

Amtrak and freight railway company, Canadian Pacific, announce

CP's formalized agreement to support

expanded passenger rail routes in the Midwest and South

Amtrak and the freight railway company, Canadian Pacific (CP), announced this past week, on January 6, that the two transportation entities had reached an agreement formalizing Canadian Pacific's support of Amtrak's expansion of passenger rail service in the Midwest and the South.

In the announcement, Amtrak President Stephen J. Gardner said, "Given CP's consistent record as an Amtrak host, we support CP's proposal to expand its network. This is exactly what Congress and the Administration are seeking: Amtrak and the freight railroads working together to benefit freight customers, Amtrak passengers, our state/regional partners and the general public."

This announcement also conveyed that the agreement included Amtrak's support for the proposed combination of Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern (KCS) railways. Merger negotiations between KCS and CP began in March of 2021.

The announcement by Amtrak and CP was very welcomed news to passenger rail advocacy organizations throughout the nation, including the I-20 Corridor Council.

The I-20 Corridor Council is a non-profit grassroots advocacy organization and multi-state coalition, comprised of mayors, judges, elected officials, as well as business, economic development, tourism, and education leaders, and other stakeholders along the I-20 Corridor in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The Corridor Council has been working consistently for more than 15 years to establish the East-West long-distance passenger rail connection between Dallas/Fort Worth and Atlanta, Georgia. This route would also connect to the East Coast and New York City.

The announcement also stated: "Subject to CP's application for control of KCS being approved by the STB (Surface Transportation Board), the agreement also includes CP's commitment to support Amtrak efforts to work with the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) and others for the first service in more than 50 years on two U.S. routes."

The two passenger rail routes referenced above in the announcement, which would involve track owned by CP in the South, are (1) Amtrak service between New Orleans and Baton Rouge and (2) to study the potential for Amtrak service between Meridian, Miss., and Dallas, which is the proposed I-20 Corridor passenger rail route.

Former Texas State Senator and former Harrison County Judge Richard Anderson is the chairman of the I-20 Corridor Council and shared the following comments:

"The I-20 Corridor Council and all who have been working with great devotion to re-establish this important East-West passenger rail connection across the southeastern region of our nation are very pleased and grateful for the positive steps that Amtrak and Canadian Pacific have announced. We look forward to continued progress as we continue to work together toward making the I-20 Corridor long distance passenger rail connection a reality for the benefit of Texas, our Southern region, and nation."

In addition to thanking Amtrak, CP, and the members of the multi-state I-20 Corridor coalition, Anderson also thanked fellow passenger rail advocacy organizations, as well as governmental and quasi-governmental entities, who also support the proposed I-20 Corridor rail route.

These entities in support of the I-20 Corridor route include the Southern Rail Commission (SRC), Texas Eagle Marketing and Performance Organization (TEMPO), North Central Texas Council of Governments, East Texas Council of Governments, North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NET RMA), Coordinating & Development Corporation, Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments, North Delta Regional Planning & Development District, Rail Passengers Association, Texas Rail Advocates, and others.

Judge Anderson also shared his deep appreciation for his former Texas Senate colleague, Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, who, since 1993, has represented the 30th Congressional District of Texas, which includes southern Dallas. She also serves as a senior member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Judge Anderson stated: "Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson has provided outstanding leadership in transportation throughout her impressive career in Congress and in public service. We appreciate her leadership and strong support and assistance in working with us to establish the I-20 Corridor passenger rail route."

Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson added: "I am pleased that Canadian Pacific Railway has announced that they are receptive to supporting Amtrak's expansion of passenger rail service in the Midwest and the South. Along with the I-20 Corridor Council and the North Central Texas Council of Governments, I will continue to work steadfastly to bring to fruition an Amtrak passenger rail line that, once complete, will provide rail service from Dallas to Atlanta."

Additional information

Judge Anderson also stated that, with the passage of the \$1.2 trillion bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which was signed into law by President Biden on November 15 of last year, the I-20 Corridor rail project could provide an excellent return on investment. That's because it would require a comparatively small fraction of a percent of what will be needed for this project from the \$16 billion which the IIJA has designated for long-distance passenger rail.

The proposed I-20 Corridor passenger rail connection between Dallas/Fort Worth and Atlanta would travel through Mineola, Longview and Marshall in East Texas. It would also provide service through northern Louisiana which currently has no Amtrak service.

Knox Ross, chairman of the Southern Rail Commission, which advocates on rail issues for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, stated: "We appreciate the work Amtrak is doing to unite more of the south with passenger trains, from Mobile to New Orleans to Baton Rouge and now opening the door in this agreement to directly connect Mississippi and Louisiana with Texas on the I-20 Corridor."

Judge Anderson shared that both a feasibility and capacity study of the I-20 Corridor route had already been previously completed by Amtrak, TXDOT, and others, using the \$738,000 in grant funding that the Corridor Council obtained with the assistance of former U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison.

The studies determined that the I-20 Corridor route would be economically viable on existing track without an annual subsidy, plus capacity, such as additional sidings, could be increased for a relatively low cost. Also, this new passenger rail service should not adversely affect freight traffic.

Anderson concluded: "As Amtrak, CP, and all entities continue to work together, the time is now to make this important passenger rail connection a reality for the economic and transportation benefit of the urban and rural communities along the I-20 Corridor route, for our Southern region, and for our nation."

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