

VIA E- FILING

The Honorable Ann D. Begeman
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

The Honorable Patrick J. Fuchs
Vice Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

The Honorable Martin J. Oberman
Member
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Sept. 25, 2019

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 Chairman Begeman, Vice Chairman Fuchs and Member Oberman:

The Rail Passengers Association/NARP writes to share the concurrence of our tens of thousands of members nationwide with the August 21 Reply filed by Texas Central Railroad and Infrastructure, Inc., and Texas Central Railroad, LLC in the above-named matter.

The most important consideration in this matter remains the degree to which the through-ticketing agreement – and the relatively close proximity of the services – stimulates new travel and through-travel on the rest of the nation’s interstate passenger rail system. Amtrak’s own estimates are that some 20,000 connecting passengers are likely to use the Texas Central services to travel to other parts of the National Network by the tenth year of service. Thus, Rail Passengers asserts that last year’s through-ticketing agreement with Amtrak not only responds to the Board’s direction in its 2016 jurisdiction decision, but substantially alters the factual basis for any determination.

Rail Passengers’ analysis of the through-ticketing agreement shows that it meaningfully and powerfully 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 individual potential journeys combining TCR and Amtrak travel on a single ticket.

Building single-ticket connections between the proposed Houston-Dallas route and the rest of the Amtrak National Network 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.

While this by itself satisfies the narrow legal test for jurisdiction, Rail Passengers also encourages the Board to consider the larger implications of action – or inaction – for new rail development and the transportation future of the United States. Rail Passengers continues to believe that 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. By giving the traveling public a meaningful way to buy a single fare for travel on both Texas Central and Amtrak, the TCR project goes well beyond creating an important new Texas service and begins, however humbly, the long-delayed work of bringing U.S. rail travel up to par with the rest of the developed world.

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.

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.

The Board’s jurisdiction decision in this matter could help set the preconditions for private capital to invest in development of high-speed rail in the U.S.; likewise, the decision could also retard that development for decades to come. Thus, the traveling, taxpaying public has a compelling interest in ensuring that the Board gets the very best opportunity to examine not only the voluminous filings in this matter, but to hear from stakeholders on the very real implications of this decision for transportation policy in the U.S.

The Rail Passengers Association/NARP strongly encourages the Board to take jurisdiction over this project as an important element of the overall interstate passenger-rail system, 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
President & CEO
Rail Passengers Association/NARP
1200 G St. NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20005

cc: Parties of Record

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RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION