

SENATE BILL NO. 467

BY SENATOR CARTER AND REPRESENTATIVES ADAMS, BOYD, BRASS, CARRIER, ROBBY CARTER, WILFORD CARTER, CORMIER, DUBUISSON, DUPLESSIS, ECHOLS, FREIBERG, GADBERRY, GAINES, GLOVER, GREEN, HORTON, HUGHES, JEFFERSON, JENKINS, LAFLEUR, LARVADAIN, LYONS, MARCELLE, MARINO, MCKNIGHT, NEWELL, PIERRE, SELDERS, THOMPSON, VILLIO AND WILLARD

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18

AN ACT

To amend and reenact R.S. 48:1671(A) and the introductory paragraph of (C)(5) and (b) and to enact Chapter 34-A of Title 48 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 48:2165, relative to passenger rail service; to direct the Department of Transportation and Development to initiate the necessary engineering, financial and other studies to begin passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans; to pursue the federal funds provided for in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 48:1671(A) and the introductory paragraph of (C)(5) and (b) are hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

§1671. Southern Rapid Rail Transit Compact

A. The purpose of this compact is to study the feasibility of rapid transit service between the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama, **to take all steps that it may deem necessary and appropriate in order to establish and maintain such service,** and to establish a joint interstate commission to assist in this effort.

* * *

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

C.

* * *

(5) It shall be the duty of the commission to study the feasibility of providing interstate rapid rail transit service between the party states, **and to take all steps that it may deem necessary and appropriate in order to establish and maintain such service.** Toward this end, the commission shall have power:

* * *

(b) To conduct studies and surveys, **prepare grant applications related to the establishment or maintenance of passenger rail service, enter into operating and other contractual agreements with providers of passenger rail service, and enter into agreements with owners or operators of railway tracks in order to provide for upgrades necessary to establish or maintain passenger rail service** of all problems, benefits, and other matters associated with such service, and to make reports thereon.

* * *

Section 2. Chapter 34-A of Title 48 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, comprised of R.S. 48:2165, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

CHAPTER 34-A. PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

§2165. Passenger rail service

A. The legislature finds and declares:

(1) Passenger rail service connecting Baton Rouge and New Orleans is supported by current federal policy and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, which provides billions of dollars for passenger rail improvements and service nationwide.

(2) Passenger rail service connecting Baton Rouge and New Orleans with key stops in Jefferson Parish, LaPlace, Gonzales, and the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport is a key project in the 2021, *More Trains. More Cities. Better Service: Amtrak's Vision for Improving Transportation Across America.*

(3) A recent survey which drew in over four thousand six hundred

1 completed responses, primarily from parishes which would be directly served
2 by the proposed rail service, found strong support region-wide for passenger
3 rail as well as considerable interest in multimodal travel locally.

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

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

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

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

22 (a) Work with neighboring states on rail initiatives which benefit the
23 region.

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

26 (c) Support the improvement of existing Amtrak services and Amtrak
27 stations.

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

30 (8) Now is the ideal time to explore the opportunity to electrify passenger

1 rail, clarify who the owners and operators of the track and rail line will be, and
2 determine whether or not the track should be passenger-only or shared with
3 freight, and what the safest, most efficient manner would be to best utilize the
4 railway.

5 B.(1) The Department of Transportation and Development shall prepare
6 the scope, schedule, and budget to secure all necessary approvals and permits
7 to begin passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, and may
8 apply for grants and other funds typical for passenger rail, as appropriate, and
9 to facilitate development of the necessary platforms or stations to support
10 passenger service.

11 (2) Pursuant to this Subsection, the Department of Transportation and
12 Development shall provide the scope, schedule, and budget to the joint
13 committees on Transportation, Highways and Public Works before the start of
14 the 2023 Regular Session.

15 C. In implementing the provisions of Subsection B of this Section, the
16 department may:

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

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

21 (3) Seek approval with the National Environmental Policy Act.

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

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

27 D. Compliance with Subsections B and C of this Section shall not be
28 construed to preclude the department from concurrently pursuing funding for
29 railway and station improvements identified in any other state or local railway
30 improvement plan.

1 Section 3. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
2 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
3 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
4 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
5 effective on the day following such approval.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____