

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-

A RESOLUTION OF THE SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, SUWANNEE COUNTY FLORIDA, IN SUPPORT OF RESTORING PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE FROM NEW ORLEANS TO JACKSONVILLE AND FOR AND ESTABLISHING A STOP IN LIVE OAK, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Amtrak ridership and revenues have continued to see strong growth in FY 2014, and steady figures for FY 2015, with nearly 31 million riders each year; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak news releases dated 10-27-2014 and 12-2-2015 both emphasize that "New investment in rail infrastructure is critical for future growth of passenger rail to meet passenger demand"; and

WHEREAS, both Jacksonville and New Orleans Amtrak stations are viable and successful transportation hubs, with 77,553 and 196,768 respective riders in 2014; and

WHEREAS, before Hurricane Katrina, Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* passenger line served railroad travelers as the only transcontinental passenger rail service from Los Angeles passing through New Orleans and Mobile to Jacksonville; and

WHEREAS, Hurricane Katrina damaged a portion of the rail infrastructure along the Gulf Coast as well as causing the loss of other portions of the infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak suspended all service on the eastern portion of the *Sunset Limited* Service from New Orleans through Mobile, Tallahassee, and Jacksonville; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak has yet to restore this vital transportation link; and

WHEREAS, CSX, and Norfolk Southern (the freight railroad companies that own the tracks on which passenger rail service on the Gulf Coast will operate) have all committed to cooperating with Amtrak in its providing this vital service along the eastern Gulf Coast and to do so in a more efficient manner than prior to Hurricane Katrina; and

WHEREAS, the population growth along the Gulf Coast is projected to continue, therefore, restoration of passenger rail service to the eastern Gulf Coast will create jobs, facilitate job creation through development opportunities and alternative transportation options for commuters, enhance tourism, reduce environmental impacts due to personal automobile use, reduce roadway impacts due to personal vehicular use, thereby having a positive economic and environmental impact to all the coastal states Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida; and

WHEREAS, such resumption of passenger rail service will also benefit the entire Nation by providing a link to the Gulf Coast from the Midwest and West Coast; and

WHEREAS, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, Amtrak's enabling legislation which was passed by the United States Congress in 2008, called for Amtrak to study the potential return of passenger rail service from New Orleans to Jacksonville/Orlando; and

WHEREAS, the undersigned, in conjunction with vast local community support, have commonly agreed upon the need for a daily, reliable, quality passenger rail service with an appropriate operating schedule between New Orleans to Jacksonville; and

WHEREAS, the undersigned agree that a base level daily service that meets regional needs, and can serve as a building block for additional long distance or corridor-type service to meet regional and national transportation needs, will stimulate economic development, including facilitating, promoting and supporting: local businesses, community events, festivals and concerts, local historic and eco-tourism opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Live Oak, Florida in Suwannee County owes its very existence and namesake as a city - borne out of the railroad expansion in the 1800's, and a stop here by a large "live oak" tree, and henceforth, the railroad has been the backbone of the community providing sustained opportunities for growth and commerce; and

WHEREAS, the City of Live Oak is geographically the obvious choice for a mid-level transportation hub between Tallahassee and Jacksonville, served by two interstate highways, three state highways, and regional airports; and

WHEREAS, the City of Live Oak City Council and Live Oak Community Redevelopment Agency and Suwannee County Economic Development Office has made a commitment to the revitalization of the Downtown, which would be a viable and appropriate location for an Amtrak passenger station; and

WHEREAS, there is overwhelmingly strong support by the Suwannee County: residents, citizens, business community, governmental staff, appointed and elected officials – for not only the reestablishment of Amtrak service along this important transportation corridor, but for the establishment of a station stop in the heart of Downtown Live Oak.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY, THE SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, SUWANNEE COUNTY FLORIDA, as follows:

Section 1. The recitals and findings contained in the Preamble to this Resolution are adopted by reference and incorporated as if fully set forth in this Section.

Section 2. THE SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, SUWANNEE COUNTY, on behalf of the community and all stakeholders, does hereby call for the return of the vital passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast from New Orleans to Jacksonville, with a dedicated stop in Downtown Live Oak, Florida.

Section 3. THE SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, SUWANNEE COUNTY further commits to coordinate in the coming weeks and months to provide a detailed list of actions their respective community has taken to facilitate restoration of train service along the Gulf Coast, and to reconvene thereafter to consider the next steps to accomplish this goal.

Section 4. Effective Date. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption and approval and signature of the Chairman.

This resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption. -- _____

PASSED, ADOPTED and APPROVED this 16th day of March, 2016

SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD
OF COUNTY COMMISSION



Jason Bashaw, Chairman

Attest:



 BARRY BAKER, CLERK