a key project in the 2021, *More Trains. More*
2 *Cities. Better Service: Amtrak's Vision for Improving Transportation Across*
3 *America.*

4 (3) A recent survey which drew in over four thousand six hundred
5 completed responses, primarily from parishes which would be directly served
6 by the proposed rail service, found strong support region-wide for passenger
7 rail as well considerable interest in multimodal travel locally.

8 (4) Passenger rail service along the Interstate 20 corridor between
9 Marshall, Texas and Meridian, Mississippi through north Louisiana is
10 supported by current federal policy and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs
11 Act of 2021, which provides billions of dollars for passenger rail improvements
12 and service nationwide.

13 (5) Passenger rail services along the Interstate 20 corridor between
14 Marshall, Texas and Meridian, Mississippi through north Louisiana with key
15 stops in Monroe, Ruston, Delihi, and Shreveport-Bossier City.

16 (6) The Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments commissioned the
17 North Louisiana Passenger Rail Feasibility Study to assess the potential of
18 initiating a startup passenger rail service, primarily including the locations
19 directly served by the proposed rail service, found strong support from the
20 input of local, regional, and state stakeholders and the public to implement
21 passenger rail service.

22 (7) The Department of Transportation and Development Rail Plan
23 provides that the department, based on input received from stakeholders and
24 the public during the preparation of the plan, shall work toward the following
25 initiatives:

26 (a) Work with neighboring states on rail initiatives which benefit the
27 region.

28 (b) Participate in the Southern Rail Commission on both passenger and
29 freight initiatives.

1 (c) Support the improvement of existing Amtrak services and Amtrak
2 stations.

3 (d) Support the development of new intercity rail initiatives that enhance
4 mobility options for Louisianians.

5 (8) Now is the ideal time to explore the opportunity to electrify passenger
6 rail, clarify who the owners and operators of the track and rail line will be, and
7 determine whether or not the track should be passenger only or shared with
8 freight, and what the safest, most efficient manner would be to best utilize the
9 railway.

10 B. The Department of Transportation and Development shall initiate a
11 project development program aimed at securing all necessary approvals and
12 permits to begin passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans,
13 and shall apply for grants and other funds typical for passenger rail, as
14 appropriate, and to facilitate development of the necessary platforms or stations
15 to support passenger service.

16 C. In implementing the provisions of Subsection B of this Section, the
17 department shall:

18 (1) Identify a team of internal staff and professional consultants only as
19 necessary, to complete the preparations for service to commence.

20 (2) Minimize the length of time required for the completion of the study
21 and the initiation of service.

22 (3) Seek approval for the lowest, most simplified class of action consistent
23 with the National Environmental Policy Act.

24 (4) Complete only those analysis, studies, and engineering required to
25 establish initial service.

26 (5) Initiate processes needed to obtain federal approvals for the more
27 long-term, and more costly improvements including rail upgrades, grade
28 crossing improvements, and replacement of the Bonnet Carre' spillway bridge.

29 D. Compliance with Subsections B and C of this Section shall not be

1 **construed to preclude the department from concurrently pursuing funding for**
 2 **railway and station improvements identified in any other state or local railway**
 3 **improvement plan.**

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Archana Cadge.

DIGEST

SB 467 Engrossed

2022 Regular Session

Carter

Proposed law provides a passenger rail service is a key project in 2022.

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

Proposed law 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.

Proposed law 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.

Proposed law further provides for rail service along the Interstate 20 corridor between Marshall, Texas and Meridian, Mississippi.

Proposed law 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.

Effective August 1, 2022.

(Adds R.S. 48:385)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways, and Public Works to the original bill

1. Adds Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport as a key stop for rail service between New Orleans and Baton Rouge.
2. Adds additional route for rail service along the Interstate 20 corridor between Marshall, Texas and Meridian, Mississippi.