



VIA E- FILING

Ms. Cynthia T. Brown,
Chief, Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

May 31, 2018

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 36025: Texas Central Railroad and Infrastructure, Inc., & Texas Central Railroad, LLC – Authority to Construct and Operate – Petition For Exemption From 49 U.S.C. S 10901 And Subtitle IV – Passenger Rail Line Between Dallas, TX And Houston, TX

Dear Ms. Brown:

The Rail Passengers Association/NARP appreciates the opportunity to share the support of our tens of thousands of members nationwide for the Texas Central project and for TCRI's petition to re-open its exemption petition.

RPA believes the Texas Central initiative is an important demonstration of the role private capital can and must play in building our nation's new transportation economy, and is thus an important private project of national significance.

The Texas Central project would be exciting and worthy of support even if all it did was to introduce a new high-speed rail option between the two largest metropolitan regions in Texas. But with the completion of a recent through-ticketing agreement with Amtrak, the TCR project goes well beyond creating an important new Texas service. It significantly and positively affects the entire U.S. interstate rail network by linking Houston and Dallas passengers to some 13,958 Amtrak route miles and creating the opportunity for any one of 12,256 journeys combining TCR and Amtrak travel on a single ticket.

Representing some 40 million fare-paying rail passengers nationwide, Rail Passengers Association's long-term goal is to put 80% of Americans within 25 miles of a rail station within 25 years, using a combination of high-speed/high-performance, long-distance intercity rail, commuter trains, light rail, public transit and even bike share or shared scooters. This is our vision for what we call *A Connected America*, in which all U.S. entities, including public/private partnerships and private industry, invest appropriately and effectively to create a 21st century network to power the economy of the new century.

TCRI's new through-ticketing agreement with Amtrak meaningfully and powerfully cements the connection between the proposed Houston-Dallas route and the rest of the National Network. TCR's service will permit Northbound travelers in Houston to buy a single fare to ride TCR's train and connect with Amtrak's *Texas Eagle*, or with the *Heartland Flyer* via the *Eagle*. The Houston TCR passenger would thus enjoy single-fare access to any one of 4,753 different journeys on the combined Amtrak-TCR network—access to 5,662 route miles of Amtrak service. Southbound travelers can reach any one of the Sunset Limited's 22 destinations or even connect to Amtrak's City of New Orleans or Crescent services, opening up 7,503 potential journeys along 8,296 Amtrak route miles.

Many of these journeys will be trips that might not otherwise have occurred using other modes, with the direct link between the two cities bypassing a major flaw in Amtrak's existing long-distance network as it is currently configured—many connections must today flow through Chicago, a major impediment to travelers in the South and West. New travel always means new consumer spending, injecting life into economies all along the routes served. Northbound TCR travelers could visit any one of 97 U.S. destinations, while southbound TCR passengers could visit any one of 122, all while buying a single fare either through TCR's ticketing system or Amtrak's.

The Rail Passengers Association/NARP strongly encourages the Board to take jurisdiction over this project as an important element of the overall interstate rail network, and to expedite Board review of Texas Central's application so this exciting project can move forward and the traveling public can realize the benefits of high-performance rail without delay.

Respectfully submitted,



Jim Mathews
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Cc: Parties of Record

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