

Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: April 19, 2016

Date Submitted: April 5, 2016

To: Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Board

From: Robert M. Presnell, County Administrator

Subject: Consideration of adoption of Resolution 2016-008 to Support the Amtrak Sunset Limited

Statement of Issue:

This item is presented to the Board for Approval of Resolution 2016-008 to support the Amtrak Sunset Limited.

Background:

The Amtrak Sunset Limited currently runs from Los Angeles, CA to New Orleans, LA. Prior to 2005, the service ran all the way to Jacksonville and Orlando. The rail was damaged by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 and since then, there has been no passenger service east of New Orleans. The railway has since been repaired and efforts have been underway to restore service through Florida to Jacksonville. If the service were to resume, it would have stops in Pensacola, Crestview, Chipley, Tallahassee, Madison, Lake City and Jacksonville.

Amtrak has said that when commuter service returns to the Gulf Coast, the company will be able to provide much more efficient service that offered prior to 2005. The route will not originate in Los Angeles—delays that slowed service occurred mostly west of New Orleans. It is anticipated that trains on the New Orleans to Jacksonville run will move east and west from early afternoon through the night daily.

The restoration of commuter rail service will help facilitate economic growth, enhance tourism and reduce environmental and roadway impacts.

The resumption of the passenger service would be of benefit to our entire region.

Options:

1. Approve Resolution 2016-008 and authorize the Chairperson to sign.
2. Do not approve.

3. Board Direction.

County Administrator's Recommendation:

Option 1

Attachments:

Resolution 2016-008

RESOLUTION 2016-008

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING RESTORATION OF PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE BETWEEN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA AND ORLANDO, FLORIDA

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 to submit findings by September 2016; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners recommends and supports the restoration of dependable, daily passenger rail service along the suspended route between New Orleans, Louisiana and Orlando, Florida with a designated stop in Gadsden County, Florida.

Passed and duly adopted by the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners on the 19th day of April 2016.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____
Brenda A. Holt, Chairperson

Nicholas Thomas

