

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [HB 53](#)

**TITLE:** Rapid Rail Transit Compact

**SPONSOR(S):** Hinson

**COMPANION BILL:** [SB 1254](#) (Davis)

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** None

### Committee References

[Economic Infrastructure](#)

13 Y, 1 N



[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. A state other than 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 for emphasizing the purpose of the Compact before the U.S. Congress and other appropriate federal officers and agencies; 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, provided that the legislature of a party state is not bound to appropriate a set amount of funds.
- Terms for withdrawal from SRC and authority and direction for SRC members to carry out the purpose of the Compact.

**STORAGE NAME:** h0053a.EIS

**DATE:** 2/4/2026

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2026. (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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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. On August 18, 2025, Amtrak passenger rail service began between New Orleans and Mobile, referred to as the "Mardi Gras Service". 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.<sup>3</sup>

In 1993, SRC successfully negotiated the extension of the "Sunset Limited" Amtrak line from Los Angeles, California, to Jacksonville, Florida.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

#### Economic Impact

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

- Improved accessibility for 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.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Regional Rail Commissions, *What are RRCs?*, <https://www.aawa.us/impact/current-projects/regional-rail-commissions/> (last visited Jan. 8, 2026).

<sup>2</sup> Southern Rail Commission, *Our Mission*, <https://www.southernrailcommission.org/mission> (last visited Jan. 8, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> WLOX Staff, *Passenger trains rolling again as Amtrak returns to South Mississippi*, WLOX News (Aug. 18, 2025), <https://www.wlox.com/2025/08/18/passenger-trains-rolling-again-amtrak-returns-south-mississippi/> (last visited Jan. 8, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> Sunset Limited became the first transcontinental rail line in American history. Southern Rail Commission, *History*, <https://www.southernrailcommission.org/history> (last visited Jan. 8, 2026).

<sup>5</sup> Amtrak Routes, *Amtrak Sunset Limited Train: Stops, Stations, Route, Schedule, & Booking Tips!*, <https://amtrakroutes.com/sunset-limited-train/> (last visited Jan. 8, 2026).

<sup>6</sup> Southern Rail Commission, *Connecting the entire Gulf Coast with comprehensive passenger rail*, <https://www.southernrailcommission.org/gulf-coast-rail> (last visited Dec. 1, 2025).

**BILL HISTORY**

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
<a href="#">Economic Infrastructure Subcommittee</a>	13 Y, 1 N	2/4/2026	Keating	Ray
<a href="#">Commerce Committee</a>				