

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. (gov sig)

1 AN ACT

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

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. R.S. 48:1671 is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

11 §1671. Southern Rapid Rail Transit Compact

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

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(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:

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(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.

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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.***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29           (d) Support the development of new intercity rail initiatives that enhance

1 mobility options for Louisianians.

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

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

13 C. In implementing the provisions of Subsection B of this Section, the  
14 department may:

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 Section 3. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not

1 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
 2 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
 3 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
 4 effective on the day following such approval.

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The original instrument was prepared by Archana Cadge. The following digest, which does not constitute a part of the legislative instrument, was prepared by Cheryl Serrett.

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DIGEST

SB 467 Reengrossed                      2022 Regular Session                      Carter

Proposed law provides for the following legislative findings and declarations:

- (1) That passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is supported by current federal policy and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.
- (2) That passenger rail connecting Baton Rouge and New Orleans is a key project for 2021.
- (3) That there is strong support for region-wide passenger rail.
- (4) That passenger rail along the Interstate 20 corridor between Marshall, Texas and Meridian, Mississippi is supported by current federal policy and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.
- (5) That the Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments found strong support for the passenger rail service along the Interstate 20 corridor.
- (6) That the department of transportation will work 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.
- (7) That now is the ideal time to explore the opportunity to electrify passenger rail.

Proposed law further provides the department shall prepare the scope schedule and budget to secure all necessary approvals and permits to begin passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

Proposed law provides the department may 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 upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 48:1671, adds R.S. 48:2165)

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.

Senate Floor Amendments to engrossed bill

1. Amends purpose of Southern Rapid Rail Transit Compact.
2. Clarifies the actions of the department.
3. Changes effective date.
4. Makes technical changes.