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From: Michelli Martin

Mayor Friday Ellis and Senator Bill Cassidy Welcome Southern Rail Commission to City of Monroe to Discuss Passenger Rail

(Monroe, LA) On Thursday, Mayor Friday Ellis and U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy welcomed leaders and stakeholders from Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama as they convened to discuss funding opportunities to bring the I-20 Corridor Passenger Rail Service from conversation to implementation.

This is part of an ongoing effort to connect the economies and residents of the previously listed states with passenger rail service. The proposed service spans from the mega-region of Dallas-Fort Worth to Atlanta through connections with Amtrak's Texas Eagle, City of New Orleans, and Crescent trains with news stations proposed in Monroe, Shreveport/Bossier, Ruston, and Vicksburg.

The Southern Rail Commission and the Transportation for America hosted the meeting. Participants included the Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific Railway, Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith and Roger Wicker, and Dr. Shawn Wilson, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. Thursday's meeting included project updates, passenger rail funding opportunities, and coordination on next steps.

Leaders and stakeholders from Monroe, Shreveport, Ruston, and Vicksburg offered presentations on why passenger rail is so important to the I-20 Corridor, with Mayor Ellis representing the City of Monroe.

"It was an honor to host leaders and stakeholders from across state lines to discuss a project that is vital in driving future economic opportunities for northeast Louisiana. The City of Monroe is eager to take advantage of this opportunity to bring new visitors to our city to showcase the incredible things we have underway in Monroe," said Mayor Ellis.

Senator Cassidy helped lead the convening and noted the powerful collaboration of federal, state, and local leaders and stakeholders who gathered at the event to support the passenger rail effort.

"This is about how we can build economic development for Louisiana, Mississippi, and east Texas in a way that makes life better for those who live there," Senator Cassidy said. "One of

the ways we move forward is through better transportation and infrastructure. To succeed, we have to have vision, strategy, and cooperation. This conference gives us the strategy and cooperation to do that. Now, we just have to execute.”

Amit Bose, Administrator for the Federal Railroad Administration, says this is an “incredibly exciting time for passenger rail service... the I-20 Corridor has tremendous potential and the FRA is eager to continue working with state and local leaders in planning and pursuing funding for passenger rail service.”

In 2021, Canadian Pacific Railway proposed a merger with Kansas City Southern freight railroad, and once approved, is committed to partnering with Amtrak who would operate passenger rail service on the tracks along the I-20 Corridor.

For more information on the Southern Rail Commission, visit www.southernrailcommision.org

Best,

Michelli Martin

Media Relations Director
michelli.martin@ci.monroe.la.us
318-372-7640