

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [HB 833](#)

TITLE: Rapid Rail Transit Compact

SPONSOR(S): Hinson, Campbell

COMPANION BILL: [SB 966](#) (Davis)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Economic Infrastructure](#)



[Commerce](#)

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill authorizes the Governor to enter into a Rapid Rail Transit Compact with Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill authorizes the Governor to enter into a Rapid Rail Transit Compact (Compact) with Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The bill establishes the following terms of the Compact: (Section [1](#)).

- The Compact's purpose is to study the feasibility of rapid rail transit service between Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi and to establish a joint interstate commission to assist in this effort.
- The Compact takes effect when a state has ratified it and Congress has consented. States outside of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi may become a party to the Compact if it is contiguous to another party state and the legislature of the contiguous state becoming a party approves.
- The [Southern Rail Commission \(SRC\)](#) is the joint agency created by the parties under the Compact. SRC's membership consists of:
 - The Governor of each party state;
 - One representative from each party state's department of transportation; and
 - Five other citizens of each party state which are appointed by the respective Governor.
- Terms of membership in the SRC and quorum meeting requirements.
- The powers of SRC include the power to:
 - Hold hearings;
 - Conduct studies and surveys of all problems, benefits, and other associated matters;
 - Make reports;
 - Acquire moneys or property from local, state, federal, or private sources for its proper functioning;
 - Cooperate with public or private groups;
 - Formulate and execute plans and policies to carry out the purpose of the Compact to the U.S. Congress; and
 - Exercise other powers as it deems appropriate.
- Each party state agrees that its legislature may expend funds for the establishment and operation of SRC. If possible, each party state's contribution must be in equal amounts. The bill also specifies that each legislature is not bound to set any appropriation of funds.
- Terms for withdrawal from SRC and authority and direction for SRC members to carry out the purpose of the Compact.

STORAGE NAME: h0833.EIS

DATE: 3/28/2025

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2025. (Section [2](#)).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

[Southern Rail Commission \(SRC\)](#)

Regional Rail Commissions (RRCs) are interstate compacts established by federal law that enable two or more contiguous states to jointly study and develop rail projects for their mutual, regional benefit.¹ The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is an RRC created in 1982 to promote the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods to enhance economic development within party states. It is also SRC's objective to:

- Provide transportation choices;
- Engage local decision makers;
- Facilitate emergency evacuation routes;
- Pursue funding for planning and implementation; and
- Support state departments of transportation.²

Current members of SRC are Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. In September 2023, the efforts of SRC and the Rail Passengers Association, among others, resulted in a \$178 million federal grant for the restoration of passenger rail service from New Orleans, Louisiana, to Mobile, Alabama. The funding will help build a platform for the Mobile end of the service and additional track upgrades.³ Amtrak rail service between the two cities is anticipated to leave the station in the Summer of 2025 with two daily roundtrips.⁴

Other SRC passenger rail service projects include a route from Baton Rouge to New Orleans and a proposed I-20 Rail Corridor service that connects Dallas-Fort Worth, Northern Louisiana, and Atlanta.⁵

[Florida Passenger Rail Service](#)

In 1993, SRC successfully negotiated the extension of the "Sunset Limited" Amtrak line from Los Angeles, California, to Jacksonville, Florida.⁶ Sunset Limited was extended into Florida, with major stops in Orlando and Hialeah. However, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 permanently closed the line east of New Orleans, derailing passenger rail service which has not been restored since.⁷

[Economic Impact](#)

Proponents of a Gulf Coast passenger rail service restoration claim there are many economic benefits, such as:

- Improved accessibility for more than two million residents between New Orleans and Orlando.
- Growth in tourism, the job market, health care, and higher education.
- Development of an evacuation route for Gulf Coast cities.
- Additional sales tax revenue from casino patrons, visitors, and tourists.⁸

¹ Regional Rail Commissions, *What are RRCs?*, <https://www.aawa.us/impact/current-projects/regional-rail-commissions/> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

² Southern Rail Commission, *Our Mission*, <https://www.southernrailcommission.org/mission> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

³ Rail Passengers Association, *\$178 Million in CRISI Grant Funding Awarded for Gulf Coast Rail*, <https://www.railpassengers.org/happening-now/news/releases/178-million-in-crisi-grant-funding-awarded-for-gulf-coast-rail-restoration/> (last visited Mar. 27, 2025).

⁴ Christian Oliver, *Train from New Orleans to Mobile starting service in summer 2025*, WGNO News (Mar. 26, 2025), <https://wgno.com/news/louisiana/orleans-parish/train-from-new-orleans-to-mobile-starting-service-in-summer-2025/> (last visited Mar. 27, 2025).

⁵ Southern Rail Commission, *Project Overview: I-20 Corridor*, <https://www.southernrailcommission.org/i20-corridor> (last visited Mar. 28, 2025).

⁶ Sunset Limited became the first transcontinental rail line in American history. Southern Rail Commission, *History*, <https://www.southernrailcommission.org/history> (last visited Mar. 27, 2025).

⁷ Amtrak Routes, *Amtrak Sunset Limited Train: Stops, Stations, Route, Schedule, & Booking Tips!*, <https://amtrakroutes.com/sunset-limited-train/> (last visited Mar. 27, 2025).

⁸ Southern Rail Commission, *Connecting the entire Gulf Coast with comprehensive passenger rail*, <https://www.southernrailcommission.org/gulf-coast-rail> (last visited Mar. 27, 2025).

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Economic Infrastructure Subcommittee			Keating	Garcia
Commerce Committee				