THE ROLE OF INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL DURING NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

(110–97)

FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON

RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

FEBRUARY 11, 2008 (New Orleans, LA)

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

40–886 PDF WASHINGTON : 2008

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402–0001

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

JAMES L. OBERSTAR, Minnesota, *Chairman*

NICK J. RAHALL, II, West Virginia, *Vice Chair*
PETER A. DEFAZIO, Oregon
JERRY F. COSTELLO, Illinois
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, District of Columbia
JERROLD NADLER, New York
CORRINE BROWN, Florida
BOB FILNER, California
EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, Texas
GENE TAYLOR, Mississippi
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, Maryland
ELLEN O. TAUSCHER, California
LEONARD L. BOSWELL, Iowa
TIM HOLDEN, Pennsylvania
BRIAN BAIRD, Washington
RICK LARSEN, Washington
MICHAEL E. CAPUANO, Massachusetts
TIMOTHY H. BISHOP, New York
MICHAEL H. MICHAUD, Maine
BRIAN HIGGINS, New York
RUSS CARNAHAN, Missouri
JOHN T. SALAZAR, Colorado
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, California
DANIEL LIPINSKI, Illinois
DORIS O. MATSUI, California
NICK LAMPSON, Texas
ZACHARY T. SPACE, Ohio
MAZIE K. HIRONO, Hawaii
BRUCE L. BRALEY, Iowa
JASON ALTMIRE, Pennsylvania
TIMOTHY J. WALZ, Minnesota
HEATH SHULER, North Carolina
MICHAEL A. ARCURI, New York
HARRY E. MITCHELL, Arizona
CHRISTOPHER P. CARNEY, Pennsylvania
JOHN J. HALL, New York
STEVE KAGEN, Wisconsin
STEVE COHEN, Tennessee
JERRY MCNERNEY, California
LAURA A. RICHARDSON, California
VACANCY

JOHN L. MICA, Florida
DON YOUNG, Alaska
THOMAS E. PETRI, Wisconsin
HOWARD COBLE, North Carolina
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., Tennessee
WAYNE T. GILCHREST, Maryland
VERNON J. EHLERS, Michigan
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, Ohio
FRANK A. LOBIONDO, New Jersey
JERRY MORAN, Kansas
GARY G. MILLER, California
ROBIN HAYES, North Carolina
HENRY E. BROWN, JR., South Carolina
TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON, Illinois
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, Pennsylvania
SAM GRAVES, Missouri
BILL SHUSTER, Pennsylvania
JOHN BOOZMAN, Arkansas
SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, West Virginia
JIM GERLACH, Pennsylvania
MARIO DIAZ-BALART, Florida
CHARLES W. DENT, Pennsylvania
TED POE, Texas
DAVID G. REICHERT, Washington
CONNIE MACK, Florida
JOHN R. 'RANDY' KUHL, JR., New York
LYNN A WESTMORELAND, Georgia
CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR., Louisiana
JEAN SCHMIDT, Ohio
CANDICE S. MILLER, Michigan
THELMA D. DRAKE, Virginia
MARY FALLIN, Oklahoma
VERN BUCHANAN, Florida
VACANCY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

CORRINE BROWN, Florida *Chairwoman*

JERROLD NADLER, New York
LEONARD L. BOSWELL, Iowa
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, California
NICK LAMPSON, Texas
ZACHARY T. SPACE, Ohio, *Vice Chair*
BRUCE L. BRALEY, Iowa
TIMOTHY J. WALZ, Minnesota
NICK J. RAHALL II, West Virginia
PETER A. DEFAZIO, Oregon
JERRY F. COSTELLO, Illinois
EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, Texas
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, Maryland
MICHAEL H. MICHAUD, Maine
DANIEL LIPINSKI, Illinois
VACANCY
JAMES L. OBERSTAR, Minnesota
(ex officio)

BILL SHUSTER, Pennylvania
THOMAS E. PETRI, Wisconsin
WAYNE T. GILCHREST, Maryland
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, Ohio
JERRY MORAN, Kansas
GARY G. MILLER, California
HENRY E. BROWN, JR., South Carolina
TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON, Illinois
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, Pennsylvania
SAM GRAVES, Missouri
JIM GERLACH, Pennsylvania
MARIO DIAZ-BALART, Florida
LYNN A. WESTMORELND, Georgia
JOHN L. MICA, Florida
(ex officio)

CONTENTS

Page

Summary of Subject Matter vi

TESTIMONY

Bertini, Jr., Dr. John 25
Cannon, Glenn, Assistant Administrator, Disaster Operations Directorate, Federal Emergency Management Agency 4
Ebbert, Colonel Terry, Director of Homeland Security, City of New Orleans 4
Moller, Jeff, Executive Director, Safety and Operations, Association of American Railroads 25
Nagin, Hon. C. Ray, Mayor, City of New Orleans 4
Parsons, Karen, Executive Director, Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission 25
Phelps, Richard, Vice President for Transportation, Amtrak 25
Santos, Jr., Colonel Pat, Assistant Deputy Director for Operations, Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, State of Louisiana 4
Thomas, Wayne C., Vice President for Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Innovative Emergency Management 25

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Brown, Hon. Corrine, of Florida 48
Jefferson, Hon. William J., of Louisiana 54

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED BY WITNESSES

Bertini, Jr., Dr. John E. 57
Cannon, Glenn M. 59
Ebbert, Colonel Terry J. 65
Moller, Jeff 68
Nagin, Hon. C. Ray 76
Parsons, Karen 81
Phelps, Richard 88
Santos, Jr., E. Pat 106
Thomas, Wayne C. 109

SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

Moller, Jeff, Executive Director, Safety and Operations, Association of American Railroads, response to question from Rep. Brown 75

ADDITIONS FOR THE RECORD

New Orleans City Council, Arnie Fielkow, President, Council Resolution R-06-301 116

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

James L. Oberstar
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

John L. Mica
Ranking Republican Memb

David Heymsfeld, Chief of Staff
Ward W. McCarragher, Chief Counsel

James W. Coon II, Republican Chief of St

February 8, 2008

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials

FROM: Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Staff

SUBJECT: Field Hearing on the Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies

PURPOSE OF HEARING

The Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials is scheduled to meet on Monday, February 11, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., at the New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal, 1001 Loyola Ave., New Orleans, LA 70113 to receive testimony on the role of intercity passenger rail during national emergencies.

BACKGROUND

In the event of a large-scale emergency, state and local governments are the primary entity responsible for managing a response. In a catastrophic disaster, and if the governor requests, federal resources can be mobilized through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's ("DHS") Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") for search and rescue, electrical power, food, water, shelter and other basic human needs. A governor's request for a major disaster declaration could mean an infusion of federal funds, but the governor must also commit significant state funds and resources for recovery efforts.

The federal government's role in disaster response is outlined in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act ("Stafford Act", P.L. 93-288), which established the programs and processes for the federal government to provide major disaster and emergency assistance to state, local, and tribal governments, individuals, and qualified private nonprofit organizations. FEMA has responsibility to administer the provisions of the Stafford Act. The Stafford Act further clarifies the federal government's role by establishing that disasters should be managed at the lowest possible governmental level.

In addition to federal resources, states affected by a catastrophic disaster can also turn to other states for assistance in obtaining "surge capacity," i.e. the ability to draw on additional resources, such as personnel and equipment, needed to respond to and recover from the incident. One way of sharing personnel and equipment across state lines is through the use of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, an interstate compact that provides a legal and administrative framework for managing such emergency requests. The compact includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL AND DISASTERS

Intercity passenger rail has many advantages in disaster situations, including evacuating residents, transporting first responders and equipment to assist in disaster relief, and often responding to people lacking alternative modes of transportation, such as those who rely on public transportation. Further, it is helpful for transporting individuals that need special assistance due to medical conditions or hospitalization. Finally, it is sometimes the only mode available to transport people and equipment medium- to long-range distances in a timely manner.

Intercity passenger rail played an important role in the recovery efforts following the attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) on September 11, 2001 ("9/11"). For example, after aviation service was suspended following the attacks, Amtrak transported 1,000 firefighters, police officers, and emergency workers from Boston and Washington, D.C. to the WTC.

While the value of intercity passenger rail was first neglected in the lead up to Hurricane Katrina ("Katrina"), its value was reinforced following Katrina and Hurricane Rita ("Rita"). Initially, the City of New Orleans failed to respond to an Amtrak offer to assist the City's initial evacuation efforts. A Federal Highway Administration ("FHWA") report entitled "Catastrophic Hurricane Evacuation Plan Evaluation," found that a 20-car Amtrak train prepared to move 900 people to safety left empty due to Federal, state and local organizational challenges and lack of planning.

However, intercity passenger rail was a valuable evacuation tool prior to Hurricane Rita, which followed Katrina and affected parts of Texas and Louisiana on September 24, 2005. When emergency officials began evacuating the Houston area prior to Rita reaching the coast, it spurred the largest evacuation in Texas history. As a result, nearly three million people attempted to evacuate the Gulf Coast, leading to massive gridlock on the roads.

While seven people died due to Hurricane Rita, the National Hurricane Center reported that over 100 people died due to the evacuation, many in car accidents or from heat exposure, including 23 senior citizens due to an on-road accident during the evacuation. Area highways were gridlocked and vehicle breakdowns were common. Delays as long as 24 hours caused many cars to run out of gas and car rental companies ran out of vehicles to rent.

Trinity Railway Express (TRE), a commuter rail service operating in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, worked with Amtrak to redirect commuter trains to run between Houston and Dallas. According to FHWA, TRE moved over 450 people to Dallas. Once they reached Dallas, Amtrak

and BNSF Railway personnel loaded the evacuees onto buses and transported them to safety, according to TRE personnel.

Additionally, Amtrak helped evacuate about 300 people on its *Sunset Limited* line.

Immediately following Katrina and Rita, FEMA, in consultation with the Federal Railroad Administration ("FRA") worked with Amtrak, commuter trains, and freight railroads to support emergency response. Trains moved evacuees out of the region and to transport heavy equipment, supplies, and relief equipment into the area. Unfortunately, the FHWA reported that these efforts were continually challenged due to the lack of communication, coordination, and prior planning among local, State, and Federal officials.

Additionally, FHWA reported that the experiences in New Orleans accentuated the need to better incorporate intercity passenger rail and other transportation modes in evacuation plans. New Orleans had a large segment of its population that could not evacuate in personal vehicles, and the City was unprepared to evacuate so many persons using other modes, including intercity passenger rail. Following Hurricane Katrina, the City developed a plan to utilize intercity passenger rail and other transportation modes to evacuate those who cannot evacuate by private vehicle.

While the evacuation of New Orleans in response to Hurricane Katrina was considered relatively successful for people with their own vehicles, approximately 1 million people evacuated Louisiana prior to landfall. However, approximately 100,000 people were not evacuated prior to the storm, in many cases because these people lacked access to a vehicle. Hurricane Katrina ultimately resulted in over 1,300 deaths. Among those who could not evacuate were some of society's most vulnerable populations: the elderly, low-income individuals, and persons with disabilities. These populations often lack the ability to provide for their own transportation.

Evacuations of varying scales are common in the United States and can be triggered by a variety of events, including natural disasters such as Katrina and Rita, wildfires, and terrorist attacks like those committed on 9/11. In fact, emergency evacuations of more than 1,000 people occur more than three times a month. While evacuation is only one option in response to an emergency, it is complex and contains several critical components, including transportation, shelter, supplies, and security, among others. Each of these components is itself complex and often interrelated to transportation. Those who, by choice or circumstance, do not have access to a personal vehicle or are precluded from driving may require evacuation assistance during emergencies.

The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that the population categories previously defined as transportation-disadvantaged—the elderly, low-income individuals, and persons with disabilities—comprise a large segment of the country's total population of over 300 million. For example, Census data indicated that, in 2000, 12 percent of Americans were age 65 and over, 12 percent were living below the poverty line, and 23 percent had a disability. However, the transportation-disadvantaged not only include vulnerable populations, but all those who are car-less during an emergency. In 2000, the top 10 car-less cities had between 29 and 56 percent of households without a vehicle. However, people who require transportation assistance in an evacuation may be an even larger group because, in an emergency, anyone without immediate access to transportation may require assistance.

Following the events of Katrina and Rita, the Department of Transportation Inspector General recommended that DHS, in coordination with the Department of Transportation and the State of Louisiana, work to: identify those who could not evacuate on their own; establish an interagency transportation management unit to coordinate the routing of buses; enter into contracts to provide transportation by bus, rail, and air; and provide transportation from state and local pre-established collection points to shelters, rail sites, or air transportation sites.

SUNSET LIMITED

The *Sunset Limited* is an Amtrak passenger train that runs between New Orleans, Louisiana and Los Angeles, California. From early 1993 to August 2005 however, Amtrak extended the line as far east as Florida. Following the devastating 2005 hurricane season, the Sunset Limited's service was to stop at San Antonio until repairs were completed in October 2005. However, while repairs were completed, service was restored only between New Orleans and Los Angeles. The Sunset Limited's previous service along the eastern half of the Gulf Coast into Florida did not restart.

In January 2006, CSX, owner of the rail line from New Orleans to Florida, finished restoring damaged tracks and resumed freight traffic. Despite the complete restoration of rail service along the Gulf Coast, damage to stations and other Amtrak-owned infrastructure has prevented the restoration of full passenger service for the *Sunset Limited*. While Amtrak is considering options to restore service, it has not yet implemented a plan to restore service.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans-to-Orlando segment accounted for 28 percent of the *Sunset Limited's* miles, but 39 percent of ridership, and 41 percent of revenue. The *Sunset Limited* is the only Amtrak route connecting California, the Southwest, Texas, and New Orleans with Florida.

If service is restored to the *Sunset Limited* between New Orleans and Pensacola, Amtrak could be utilized by the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida as a reliable method for evacuating residents during a national emergency.

EXPECTED WITNESSES

Dr. John E. Bertini, Jr., MD, FACS

Mr. Glenn Cannon
Assistant Administrator
Disaster Operations Directorate
Federal Emergency Management Administration

Colonel Terry Ebbert
Director of Homeland Security
City of New Orleans

Mr. Jeff Moller
Executive Director, Safety & Operations
Association of American Railroads

The Honorable C. Ray Nagin
Mayor
City of New Orleans

Ms. Karen Parsons
Executive Director
Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission

Mr. Richard Phelps
Vice President for Transportation
Amtrak

Colonel Pat Santos
Assistant Deputy Director for Operations
Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness
State of Louisiana

Mr. Wayne Thomas
Vice President for Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Innovative Emergency Management

HEARING ON THE ROLE OF INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL DURING NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

Monday, February 11, 2008

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS,
New Orleans, LA.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:15 a.m., in the Union Passenger Terminal, 1001 Loyola Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana, Hon. Corrine Brown [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Ms. BROWN. Will the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials please officially come to order.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the role of intercity passenger rail during national emergencies.

Our Ranking Member, Mr. Shuster, planned to join us today and is very interested in the needs of the Gulf Coast, but unfortunately he is unable to join us due to a flight cancellation—that is why we need additional rail.

[Laughter.]

Ms. BROWN. I want to thank Mayor Nagin and the City of New Orleans for hosting today's hearing. The Mayor made it possible for the Subcommittee to hold hearings today at this Union Pacific Terminal. This station is the major southern hub for Amtrak and played an interesting role in the recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina as a temporary jail.

As you can see, this is a beautiful station that has been fully restored by the City and the station's dedicated employees. It is one positive example of the progress being made in downtown New Orleans.

Since the tragedy surrounding September 11, emergency management and preparations have played an elevated role in the daily lives of citizens and governments alike. September 11 and hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrate the critical role intercity passenger rail holds in emergency response situations. An intermodal transportation system that offers a range of options during any emergency situation must be an essential part of any emergency planning.

Passenger rail offers many benefits during a disaster. It can move large numbers of people out of harm's way; it can bring critical supplies to needy areas and it offers an alternative form of

transportation to combat overcrowded highways as we witnessed during the evacuation of Houston in hurricane Rita. Passenger rail should be a vital component of every rail emergency plan and the federal and state governments must commit the necessary investments to make this possible. While the Federal Emergency Management Agency has made changes in their response planning following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, it is clear that there is more that we can do to make sure passenger rail is fully utilized.

I hope today to hear the progress that has been made to fully restore the Sunset Limited line. The loss of service on the Sunset Limited from New Orleans to Pensacola—you know I am from Florida—directly impacts the ability of people living along the Gulf Coast to respond to emergency situations. Further, it limits the ability of people in Florida to ride Amtrak to visit family and friends along the Gulf Coast and New Orleans. This is a serious problem and I believe that now, over two years since the disastrous hurricane season of 2005, we should have more answers about when Sunset Limited services will be restored.

I would like to welcome today's panelists and thank them for joining us. I look forward to hearing their testimony on how passenger rail can be better utilized during national emergencies and what Congress and the Federal Government can do to make this possible.

Before we begin testimony, I ask that Members be given 14 days to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and material by Members and witnesses. Without objection, so ordered.

I would like to ask unanimous consent that Congressman Jefferson be allowed to sit in on the panel and ask questions of the witnesses. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. Jefferson, I am going to let you make your opening remarks at this time and then we will go to the panel.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, Representative Brown.

I believe this is the first time and the most formal way I have ever addressed you, as Representative Brown. To us, she goes by a more familiar name, which I will not mention here today because we are in these formal circumstances. But she is, to us in the Louisiana delegation, like an eighth Member of our delegation because even when it came to her own native Florida and the issue of the VA Hospital, she stood with New Orleans in that fight to make sure the hospital was placed here and was not even talked about as being a possible placement for it in Florida. So we owe her a great debt. She has been here eight, ten times since the storm. I may be shortchanging her a few trips. And she has worked on everything from missing children during the hurricane to just the basic issues of evacuation.

And today's hearing, at least in part, is going to deal with how we might think about how the intercity transportation systems can help us prepare for disasters and for the need to move people out in ways that are more effective, more efficient and less costly, more safe; and also, how we can, after the storms come along, do more to help with our recovery through the use of intercity transportation to move people back and forth to jobs, to help to restore confidence in our economy and all those sorts of things.

At the end of the day, I think that we can probably just say in sum what I would like to say, the very last paragraph of my prepared statement and I will submit it, if I might, Madam Chairlady, for the record.

In summary, having an intercity rail in southeast Louisiana and even expanding the Sunset Line to Florida helps in many areas. It means getting our people to safety in the face of terrible storms of the future. It means offering our people that do not have the ability to flee to safety a viable option. It means a safer commute for those traveling each day. It means a connection to our varied communities. It means affordable mass transportation for everyone. It means less congestion on roads and less pollution in our air. It means business development and opportunity. And lastly, it means essentially it would be a great deal of help for our recovery.

I have a statement I prepared, Madam Chair, I would just like to submit it for the record if you would permit me to do so, so we can get to our esteemed panel.

And I thank you for the chance to serve with you today on this panel and be here for these excellent witnesses.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, my colleague. And let me just say you probably missed the number of times I have been here because I have felt really responsible—when I saw Katrina and I saw the response of the government, I felt it was necessary not only to come here right away, but I went home and organized my community and we sent 16 tractor-trailers full of goods and services to the community.

And I have worked very hard to make sure that the VA Hospital—and we have meetings on that tomorrow, and in fact I just talked to the Chairman and we have the funds in there for that hospital and so I am going to make sure we move forward with the new VA facility here, working with the community.

So thank you for having me here and thank the Mayor for inviting me.

And with that, I would like to welcome and introduce our first witness. It is Mr. Glenn Cannon, the Assistant Administrator for Disaster Operations Directorate, Federal Emergency Management Administration.

The second witness is our Mayor, Mayor Ray Nagin, Mayor of the City of New Orleans.

And the third witness is Mr. Santos, Assistant Deputy Director of Operations and Preparation for the State of Louisiana.

And the final witness on the panel is Mr. Terry Ebbert, Director of Homeland Security for the City of New Orleans.

Let me remind the witnesses that under our Committee rules, oral statements must be limited to five minutes, but the entire statement will appear in the record. We will allow an entire panel to testify before questioning the witnesses.

I am pleased to have all of you here today and I recognize Mr. Cannon for his testimony.

TESTIMONY OF GLENN CANNON, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, DISASTER OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY; THE HONORABLE C. RAY NAGIN, MAYOR, CITY OF NEW ORLEANS; COLONEL PAT SANTOS, ASSISTANT DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS, GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS, STATE OF LOUISIANA; AND COLONEL TERRY EBBERT, DIRECTOR OF HOMELAND SECURITY, CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Mr. CANNON. Thank you. Good morning, Madam Chair and Representative Jefferson. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you plans for using rail transportation to support emergency evacuations and the challenges of using rail in these situations.

Providing critical planning and resource support to help our state and local government partners in the Gulf Coast region prepare for the disasters that they face has been one of our highest priorities for the past two years.

One of the activities that we have been most intensely engaged in involves the area of evacuation planning. In the declared disaster, FEMA's disaster operations, disaster assistance and logistics management directorates provide for pre-cautionary evacuation and return assistance to at-risk populations in accordance with the Stafford Act. However, FEMA does not, should not and cannot act alone. FEMA Administrator David Paulison often speaks of our commitment to building engaged partnerships with our colleagues in state and local government. Evacuation planning is one area where this commitment is very evident.

Since hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA has worked with all the states in the region to coordinate their diverse evacuation plans. Multi-agency teams engaged with Gulf Coast states to identify requirements and capabilities and develop plans and integrate shelter planning with transportation planning. This is what we mean when we say engaged partnerships.

FEMA is also on the ground. We established an office in Baton Rouge to conduct specific evacuation planning for the 12 coastal parishes of Louisiana. Working closely with our federal, state and local partners, this planning effort helps ensure the transportation, sheltering, mass care and repopulation elements are ready to support Louisiana.

FEMA is supporting multi-modal evacuation planning specifically for Louisiana and the City of New Orleans. A major component of this evacuation planning leverages the capabilities of Amtrak and intercity rail transport to evacuate the New Orleans metropolitan area. Last year, during the 2007 hurricane season, FEMA entered into a contract with Amtrak to provide emergency rail transportation services to help evacuate persons from New Orleans to other locations in the Gulf Coast region. My written testimony goes into greater detail on this arrangement.

Despite the evacuation planning and related support we have provided, there are still challenges that need to be addressed regarding rail evacuation planning and readiness for future disasters. On a broad scope, there is a shortage of personnel with experience in rail transportation issues who are also qualified in evacuation planning. States need to use consistent planning techniques and

methodologies when developing activities that will cut across multiple jurisdictions but may lack training, funding and personnel to accomplish these tasks. And states need to develop and take greater advantage of mutual aid agreements, memoranda of understanding and contracts. Often, developing these instruments can not occur until near the end of the planning cycle, coming after risk assessments, gap analyses, capability inventories and concepts of operation are well underway.

In addition to those broad challenges, there are also specific rail evacuation challenges. The private ownership of railroad right-of-ways poses some challenges. Individual agreements are necessary to determine how and when they are used and each railroad independently determines when they will cease operations in the face of an oncoming hurricane.

The existence of these agreements and the close cooperation of each railroad line in use are critical to achieving effective planning. Once the evacuee population has reached the destination, receiving state and local governments and responders must be able to provide adequate services, such as transportation and sheltering. As a result, destinations must be mutually agreed upon by the evacuating state, the receiving jurisdictions, FEMA and its operational partners and Amtrak.

To ensure the safety of evacuees, Amtrak has indicated a need to include law enforcement officers in each car. However, personnel limits will require prearranged agreements for additional law enforcement officers to supplement existing forces. Availability of personnel during a crisis will always be a challenge.

Regarding special needs evacuees, the typical passenger rail car can only transport ambulatory evacuees, and a limited number of wheelchair-bound patients not needing medical attention or medical staff. Amtrak is not capable of conveying special medical needs passengers.

Finally, there is a cost to being prepared for a potential evacuation. Last year, equipment and personnel were prepositioned in New Orleans at a cost of approximately $700,000.

The planning efforts we have undertaken with Louisiana exemplify the emergency planning envisioned in the National Preparedness Guidelines. Our engaged partnership has promoted unity of effort resulting in policies, processes and actions that have improved overall preparedness. New Orleans is only one of many cities and states at risk from hurricanes that can take advantage of incorporating passenger rail into their local and state emergency efforts. FEMA will continue to closely coordinate and support communities across the region and the country to facilitate the development of a more robust evacuation and response plan to ensure protection of the population when disaster strikes.

I look forward to discussing with you today and in the future the opportunities and challenges raised by the role and the use of rail in the emergency management system.

Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. Mayor.

Mayor NAGIN. Thank you. To Chairwoman Brown, Congressman Jefferson and other Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous

Materials, thank you for choosing New Orleans and thank you for choosing this site for this hearing. We are particularly pleased to host you here at the Union Passenger Terminal. It is an historic building which currently plays an important intermodal role in our transportation network and will play a critical role in future evacuations, emergency evacuations.

I am not going to read all of my testimony, but I will cover a few of the highlighted points of this testimony.

We are in recovery, Madam Chair, and——

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Mayor, I'm sorry, would you bring your mic a little closer?

Mayor NAGIN. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

Mayor NAGIN. We are in recovery, Madam Chair, and 2008 for us is going to be a tipping point in our recovery. We have lots of work to do but we are starting to see a flow of dollars into our community to accelerate our recovery. We have access to a state revolving loan fund, the initial portion of a $260 million bond that was approved by voters before the storm; we have access to that since we have gotten our bond rating back up to a stable rating. In total, we have access to more than a billion dollars for our recovery efforts and our citizens are engaged in this process and working with us. Just in street work alone and roads and bridge improvements, we have $363 million that we are spending.

We also have a significant number of building permits that our citizens are giving us strong indications that this recovery will be a full recovery. We have issued over 81,000 building permits for a value of $5 billion and we have another—that is just in restoration work. We have another billion dollars in permits that we have issued for new construction. Experts predict that this region will spend anywhere from 60 to 100 billion dollars in its recovery.

Our airport, Louis Armstrong International Airport, is also rebounding. It currently provides 78 percent of the seats offered pre-Katrina, 84 percent of pre-Katrina flights and we are going to 88 percent of pre-Katrina destinations that we had previously.

Our port is now back to 2002 levels, above 2005. So we are real excited about that.

And our tourist industry is really showing some strong signs of recovery. We estimate or UNO estimates that this year, we will do about $4.5 billion in tourist-related business. That is important because in 2004, it was a record year for us, we had never been that high, we had over 10 million visitors and they spent about $4.9 billion.

We are on a roll, Madam Chair. We just had the BCS Championship, the NBA All Stars this weekend, All Star weekend. We have—the President has announced an international summit with Mexico and Canada. We have the tenth anniversary of V-Day with Oprah Winfrey and Jane Fonda and all those folk coming in. Right after that, French Quarter Festival, Jazz Fest and Essence. And I forgot about a little party we throw called Mardi Gras, which we just finished up. So we are definitely moving in a very positive direction.

People ask me all the time how do you measure the success of a recovery of something that has happened. And it is all about peo-

ple. A city if about people, a state is about people. And about 71 percent of our people are back, we are about 320,000 people, but there is a swell during the day that is very exciting for us, where people are coming in and working on their homes, working on their businesses. And we think our population is back to about 365,000 during the day, down from 455,000 pre-Katrina. So we are really excited about that.

On evacuation planning, we need to assure our citizens that we have the capacity to react quickly and responsibly. And after hurricane Katrina, my Office of Homeland Security developed a city-assisted evacuation plan with a major component centered on rail services in the Union Passenger Terminal. Our strategy is the use rail assets to move our elderly and those with minor medical conditions from the city. We think that this is important.

We were able to incorporate the use of rail in our evacuation plans in the past two hurricane seasons. In 2006, our plans called for rail to take our citizens to Jackson, Mississippi and we were hoping that 6000 people could take advantage of that.

We strongly feel that the use of rail is critical to the successful future evacuation of the city of New Orleans. And Colonel Ebbert will touch on that in a minute.

We also ask you to support full funding for Amtrak services, particularly from coastal cities such as New Orleans and other coastal cities. This would provide important regular passenger rail transportation and will play a critical role in emergency transportation planning and execution across the city. And of course, we would like to see the Amtrak Sunset Limited back so we can get back to Jackson, Florida. And finally, we are seeking matching funds for about $80 million, it is a three-year initiative for rail fortification and startup costs for a commuter rail line from this UPT center to Baton Rouge, which will serve as another evacuation asset.

Madam Chair, that concludes my comments. I would like to thank you once again for being here and for all your hard work after the storm. You have been a true champion along with Congressman Jefferson, and we thank you for being here and helping us to bring back one of the most distinctive cities in the country—New Orleans.

Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Santos.

[Applause.]

Colonel SANTOS. Good morning, Madam Chair, Congressman Jefferson. It is an honor to be here today to provide this very critical and important testimony.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita exposed significant flaws in federal, state and local preparedness and response capabilities to catastrophic events. Numerous after-action reviews were conducted in the months following the 2005 hurricanes involving stakeholders at every level of government. Beginning in 2006, a concerted effort has been made by the State of Louisiana in cooperative spirit with local governments, including non-governmental organizations, industry, and our federal partners to formulate improved planning, coordination and disaster management capabilities during future incidents.

One such lesson learned was the need to develop scalable and flexible plans with adequate resources to assist those citizens who desire to evacuate during an emergency, but lack the means to do so. The City of New Orleans has developed a New Orleans City Assisted Evacuation Plan that addresses this very issue. It is estimated that if an evacuation is called, approximately 25,000 citizens could potentially require emergency transportation out of the New Orleans area within a 54-hour window.

It is clearly evident that to evacuate that number of citizens in such a short time period, every available means of transportation has to be considered. The State Department of Transportation and Development, who has the primary responsibility for emergency support function, ESF-1, transportation, has secured a commercial bus contract for some 700 coach buses. These commercial buses, in addition to the state school buses, will provide a large percentage of the critical transportation needs for citizens that require both transportation and sheltering across all of the at-risk parishes in Louisiana. We are aware and do currently have concerns that the contracted bus vendors, depending on the situation, may not be able to provide the total number of buses when and where needed in Louisiana. Those citizens considered general population evacuees that do avail themselves of this means of transportation can expect a rather long trip, approximately 5 to 10 hours perhaps, to shelters located in north Louisiana or to neighboring states such as Arkansas or Alabama.

New Orleans Emergency Management officials suggested in 2006 that we consider Amtrak as a transportation asset that could be used for senior citizens and individuals that may require some special assistance. The emphasis is to place these citizens in a low stress environment to minimize the psychological and physical impact that occurs during a high tension event. The concept was discussed and refined and a request was made from the state to FEMA to formally ask for the use of this asset. Negotiations between FEMA and Amtrak produced a signed contract to be triggered in the event a Category 3 storm or higher threatens the City of New Orleans. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed between Louisiana and the State of Mississippi to allow the trains to use the Jackson train station as a transload site. At that point, evacuees from the train would transfer to commercial buses which would take the evacuees to shelters located back in north Louisiana.

In 2007, the plan was modified to transport ambulatory senior citizen evacuees to Memphis, where the State of Tennessee has agreed to shelter up to 6000 Louisiana citizens arriving by train. Two Amtrak trains, each train consisting of 24 rail cars, carrying 1500 citizens, with limited wheelchair capability, would make two trips each from New Orleans to Memphis starting at 48 hours prior to the projected onset of tropical force winds, referred to as H-48.

During hurricane season, the speed at which some storms develop may not allow state and federal entities to activate their transportation support plans in time to be effective. Air and bus assets must be activated as early as H-100 hours in order to maximize their potential effectiveness. Amtrak, with its prestaged

transportation resources in the vicinity, could make an immediate impact in this type of environment.

The use of rail is an integral part of the overall transportation evacuation plan in Louisiana. It was identified early in the planning process for an evacuation of critical transportation need citizens within the southeastern parishes of Louisiana, which includes New Orleans, as the use of bus and rail alone will not provide the necessary transportation resources potentially required. As a result of this potential shortfall, a plan was developed by FEMA for the use of air assets to supplement bus and rail to transport as many as 15 to 20,000 evacuees out of the state.

All of the planning in the 2007 Gulf Coast season was focused on New Orleans as the origin rail station and Memphis as the destination rail station. During one of the hurricanes this past season, as both Louisiana and Texas at one point were being threatened simultaneously, Texas inquired about the potential use of emergency rail transportation services for their general population. Due to the lack of prior planning, this option was not pursued. There is a need for a coordinated national emergency transportation plan.

Our recommendation is that FEMA pursue a regional rail evacuation concept with a flexible multiple origins and destinations contract with Amtrak that is in line with the FEMA Region's responsibilities and Amtrak's capabilities. There are other variables that could impact having only one origin or destination and without prior preplanning for other options, it could reduce Amtrak's capabilities. By planning different scenarios, FEMA and the states will be better prepared for any unusual situation that could disrupt operations. We see this as giving FEMA and the states a broad scope of coverage for emergency rail evacuation to complement their multi-state responsibilities. As we continue preparations for the upcoming 2008 hurricane season, Louisiana will once again be requesting through FEMA an Amtrak contract.

That concludes my statement.

Ms. BROWN. Colonel.

Colonel EBBERT. Madam Chair, Congressman Jefferson, I thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials.

I am Colonel Terry Ebbert, the Director of Homeland Security for the City of New Orleans and am responsible for the police, fire, emergency medical services, criminal justice and the Office of Emergency Preparedness. I have served in this position for the past five years.

The City of New Orleans, like all of our large urban areas, has great public safety planning and operational challenges. We at the local level have limited resources available to deal with catastrophic incidents. Our planning is based upon our capabilities and the requesting of additional state and federal resources. Transportation evacuation planning was, and continues to be, of great concern to me and my departments.

New Orleans is the only major urban area in the United States that has no authorized federal or Red Cross support for sheltering in place during major hurricanes. This situation requires multi-state and parish planning for mandatory general population evacu-

ation. As you are aware, mandatory is not forced evacuation. My police officers will not break down doors and remove citizens from their homes by force. We must then create a plan that the citizens believe will work, to ensure their cooperation. Several major milestones must be completed to successfully evacuate 1.3 million people from southeast Louisiana:

1. A coordinated regional plan for self-evacuation
2. A City-assisted evacuation plan to move 25,000 citizens without personal transportation
3. A sheltering plan that supports both types of evacuation plans
4. A public education plan that convinces all citizens that it is in their best interest to work with public government and plan to evacuate.

To accomplish these very difficult goals requires close coordination of planning at every level of government that utilizes all available resources to the maximum capability. In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, we were criticized for not using rail transportation. I tell you, as I did both the House and Senate investigative committees, that the non-use was not the result of not attempting to plan for this utilization, The problem remained that we were a local agency with no capability to coordinate a memorandum of understanding with federally subsidized Amtrak.

During the past two years, I have continued to work closely with my state and federal partners to ensure that we could and will utilize rail transportation to move a major portion of our most fragile, elderly and young citizens. During the past two years, hundreds of planning hours have been dedicated to this effort and we have been able to successfully obtain dedicated rail resources for 2006 and 2007. These two plans were completely different and we are getting ready to start the process from scratch for a third time. This is a very difficult process that should not have to be repeated every year.

The question that keeps reoccurring to me is "Where is the National Rail Transportation Plan?" A national rail plan should be developed on a regional basis to enable all urban areas to take advantage of railroads in evacuation planning. Leaving rail on the sideline, or with only limited capability, and moving large numbers of citizens by commercial and military air appears to be a large waste of taxpayers' money. Federal contracting of commercial buses to be placed on call and moved into an evacuation area prior to a storm is problematic due to traffic and availability. Trains are mobile and plans can be developed to move resources to any area requiring assistance. Trains are unaffected by vehicle traffic congestion. Trains are the fastest and most comfortable mode of transportation to move elderly and those with minor medical problems. Moving large numbers of people by train makes operational and fiscal sense.

Predesignated shelters supported by rail transportation moving over unrestricted passenger and freight lines is a safe and affordable and dependable means of evacuation. It is unrealistic to expect southeast Louisiana to successfully evacuate 1.3 million people in a limited 48 hour window without extensive use of rail capability. To accomplish this task, emergency rail assets must be made available to all local urban areas. To do this, we need a national frame-

work to help make this happen. Those of us at the local level look to your assistance in helping us on this mission.

Thank you very much for your support in examining the increased capability of railroad evacuation operations. I will be happy to take any of your questions.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you and thanks to the panel.

When the Mayor was speaking, there was a feeling that we wanted to give him a clap, and all of the participants, so this is a time that you can do that——

[Applause.]

Ms. BROWN. —before we start asking the hard questions.

First of all, Mr. Cannon, in your testimony, it seemed to me that you had some questions about whether or not the disabled or the infirm could benefit from the train participation as opposed to cars or buses. Now we all know what happened with those cars and buses and all the congestion.

Recently I traveled to Europe, I flew from Washington to Brussels, I got on a train and went from Brussels to downtown Paris, 200 miles, one hour and 15 minutes. I mean, you know, during the 1950s we invented the highway system. It is now time for us to move forward with a functional rail system, one that can move people, goods and services. One of the things, in Europe, in many areas, they do not let the trucks go through the community or they piggyback, they put the truck on the trains and move them out.

So can you respond to that, your feelings about—I guess my question is what is your concern about moving the disabled on the trains?

Mr. CANNON. It is the present configurations of the trains. The people that are in the intermodal plan for evacuation are the elderly who are ambulatory, who can move on their own. There is a very small wheelchair capacity on the existing rail cars, so we could take some wheelchair patients and some patients who use oxygen but who carry it with them and take it with them. But stretcher-bound patients, people in need of respirators and those types of patients cannot travel on the train.

So the plan for the city and the state includes another portion where they will be transported in a different manner and not by bus, but by air. Now they will have to be moved by ambulances to the transportation center and then they'll be triaged and then appropriately moved out utilizing air resources.

But it is just the configuration of the rail car. It is not that if it was properly configured you could not—and you had the right crews of medical support—you could use them. That is not the issue, it is that you cannot use them as they are presently designed.

Ms. BROWN. Mayor.

Mayor NAGIN. As far as?

Ms. BROWN. Did you want to respond to that?

Mayor NAGIN. I think Colonel Ebbert has studied this on a pretty detailed level.

Ms. BROWN. Colonel.

Colonel EBBERT. We looked, in 2006, in fact went to several manufacturers who believe they can convert all their rail cars into an evacuation car for even stretcher patients for about half a million

dollars a car. That seems expensive, but when you utilize it across the nation as a mobile resource and bounce it against the cost of flagging one C-17 military aircraft to move people, it would seem, over time, to become a very efficient way to move large numbers of non-ambulatory patients. So I agree that we need to configure some of these cars properly because currently a passenger is not capable.

The second thing is we as a city are tasked with—one of the only cities being tasked by the Justice Department to ensure that our evacuation plans are in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which causes us problems when we utilize trains that are not capable of meeting those standards and also buses that do not meet those standards.

Ms. BROWN. Well, we all—everybody in this room has to feel very strongly that we have to have a plan for the elderly and the disabled. We cannot let what happened happen again, never, on our watch. And so we need to move forward with planning and implementation.

And with that, Mr. Cannon, if done appropriately, do you believe intercity passenger rail can help or hinder evacuation efforts?

Mr. CANNON. No, I actually think it is a great help to evacuation efforts. And as you heard Colonel Ebbert say, we are beginning the process now with the renegotiation for 2008, and what we are looking at is the entire Gulf region and adding in those other metro areas and not just New Orleans. So we are taking the lessons learned the last two years, 2006 and 2007.

And transportation evacuation, I will just comment, is only one of those lessons learned that we are taking from here. But it is almost like getting a use of the taxpayers' dollars twice. Because things that we have invested in heavily in Louisiana can now be transferred from Texas to Florida without any difficulty. And I can give you a very clear example of that.

During hurricane Dean, the Category 5 that was approaching Texas, there was a need for air evacuation that had not been preplanned. There was a very short time. It was to move 25,000 people, the request came in on Saturday to be able to move them on Monday. How would we do that? Well, we took the transportation planning unit from Louisiana and the Baton Route warm cell and we transferred it over to Texas and we were able to use the planning structure and the template and the model that had been developed here and transferred it over there.

And so when I talk about the use of the investment of taxpayers' dollars and the transferability of models, much has come from the last two years of the work here. While some people may be critical of the fact that we put so much into this state, it is not just this state. It is a benefit across the Gulf coast and eventually the rest of the country.

So yes, very plainly, I support and we support the idea of rail in the urban areas.

Mayor NAGIN. Madam Chair, if I could make one point.

Ms. BROWN. Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor NAGIN. Make sure that what Colonel Ebbert was pointing out was that it seems as though—and we do not mind being kind of the test case for a lot of this and we hope that it can be shared

with the rest of the country. But one of our frustrations is that it is an annual negotiating event. We have had enough learning to go on and it would be great if it could be a multi-year commitment so that we in the City of New Orleans, Jacksonville, any of the other coastal cities, would know that this service is available to them and they would not have to be scrambling around. I mean this if February, our hurricane season starts in June and we are still not certain about what we are going to have going forward.

Ms. BROWN. Well, Mr. Cannon, would you believe that—well, for the past few years, I have been struggling because the administration's budget has come in zero funding for Amtrak, and this year it is an improvement, it is $900 million, but at $900 million, it would actually close the system down. Comment.

Mr. CANNON. Madam, I really cannot comment on the budget. I can comment on two points. Our goal is to have this contract in place before June 1, although it will be again different than it was in 2007 and 2006 because of the expansion into the Gulf.

Secondly, if in fact there was a national plan where rail evacuation was part of the national railroad operation, that would certainly make this task a lot easier.

Ms. BROWN. I'm going to go to Mr. Jefferson and then I have additional questions. Mr. Jefferson.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, Madam Chair.

What prevents a national plan being put into place, Mr. Cannon, in your judgment? What is limiting this effort?

Mr. CANNON. I really can't speak for Amtrak. I can tell you that the way FEMA works is that we coordinate the resources of the federal government through something we call inter-agency planning. And we see what each piece brings to the table, which is why we use the military, Northcom and Transcom, to do the air piece. And we have dealt with Amtrak on this very specific piece, but there needs to be a larger mission, if in fact we are going to talk about a national rail program. And that comes from the national rail program.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Well, does there need to be some new authority in law to accomplish this, or just cooperation between the various parties?

Mr. CANNON. No, I think, as with many things, there needs to be a funding source and a new authority with the required mission. There are many things we could do if we had the resources to do it.

Mr. JEFFERSON. When I say new authority, I mean new laws to be put in place. Is that what you mean, the same thing?

Mr. CANNON. I understand; yes, sir.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Okay, so what would these new laws entail?

Mr. CANNON. I was speaking specifically about the Federal Railroad Administration and what they see as their areas of responsibility. If Congress makes evacuation planning and utilization part of their responsibility, they will bring that to the table. But right now, that is not part, so they are doing the best they can with the resources they have.

Mr. JEFFERSON. So without that, you are limited to this one year plan the Mayor talks about and Mr. Ebbert complains about, that cities have to go through, and I guess states too, year by year?

Mr. CANNON. What it means is that each one—well, yes, in the sense that each area has to be planned individually for the resources that are available in that area.

As I said earlier, one of the more difficult parts of rail transportation—and I think I heard one of my colleagues mention it here—is the use of both passenger lines and freight lines. All those lines are owned by separate and distinct railroads and so there have to be agreements in place that we run down locally in the planning process to make that happen. If there was in fact a national program that made that happen, it would make our work a lot easier.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Now let me ask you, if we were just trying to judge where we are now compared to where we were before 2005, would you say we are better off now with respect to the capacity to use rail to evacuate people out of harm's way now than we were in 2005 before Katrina?

Mr. CANNON. We are better off in New Orleans and Louisiana because we have done the very special particular work that is necessary for this area and this region. I could not say the same thing for another Gulf Coast community, but our plan—we are changing our whole planning focus from now New Orleans centric to Gulf Coast centric. So yes, it is better here than it was pre-2005.

Mr. JEFFERSON. How much better?

Mr. CANNON. Much better, much better.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Quantify that for me.

Mr. CANNON. The plan is in place to evacuate 6000 people by rail that did not exist prior to that. So it has come a long, long way since then.

Mr. JEFFERSON. And that is a plan we can rely on right now today.

Mr. CANNON. I believe that is a very solid plan.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Do you feel the same way, Colonel?

Colonel EBBERT. I feel that we have come a very long way, Congressman. I want to reiterate though I believe you need a national framework. Because of the complexities of the planning process, the ones that were just addressed, the use of freight rail to push Amtrak over, without that capability, it limits the options of sheltering and where you can move trains to and locations. We need some national model that when there is an emergency declaration, that somebody somewhere has laid out, that allows Amtrak to utilize those lines that are most efficient and most effective for each local community.

The second thing is that we need it on a national level because it does not make sense to spend $700,000 to park trains in New Orleans when there are no trains in Mobile, there are no trains in Pensacola, Corpus Christi or anywhere else. This is a mobile capability. So if we look at it as a national resource, the valuation of this comes down significantly and the cost, spread over the nation, becomes much more easily acceptable.

Ms. BROWN. I think what we will do is I think there are people here from the freight rail, we will pose that to them, because even though it is not a written agreement, I think it is an informal agreement in case of an emergency, the freight will yield to the passenger rail to move people out of the area. But we will get that on record. Is that not the case, Mr. Cannon?

Mr. CANNON. I am not aware, ma'am, of that.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Madam Chair, one last thing, if I might, just to ask Mr. Santos and to ask the entire panel, as we do, given the answer Mr. Cannon has given about the need for a national—for new authority on the national level, does anyone have a suggestion to the Committee as to what specific authority ought to be granted in this area that this Committee could go back and perhaps work to get this specific thing done so that—it appears to be central to what we are talking about here.

So have you thought, Mr. Santos, about what the specific language ought to be and what specific authority is needed to get this whole issue of planning worked out, so that we can have a reasonable plan that lasts more than one year, and all the rest?

Colonel SANTOS. Congressman, I believe after reviewing the brand new national response framework that came out I believe on January 22, that describes how our nation is organized and the roles and responsibilities at the state, the local and federal level, that this responsibility should perhaps rest with FEMA as the entity that the local and state emergency management across all of the United States, all the states, look to for assistance.

You have got to keep in mind, all emergencies are local. So what happens here in Orleans Parish and all the parishes in Louisiana, we work very closely at the state to help them to see where the gaps are, to see what their needs are. And once we find those, then we at the state level work very hard to try and fill those resources. When we reach a point where it exceeds even the state's capability, that is where we look to our FEMA partners to come in, who has the resources across all of the federal partners and entities, to bring in those resources that we need. We see rail as one of those assets that should fall under where they can help control, help design and put into place a plan that could be used from coast to coast.

So as far as the verbiage goes, you know, the verbiage in our mind I believe would be one that they have the authority to work with Amtrak and all the different entities of rail out there, to bring them under in a time of emergency, so that we can have a unified, collaborative plan that will work wherever it is needed.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Mayor, in your testimony, you stated that 3.6 million people visited New Orleans in the first six months of 2007, nearly the same amount of people visited in 2006. Do you believe that intercity passenger rail service is an important resource to continue to bring people to New Orleans? Why or why not?

Mayor NAGIN. I think it is very important, Madam Chair, for a couple of reasons. We are still building our transportation systems in and out of this city. The airport, even though it is doing very well, is still only at—you know, if you look at cities, it is 88 percent, but if you look at passengers, about 70-something percent of what it was pre-Katrina.

We just had these huge football games in the city and we had passengers or tourists that were trying to get into this city, whether they were driving, rail, flying, what-have-you. And intercity rail would definitely enhance our ability to get back up to those record years that we had in 2004, absolutely.

Ms. BROWN. I just want you to know that I just had my family here this weekend and we were coming from Jacksonville. We checked Jacksonville, Orlando on the airlines and the tickets was running six, seven and eight hundred dollars.

Mayor NAGIN. Yes.

Ms. BROWN. So I mean it is just ludicrous. That is one of the reasons why more people cannot get in here, because they cannot afford it. And we need an alternative other than driving, you know, ten hours. We are thinking green and we are thinking economic development, we have got to think how we can move people.

You mentioned in your testimony that you are seeking $80 million for rail fortification and startup costs for a commuter rail line from New Orleans UPT to Baton Rouge. Who is contributing to this project and how much and who would provide the service?

Mayor NAGIN. This is a project that the state has been working on for a couple of years. We have been working with the state. They have done the analysis and I think it is over a two to three year period that this type of investment will be needed. So the matching funds would be brought forward by the state. It is a cooperative endeavor with Amtrak, Amtrak is also working with us on this, where they would have some dedicated trains that would go back and forth between these two cities.

But it would also put us in a position where our citizens would be more attuned to rail service and they would use it on almost a day-to-day basis. So then when we needed it for evacuation purposes, we could just expand the number of units that are moving between those two rails and besides Memphis, have Baton Rouge as another evacuation destination city.

Ms. BROWN. In regard to rail, how can you work with other local and state governments to assure that they will be ready to care for citizens of New Orleans in case of evacuation by rail?

Mayor NAGIN. Well, it is a cooperative effort between the city and the state where we are—and the federal government for that matter. We are talking to various cities assessing their capacity for taking our citizens.

Going forward, we do not think we will have as many citizens that will need to utilize rail, but there still will be—I think, Colonel, we are talking what, 25,000?

Colonel EBBERT. Twenty-five thousand.

Mayor NAGIN. Twenty-five thousand people that are still dependent upon public transportation and would need that type of transportation.

There are cities out there that are willing to work with us, they just want to know that whatever costs that they incur during these emergencies, that they will be reimbursed. And I think we are getting closer to those agreements.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Jefferson.

Mr. JEFFERSON. One of the issues during the evacuation was after the initial—after the storm passed, this is after the storm passed, there were many people who wanted to help in the city, many first responders from other parts of the country. This business of moving people by rail into the city, have you considered—is it part of your plan to move first responders from other cities here to be of assistance to us after a storm has hit our area?

Colonel EBBERT. We have not broached that idea. We are more concerned at this point of ensuring that we get our citizens who do not have the capacity to get out of here——

Mr. JEFFERSON. I am talking about after the storm.

Colonel EBBERT. Obviously, if we develop that capability, it gives us the capacity to move the other way, bringing people in, especially supplies and people, both of which are high bulk items that could be utilized by rail movement much more efficient in many ways than highway, one truck at a time. So it is a capacity that once we develop it, it would allow us to deal with after-storm problems of resupplying those people and bringing both manpower and resources into any area in the United States.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Mayor, I know we talked earlier about you have plans to utilize some special areas for people who are in high-risk situations, who could not move out of the city, whatever. And of course, now our plan is hopefully to have as many people move out as possible without having these big areas where we concentrate people with expectation that they will be able to weather the storm and go back to their homes.

Mayor NAGIN. Yes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. This is a 25,000 person number you are talking about who do not have transportation themselves. That is—how is the specific planning done to move people from their homes to here, to out of here? How would that be done?

Colonel EBBERT. What we have done is develop a city-assisted evacuation plan. And our plan is based around (1) the utilization of our own internal buses to move citizens from 17 pickup locations located out of the city, to, and if they are coming in on rail, to this facility here to be processed and put on rail. So we plan to use our internal capacity with our buses that are very much a part of our intercity program.

We have gone further than that. We have tried to develop a database of those people who are incapacitated in a home, bedridden, that need assistance to get out of the home to actually get to the processing center. So we have worked very hard to get the citizens to preregister so we know where those people are, who they are and what their needs are. And then we again use our ambulances, our buses, our vans, to pick those individuals up, bring them to a processing center where they can either get on rail or plane transportation out of the airport.

Mr. JEFFERSON. If I might, Mr. Mayor, about recovery, we talked a lot about the evacuation before the storm and some things after the storm, but now we are down two years, three years——

Mayor NAGIN. Right.

Mr. JEFFERSON. —and the issue is how might this rail system, changes in it, intercity rail transportation issues and all the rest, resolve in a way that might help our city's recovery now and in the longer term. And what role do you see rail playing in that by expanding the services and the rest that you discussed generally?

Mayor NAGIN. It can play many different roles besides it being an evacuation tool and also a tool for people to come back post-storm. It would allow an efficient transportation option for our citizens right now. Madam Chairperson just talked about the airlines and what they are doing. The reason why the flights are so high

is because every plane that leaves and comes into this city is full to capacity just about. I flew a couple of weeks ago and I got the last two seats on the plane, it was literally the last two seats, and I paid a premium for that.

So this would provide us with another alternative for people to come in and out of the city. Many of our citizens are still living in other parts of the country and want to come back to the city to work on their property, check on their family members or what-have-you. So it would be critical. I have been to Europe also and in Europe, it is a critical part of their transportation network.

I will tell you this though, the infrastructure of the rail lines, we have six Class A rail lines that come in and out of this city. We are very unique, which is a blessing. But I will tell you that most of those rail lines need significant infrastructure work because if we are going to have the kind of speeds that we need for passenger rail, then we need to fortify those rails.

And I will make this one other point. Most of the rail lines are elevated, so in the event of flooding, they are a transportation medium that is reliable, even when something floods. I cannot remember seeing a picture of a rail line totally under water, Colonel, unless you saw one.

Colonel EBBERT. No, that is correct, they are elevated and the only time that we cannot utilize them is when we actually close the gates on the levee system, which we would have to do probably eight to ten hours prior to a storm arriving in this area.

Ms. BROWN. Mayor, I have a couple more questions for you, if you do not mind.

Mayor NAGIN. Yes.

Ms. BROWN. What was the cost of restoring this Union Passenger Terminal following hurricane Katrina? What investments have the City made in restoring this building to accommodate Amtrak passengers? This is absolutely a beautiful building and I just love the multi-modal, you have the bus there, we have the train. I mean this is—the goal is to have everything under one roof.

Mayor NAGIN. Yes. I do not recall the cost off the top of my head but it was a couple of million dollars that we invested in this facility. And we have visions of expanding this. There is a streetcar line that stops about two to three blocks away from here. So we hope at some point in time to incorporate a streetcar line into this facility. And if we have a passenger rail system that is coming in and out of the major cities in the state and linking us to other cities around the country, then when a passenger comes into this facility, they will have the option of taking a taxicab, a streetcar, a bus or whatever they need to do to get in and around this great city. And we will continue to invest in this. We see this as a transportation hub for the future of New Orleans that is embedded with the rail system. If the rail system was not here, we would not have this central location the way we have it. So it is critical for the future of this city.

Ms. BROWN. I think those are all the questions I have for you at this moment.

Mr. Santos, can you describe the agreement that the State of Louisiana has with other states to accommodate possible disaster

evacuees? What is the difference in the accommodations if the evacuees arrive via bus or rail?

Colonel SANTOS. Yes, ma'am. This past year, we had a concerted effort, along with our FEMA partners to go out and solicit the cooperation and assistance from various states to potentially take evacuees from Louisiana. We already talked about Tennessee, how they have agreed to accept 6000 evacuees by rail in their state. Once they get there, they will be responsible for taking those evacuees by bus to the various shelters they have near that location. We have other states, Arkansas, 4000 by bus, some by air. We have some states that will take—Alabama, 10,000 by bus, and they want a few of the buses to remain so that way there is a transportation means to get people around in the event they need to go do some things. So we have a number of states that have agreed with us to take our citizens, evacuees, by either bus, air or by rail.

Ms. BROWN. Would your like to respond, Colonel?

Colonel EBBERT. I think we have worked very hard with our state partners and with FEMA to identify those locations where our citizens could evacuate. My one concern remains is I believe we need to work very hard and the state does not have the capability at all times to predesignate shelters. But we still need to look regionally across the United States at predesignation of shelters if for nothing more than terrorism, because if we have to evacuate any urban area in America when we do it on short notice, those citizens need to know where they are headed. They have got a tank of gas, $3.00 a gallon fuel, and $20 in their pocket. They have got to know where they are going, they have got to see Uncle Sam out there with his arms out saying, "If you get to this location, we are going to provide safety to you and your family."

So my fear is more on the short no-notice evacuations in urban areas than it is for a hurricane where we can plan and identify those shelter areas, depending upon where the storm is coming and which direction it is coming. But in a terrorism strike, we need to have predesignated major regional shelters so our population knows where to go ahead of time.

Ms. BROWN. Last question for both of you all. What plans have been done to return people to New Orleans following an evacuation? How are those challenges different from getting them out—getting them back after the threat is over or the hurricane is over?

Colonel EBBERT. We plan, and our plan the last two years, has been to utilize those resources which we use to move people out, to move them back, whether it be either by vehicle or by train. The more difficult problem that arises—and I do not believe we have had a successful plan—is those people who are medically critically ill that we move by air are a much greater problem in returning because (1) you have to have the capacity to return them into a facility where they can be cared for. So that is a much more complex operation that is going to take a lot longer every time you move these individuals out of the city.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Santos.

Colonel SANTOS. Yes, ma'am, I echo the same sentiments. What Terry describes is those very sick people, you take a chance when you move them. There is a possibility they may not make it, but we may find ourselves in a situation where we have no choice. Our

Department of Health and Hospitals here in Louisiana has done a very, very good job in putting together what they call the medical institution evacuation plan. And based on the situation or scenario that we face ourselves with, we have a plan in place that, using our federal partners' resources, DOD, that we are able to fly very, very sick people to hospitals out of the state of Louisiana. And yet it is a complex plan because they have to know exactly where they are going. And so all of that has to be coordinated before that patient gets on that plane and leaves Louisiana for that location.

But you know, when you are dealing with very, very sick people, it is very challenging.

Ms. BROWN. Go ahead.

Colonel EBBERT. Madam Chair, I would like to add one more item to that. One of our requests of Congress last year and this year has been for the funds to do a cost/benefit analysis of moving that population versus developing a capacity to keep them in the region where they are safe from the storm, can be cared for properly and do not have to be moved. That particular population is greatly at risk, the very sick, every time we pick them up and move them, by whatever means, and we would like to have a cost/benefit analysis done of developing the capacity through dual-use facilities or such that maybe it is more economical to work to shelter those individuals in place than it is to move them great distances.

Colonel SANTOS. And if I may, that is part of the plan. You know, our medical professionals will make that decision. There are hospitals that have hardened themselves, put in generators high up so that way, you know, again depending on the situation, a decision can be made of whether or not it is prudent to leave those sick people where they are, ride out the storm and then let us see what happens. If something does happen, then at that point after the storm passes, then obviously make that decision to get these people out to a safe location.

So all of those factors are looked at, you know, when that time comes.

Ms. BROWN. Colonel, one last question. In the evacuation following hurricane Katrina, Amtrak trains were ready to transport hundreds of people to safety. However, many logistical reasons prevented this from happening. Is the Gulf Coast emergency preparations impaired in any way that if it does not have access to something like Amtrak's Sunset Limited that allows the movement of people from a disaster area to safety? I mean, have we resolved that problem or—I heard what you said, we need a multi-year planning (1); (2) we need to have some kind of agreement with the private rail. Is there any other thing that would stand in the way from moving these people out of harm's way?

Colonel EBBERT. I think that (1) to answer your first question, Madam Chair, without rail, yes, people will be at risk. We need rail transportation for these, what I would entitle the more fragile of our population, the elderly or the very young or the ambulatory sick. We need rail to move those on. (2) the last two years, we have in a partnership with our state and federal authorities worked with Amtrak and have not had that problem. My concern as we move forward is that I believe we need to develop it on a regional basis so it becomes cost effective and that we do not have to start the

process every year to develop all these agreements because of the amount of time and effort that it takes to develop those.

Ms. BROWN. Okay. Well, with that, any closing statements that you all would like to make, starting with Mr. Cannon.

Mr. CANNON. I think that, especially with the last two speakers, you get the sense that FEMA's role is to support local emergency responders. All disasters in our country start at some local place. And it may be years later, but they end at that same local place. It is the responsibility of the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana, to deal with these issues.

Our job at FEMA is to help them, to support them, but not to do their work for them. But to be engaged partners with them. When I spoke about legislation, if I go to DOD and say I want to give you an assignment to help with this, they have a mission to do that. When I go to Health and Human Services and I say I need your support on medical care, they have a mission to do that.

When I go to someone else that has never had a mission like that and now I ask for those resources, it takes much, much longer to plan and develop that.

But again, when we do that at FEMA and when we try to coordinate that, it is in support of the state and local government who have the legal responsibility in this country. This Mayor sitting beside me has the legal responsibility for dealing with this city and our job is to make sure he is successful. And that is what we are about, supporting the local people in their response.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Cannon, let me just say that when people were looking at the government—and I am part of the government, you are part of the government—they did not care whether it was the Congress, they did not care whether it was the President, they did not care whether it was the Democrats or the Republicans. They thought we were inept, incompetent and did not care.

Mr. CANNON. I recognize that.

Ms. BROWN. Period. Everybody felt so.

Mr. CANNON. Yes.

Ms. BROWN. And so as we move forward, we need to understand that people want the government to work efficiently, effectively and they do not care—it is not the blame, I am not pointing any finger at you. I am saying when I personally was home watching it on TV, I thought our government was missing in action. And I am part of the government.

And so I had to do something. I organized my community, we sent 16 tractor-trailers and let me tell you, when they were coming and there was something about the gas and they said that you do not have a certain placard to get gas, they got me on the phone, 1:00 in the morning. And they let my trucks roll. They do not care, people do not care. When there is a problem, they want people to move and that is what we have got to figure out, how to make sure this government works the way it is supposed to work.

And you know, FEMA, it was just—I am not saying it was just FEMA, I am saying the government failed. And we have just got to make sure it does not happen. People around the world was looking at us and calling, thinking that the government was a failure and they did not say whether it was FEMA, they—I mean they just thought that we had a crisis, a meltdown.

Mr. CANNON. Madam Chair, let me—I think you misinterpreted what I said.

Ms. BROWN. Okay.

Mr. CANNON. Our role is to make sure that we are out there supporting them, as you have heard testified here that we have done for the last two years, by having things in place before it happens. Coming in after the fact is very difficult. I want you both to know that FEMA is a very different place than it was in 2005. There is absolutely no leadership at FEMA that was here then and everyone that has been hired at FEMA, including myself with almost 40 years of emergency service experience, everyone in the top of FEMA has real world emergency service experience now.

I would also tell you while we have been blessed by having no major hurricane hit the United States for the last two years, if you will look at tornadoes in Florida that happened last February and March—February. Georgia and Alabama where a school was hit and a hospital was hit, and Kansas that lost an entire town, the first people on the ground after that event with aid were from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. We have a new strategy today, it is called Leaning Forward. The Stafford Act tied our hands for many, many, many years. We will no longer sit still and watch people drown because we are worried about who has got the authority and the responsibility. And all you have to do is look at our performance for the last two years and know that what I say to you is true.

And why we have spent so much time and so much money down here in Louisiana is to make sure that that situation that you described never, never happens again. And I can tell you this, that the people who died in New Orleans will not have died in vain as long as we and people of our ilk are in charge of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

Ms. BROWN. I want to thank you for that. And I just want you to know that the FEMA that I dealt with coming from Florida—we had problems, we had hurricanes, we had them in my district—I never had the problems that the people in New Orleans experienced. It was a different FEMA. I am glad that the FEMA that I dealt with is back because I never had the problems that the people in this area had with FEMA, because I represent Jacksonville, Orlando. I mean we had hurricanes, we had fires, but we had the support and the boots on the ground from the beginning. And I am very glad that FEMA is back with professionals doing their job.

Mr. CANNON. Madam Chair, just one other connection. I was the fire marshal for the state of Florida under Governor Childs.

Ms. BROWN. Oh, all right.

Mr. CANNON. So we have that neighbor connection there. And the FEMA you had to deal with here no longer exists.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

Mr. CANNON. Thank you.

Mayor NAGIN. Madam Chairperson, I want to thank you once again for bringing this Committee here. You raised some great points. You know, hurricane Katrina kind of caught everybody a little off guard, all of us of government were overwhelmed with the

disaster. And we were not necessarily coordinated enough to effectively respond to people. And that is a great lesson learned. Unfortunately some people had to suffer and die as a result of this.

But I stand before you fairly confident that we have a good planning process in place now. We have better cooperation between the federal, state and local governments than we have ever had. And I think we are here talking about something very important. And that is the rail system and how can that be utilized, not only just for day-to-day transportation, you know, methods, but for evacuation purposes. And I think this is an under-utilized resource that this country, if it focuses in on this, can improve it, it can be an efficient and cost-effective manner for us to move people normally and during a state of emergency.

So we thank you for focusing this country on this initiative. There is a significant amount of investment that needs to happen in the rail lines to get them in a posture where we can utilize them effectively. And anything we can do from the City of New Orleans standpoint, we are more than welcome to participate and help lobby.

Thank you.

Colonel SANTOS. Madam Chair, thank you again for asking us to be here.

Like I said in my opening remarks, a lot of lessons have been learned from the hurricanes of 2005, especially in this area.

I will tell you that I will vouch for Mr. Cannon and his remarks about the new FEMA, if you will. We for the past two years have been working diligently with FEMA up in Baton Rouge and their warm cell professionals who have been up there, who have been nothing but professional in how they have approached the planning and the coordination here in Louisiana. Not only here just in Orleans Parish or in the southeast, but across our state, all of the at-risk parishes.

Many, many, many hours of planning, coordination have gone into these plans. And I get asked all the time, are we ready. Are we ready. My answer is yes, we are, but that does not mean we are going to stop here. We can get better, we can continue to improve our plans and we continue to do that every day. As a matter of fact, we are meeting with Paulison and Admiral Harvey Johnson on Wednesday, this Wednesday, and briefing them up on where we are at. So everyone is engaged. And I cannot say enough about the City of New Orleans and the job that the Mayor, Terry, Jerry Sneed, the Director, have done since the hurricanes. They are planning and they are engaged, we talk with them on a regular basis and that is what it is all about, is working together. This is a team effort, the local, state and federal level. And if we keep it like that, then yes, we are better, we are ready.

Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you all for your testimony—oh, I'm sorry, Colonel.

Colonel EBBERT. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to finish with one philosophical item for the nation, and that includes those of us at the local level, state level and the federal level. This is a great nation with tremendous assets and we divide ourselves into two categories of organizations driven by two dif-

ferent things. (1) we have mission-driven organizations driven by risk management and we have compliance-driven organizations driven by risk avoidance. We cannot look to the future of this nation in catastrophic instances and be held hostage by organizations that are compliance-driven and risk avoiders. You cannot avoid risk, you can only manage it. And those individuals at federal, state and local level have got to be given the leeway to be risk managers, not risk avoiders.

Ms. BROWN. Well, first of all, let me thank you all very much for your testimony, for answering our questions. We have some additional questions in writing that we will submit to you. Thank you again very much for your testimony. We heard you and we are going to take your recommendations back to Washington.

I also have a little package for you. They will pass it out. You know that we just passed a stimulus package which was temporary to stimulate the economy, which you know, I voted for it because we were able to include some money in there for senior citizens and disabled and veterans.

But the key is the infrastructure investment. And one of the things that we want to do is to invest and we may have another stimulus package in the next three months that will include infrastructure investments—water, sewer, transit—and it will be those projects that are ready to go in 60 to 90 days. We had a group to testify before us, four governors, and they said they had projects that they could have on the streets in 60 days. So I am going to give you that package, I brought it with me and as we move forward, certainly we are going to make sure that transit is included and of course water and sewer, which is, you know, not glamorous but you have got to do it to have economic development. And we can see now if we do not invest in our infrastructure, some of the problems that we have experienced, we will have more of them.

Thank you very much. We are going to take a five minute break before the next panel comes up. Thank you.

[Applause.]

[Recess.]

Ms. BROWN. I would like to welcome and introduce our second and final panel for this afternoon. Our first witness is Mr. Richard Phelps, Vice President for Transportation for Amtrak. Thank you, I think there is 30 years of experience, someone told me.

Mr. Phelps. That is correct, a little over.

Ms. BROWN. Our next witness is Mr. Jeff Moller, Executive Director of Safety and Operations for the Association of American Railroads; the third panelist is Dr. John Bertini. Our fourth witness is Wayne Thomas, Vice President of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and our final witness today is Karen Parsons, Executive Director of the Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission. And I think we met in my office before.

Ms. PARSONS. Yes, we have.

Ms. BROWN. Let me remind the witnesses that under Committee rules, oral statements must be limited to five minutes, but the entire written statement will appear in the record. We will also allow the entire panel to testify before questioning the witnesses.

We are very pleased to have you here today and I recognize Mr. Phelps for his testimony.

TESTIMONY OF RICHARD PHELPS; VICE PRESIDENT FOR TRANSPORTATION, AMTRAK; JEFF MOLLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SAFETY AND OPERATIONS, ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS; DR. JOHN BERTINI, JR.; WAYNE THOMAS, VICE PRESIDENT FOR HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INNOVATIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; AND KAREN PARSONS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTHERN RAPID RAIL TRANSIT COMMISSION

Mr. PHELPS. Good morning, Madam Chairwoman and Representative Jefferson, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Committee. My name is Richard Phelps and I am Amtrak's Vice President of Transportation. In this capacity, I am responsible for the operation of all Amtrak trains, a responsibility that includes the operation of the——

Ms. BROWN. Sir, can you put the mic just a little closer to you?

Mr. PHELPS. —a responsibility that includes the operation of evacuation trains from New Orleans. I would also like to thank Mayor Nagin for his city's hospitality and for hosting this field hearing.

As you probably know, Amtrak began operations on May 1, 1971 and since that first day, New Orleans has been a key stop on our system with scheduled service to Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Memphis. And we have served New Orleans continuously ever since then.

Let me briefly outline Amtrak's plans for disaster relief in the region in the event of another hurricane. We have done some significant work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on planning evacuations since Katrina, and Amtrak was under contract with FEMA for the 2007 hurricane season, which extended this year from June through November. This contract expired on November 30, 2007 and we will begin talks with FEMA this month about renewing it for the 2008 season. Therefore, any references I make to an evacuation plan refer to the plan we put together for the 2007 season.

Evacuation plans are very complex and the logistics of railroad transport are not the only consideration. We move the evacuees, but we must bring them to points where FEMA can arrange for shelter and feeding and we can really only advise FEMA about the feasibility of rail evacuation to those points. One advantage of railroads is our ability to move large numbers of people at once, but it is important to remember that we can only move them on fixed lines. We need to keep this in mind as I discuss the logistics of an evacuation to Memphis, which was the destination we envisioned in our joint planning with FEMA in 2007.

It think it is important to start by setting out the conditions that are necessarily going to govern any evacuation effort. Because of the nature of hurricanes, we assumed we would have a relatively limited amount of time to implement our plan and there are a couple of governing assumptions that I should explain before we get into the description of the actual plan.

The first assumption is that Amtrak would receive its evacuation instructions from FEMA approximately 72 hours before the hurricane makes landfall. Of course, FEMA will issue these instructions at the request of the State of Louisiana. Landfall time would be de-

termined by the National Weather Service. From this assumption flows another. And that is the timing of the individual parish levee boards' decisions to close the levee gates around New Orleans. In 2007, we assumed that the board would close the levee gates 12 hours before the hurricane's announced landfall time. Obviously a lot can happen and we understand it is possible the levee gates could actually be closed 24 hours before the announced landfall time, which would then reduce the amount of time we have to conduct the evacuation from 60 hours to 48 hours. This would then reduce the number of outbound train trips they can make and lower the total number of evacuees we could cover.

All the rail lines out of New Orleans pass through levee gates and some pass through multiple gates, so general gate closure will effectively seal the rail routes. Any individual closure on a line with multiple gates, like the Canadian National line to Memphis via Jackson, Mississippi, which passes through three sets of levee gates, would close the entire line to trains leaving New Orleans Union Terminal. Because this would prevent further rail evacuation and leave equipment in the path of the oncoming storm, Amtrak would remove every piece of rolling stock that could move from the city before the storm struck. This would provide us with cars that could then have been used to transport evacuees to other locations or to bring in additional responders for relief efforts. Equipment that was inside the city after the gates closed would be moved to high ground to limit water damage.

The first 24 hour period of our 2007 plan would be spent mobilizing and deploying personnel and equipment to New Orleans. Amtrak has designated members of a rail evacuation team, or RET, who would have deployed to New Orleans in that period to organize and prepare to receive evacuees. To coordinate with the State's evacuation planners, a mobile command center bus would also have moved to Baton Rouge to link up with the Louisiana Department of Transportation Emergency Operations Center, so it could provide 24 hour liaison with Amtrak's Central National Operations Center in Wilmington, Delaware. The team would have included Amtrak police and emergency preparedness employees who could provide 24 hour coverage of the State ESF-1 functions, which encompass emergency transportation and infrastructure operations.

All revenue service to and from New Orleans would have been suspended. Individuals holding tickets on scheduled trains whose equipment was diverted to evacuation service would be given priority on those trains. Normal service from New Orleans would have been canceled to allow equipment to be used in the evacuation. Inbound trains would have turned at major intermediate points. Equipment currently in New Orleans would be used for evacuations and we would bring in whatever additional equipment that is deemed necessary. On any given day, Amtrak has three trainsets in New Orleans for normal operations and they would have been pressed into service for evacuation.

Under our 2007 agreement, evacuation would have begun at New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal 24 hours after we received notification from FEMA, and several trains would have departed from New Orleans for Memphis over the next 36 hours. We planned our operations with an understanding that the situation would natu-

rally be fluid and I need to emphasize that it depended upon two key government decisions—FEMA's notification to Amtrak and the Federal Railway Administration's notice to the freight railroads that the evacuation had begun and that evacuation trains had priority.

On the handout we have here, you will note that we have highlighted our normal services to and from New Orleans in black and potential rail evacuation routes in red. When planning for an evacuation, we want to move people inland and the two lines that physically offer the best evacuation routes out of New Orleans are the Kansas City Southern line to Baton Route and the Canadian National line to Memphis. We would stay away from the coastal routes, since those would be vulnerable to disruption. Our 2007 planning was focused on an evacuation to Memphis, and I will discuss our plans in that regard. Once I have done so, I will come back to the issue of routes and destinations to offer some closing comments.

The evacuation to Memphis would have begun when the first train departed New Orleans 24 hours after we received the FEMA alert. This would have been an eight hour trip over Canadian National rails, and it would be the first of four trips to Memphis, which could collectively evacuate a total of about 5800 people. Amtrak's employees in New Orleans would have secured the station and departed on the last trains out of the city, bringing any unused emergency food and water supplies out with them. We would also have moved all of the defective and unserviceable equipment that could roll just after the last train departed. This would have required a waiver from the Federal Railway Administration.

To support our planned evacuation, Amtrak stocked a total of 18,000 emergency snack pack meals and 72,000 bottles of water at our commissary facility here in New Orleans Union Terminal to feed evacuees. We also created go kits for every participating engineer and conductor that included such vital items as operating rules books for the railroads on which we will be operating, portable radios, satellite phones, gloves, safety glasses, batteries, lanterns and switch keys.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Phelps.

Mr. PHELPS. Yes?

Ms. BROWN. You have gone over the five minutes. Can you close or make your last point and then maybe we can get some additional information out during the questioning period.

Mr. PHELPS. Sure. I just would like to close by saying that we really worked as a team with both FEMA and the FRA because we need both of those as partners in trying to coordinate a plan that allows us to evacuate and to have priority over the freight railroads.

The most optimal route for us is the route up to Memphis, only because that is the route that we currently operate on, our crews are qualified over there and we can operate at timetable speeds. And the route to Baton Rouge is not conducive to the type of speeds that we need right now because it's basically a freight train route and we do not operate passenger service over there, although some day we would like to.

So I just would like to conclude that it is very difficult and complex to formulate these plans, but we have always been a willing partner and we want to continue to serve this emergency function for the State of Louisiana and other parts of the country.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you. Mr. Moller.

Mr. MOLLER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Congressman Jefferson. On behalf of the Association of American Railroads, thanks for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The New Orleans Terminal is a key gateway in the nation's rail network and it is vital to the national, regional and the local economies. Prior to hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Regional Planning Commission formed a partnership with the association to study possible improvements to the New Orleans rail gateway.

A feasibility study is almost complete and there are a number of improvements that have been identified to enhance the operation of a rail network, at the same time creating some potential significant benefits to the community. Included in these are more fluid routing for the trains to allow them to get into and out of New Orleans more quickly. And this is of course especially important during the critical hours leading up to a weather event.

The LADOTD and the Regional Planning Commission are continuing their partnership with the railroads and we could be beginning a formal environmental impact study later this year.

The U.S. freight railroads move a vast amount of just about every type of cargo connecting businesses with each other across North America, overseas and elsewhere on a rail network spanning more than 140,000 route miles. The industry accounts for about 40 percent of the U.S. freight ton miles. That is more than any other mode, and it does so at about 10 percent of the freight revenue because of our inherent efficiencies.

Since 1980, the industry has invested about $420 billion, that is more than 40 cents out of each revenue dollar, on infrastructure and equipment, creating the world's finest freight rail network. This provides significant public benefits, including lower pollution, energy consumption, reduced highway gridlock, enhanced mobility, safety and security.

States and localities can realize even more of these benefits through the greater use of public-private partnerships such as the one being envisioned here in the New Orleans gateway. These partnerships are based on the principle that private entities should pay for private benefits and that the public entities should pay for those that benefit the public. Rail traffic is expected to double by 2035 and so these partnerships are going to become even more important as we go forward.

A recent study by Cambridge Systematics found about $135 billion should be invested in the network to expand the infrastructure just to keep up with that demand. The industry figures that we can generate probably about $96 billion of this, which leaves a $39 billion shortfall, which is about $1.4 billion a year. This needs to come from somewhere and it can be funded partially through private-public partnerships, perhaps investment tax credits or other sources.

Public officials around the country have recognized the value of public-private partnerships and have worked together with the freight roads on a win-win basis. Four of them are describe in my written testimony, but just to summarize here, there is the Alameda Corridor, which serves LA-Long Beach; the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program or Chicago CREATE; the Heartland Corridor, which is a route from Newport News-Norfolk up to Ohio and up into Chicago; and the Reno trench. All of these represent significant public benefits.

AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, supports public-private partnerships. In a January 2003 report, they noted, ''Relatively small public investment in the nation's freight railroads can be leveraged into relatively large benefits for the nation's highway infrastructure, highway users and freight shippers.''

With existing rail capacity limited, expanding rail passenger service also will need public-private partnerships. Freight railroads are already successful partners with passenger railroads all across the country. More than 95 percent of Amtrak's route mileage is owned by the freight railroads and hundreds of millions of commuter trips each year occur on commuter rail systems that operate at least partially over tracks or rights-of-way owned by the freight railroads.

However, if passenger railroad operations impaired freight operations and forced freight onto the highways, highway gridlock could get worse, fuel consumption, pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, et cetera, could rise and our mobility would deteriorate; outcomes that of course are completely contrary to the goals of expanding passenger operations.

Freight railroads want passenger railroading to succeed and passenger rail progress though must be complementary to and not conflict with rail freight development. This means we are going to have to work together.

In the years ahead, a rapid increase in our nation's traffic will stretch ur already constrained transportation infrastructure, including railroads.

Enhanced freight rail transportation needs to be part of that solution. The freight industry looks forward to working with this Committee and others in Congress and other appropriate parties to help ensure that the rail freight network remains the best in the world and continues to meet our transportation needs.

Thanks very much.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

Dr. BERTINI. Thank you, Congresswoman Brown, Congressman Jefferson; thank you for your invitation to appear before your Subcommittee. I am John Bertini. I serve on several boards of directors of passenger rail groups and as a member of several regional planning groups. I am a practicing physician.

On Thursday morning, September 22, 2005, I received an early morning call from Joy Smith, an official with Amtrak, asking if I would organize and assist in the loading of trains departing from Houston's Amtrak station taking evacuees out of hurricane Rita's projected path. Amtrak had dispatched a four passenger car, one dining car train to Houston to evacuate people who had fled hurri-

cane Katrina less than a month before and were still sheltered in Houston. I provisioned the train with food and water, loaded several hundred people in 20 minutes and sent them on their way to a rapid trip to San Antonio where they received care and shelter.

Just after the Amtrak train departed to the west, a Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Trinity Rail Express commuter double decked train arrived to take another several hundred people, many with disability and infirmity, rapidly to Dallas with an intermediate stop for a meal. These people, their belongings, medical equipment and supplies, were rapidly boarded with order and calm.

I know firsthand the power and problems of passenger rail evacuation. The potential far outweighs the impediments obstructing the development of a feasible rail passenger disaster evacuation plan for our Gulf Coast and for the nation in response to either a natural or manmade disaster.

The major problems are a lack of a comprehensive plan involving Homeland Security, Amtrak, the Class 1 railroads, state and local officials. Such a plan would need to provide the equipment, logistics of rapid response, the mustering of selected evacuees and the care of these people as they travel to their destination point, then with a provision for their return. There are practical problems of freight traffic volume, lack of railcars, care of the elderly and the infirm, rail infrastructure limitations and staff training that would all yield to a coordinated planning and practice exercising.

The potential of passenger rail to move many of those residing within institutions such as health care facilities or who have restricted mobility either because of age or disability, or those who lack access to private transportation, is unmatched by forms of transportation crippled on the crowded evacuation roads. People can be cared for and fed while rapidly fleeing danger under the care of a small number of crew. The response-to-resource ratio can be quite favorable, provided the evacuation plan is well constructed by those who understand both railroads and disaster planning.

Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you and thank you for your assistance too.

Mr. Thomas.

Mr. THOMAS. Chairwoman Brown, Congressman Jefferson, I want to thank you for this opportunity to be here today and to provide this testimony. I have provided written testimony for the record and I will provide some brief remarks this morning.

My name is Wayne Thomas, I am the Vice President of Homeland Security for IEM. We are a national emergency management and homeland security planning company headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. We have been in business for more than 22 years and we started our business with hurricane planning.

We are currently supporting many states and FEMA across this nation, working on what I will describe as historic catastrophic planning activities, both in Florida with a major hurricane hitting the Miami area and in the central United States on a major earthquake impacting that region.

We are also supporting FEMA on what I will call evacuee support projects. This would be when evacuees arrive at a location, how those states are prepared to receive and manage these citizens

that are in a very stressful situation—where they go, how they are processed, what medical equipment they have and so forth.

Based on our experience through many years of doing this work and our current activities, there are some observations I want to share with you this morning. And I think some of the previous panel have also conveyed these thoughts.

The use of rail is a vital component in evacuation. I think we would be remiss and somewhat negligent if we did not consider it as a component in an evacuation program. That is why it is important that we look at this question in great detail. As this gentleman has just pointed out, I think we have examples of where it has been used effectively already.

The challenge I think is to incorporate rail into an overall evacuation program—bringing these citizens to the point where they get on the intercity train, they are transported safely and securely to an arriving location with food and appropriate medical facilities. And when they arrive there, they are treated with the appropriate respect by the receiving states and are put in a shelter facility where they have appropriate care for however long they need.

This is a challenging process. I do not think we can misinterpret or diminish how challenging this is. It takes intense collaboration, many hours and maybe even years of conversation on the planning process. We are working now with many states and local jurisdictions on their planning issues and we are finding that people want to help, they are desperately crying out for planning support to get these things done.

There have been comments earlier about the need for a national plan, looking at the rail system. I think that is something we need to explore in great depth. I do not think we have gone there yet, but it is something that we need to look at.

The final comment I will make is that I hear discussion of this and I think sometimes we begin to talk about this as a standard logistics challenge and it is not. We are dealing with people. We are dealing with people that are in a challenging, stressful, maybe the most stressful environment of their life. And they are mid-disaster, they want to escape that danger and go to a place where they are safe. As a country, our people are our most valuable assets and I think we are remiss sometimes in how we talk about this. I want to be sure that we do not forget that these are people and we are asking people to leave their homes and go to a place they do not know, they probably have never been, and stay there until they are safe and then they come back to maybe not even having a home.

Thank you.

Ms. PARSONS. Madam Chairwoman, Congressman Jefferson and staff, I thank you for having me here today. I am Karen Parsons, I am the Executive Director for the Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission and our role is a three-state commission and therefore, today what I want to talk about really is the role of hurricane evacuation not just for New Orleans and Louisiana but also for Mississippi and Alabama. So we maybe have a unique perspective that has not been covered yet.

I think that we have established so far that there are vast benefits of having intercity passenger rail for hurricane evacuation and

so I will not go into depth on that. And my longer testimony is available.

As we know, the airports are usually the first facilities to cease operations when a storm approaches but trains can operate up to the last moment, moving people out of harm's way. The use of passenger rail for evacuation, as does any successful operation, requires planning and preparation. It takes time to position the trains and their crews to the city being evacuated. And as we found out during Katrina, once the decision is made to evacuate, there may not be sufficient warning time to move Amtrak train equipment from other parts of the country.

Having an established intercity passenger rail service provides immediately available resources, with a known capacity from which to plan and execute the evacuation, including trained crews which are not presently available for New Orleans to Baton Rouge or from New Orleans east to Jacksonville.

While passenger rail transportation is an important resource for evacuation, the greatest contribution of an intercity passenger rail system comes in the post-disaster recovery stage. Katrina displaced thousands of residents and now, more than two years after the storm, many people have still been unable to return home. For the last two years, the State of Louisiana has successfully operated the Louisiana Swift bus service to provide transportation for displaced citizens in communities between Baton Rouge and New Orleans to return to their jobs in the greater New Orleans area. And this unprecedented success only demonstrates the need and value of having intercity transportation to the recovery of the devastated community.

The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission is supporting the efforts of the State of Louisiana to establish intercity passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans to provide reliable, economic transportation for people living throughout the corridor. The rail service will provide planners with immediately available passenger rail equipment and established capabilities from which to prepare for the next major storm. But more importantly, it will also provide an immediately available transportation system to boost the recovery effort.

A few things I would like to point out is fares for the new service will be less expensive than traveling by automobile, the cost of fuel to drive between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is approximately $12.25, the projected cost of a single ride train ticket between the two same points is about $11.00 with discounts for multi ride and monthly passes. A taxi from Louis Armstrong International Airport to a downtown hotel costs anywhere from $13.00 to $29.00. The cost of a train ticket will only be $7.00 from the airport to the Union Passenger Terminal.

New Orleans and the State of Louisiana are planning ahead. We know Katrina will not be the last storm to hit the Gulf Coast. Implementing the intercity passenger rail service within Louisiana will provide a ready reserve of equipment and trained personnel. It is important to note that this may be possible because the service will reside within Louisiana state boundaries and not as a multiple state corridor. The Louisiana State Legislature is able to act independently of our other two states within our commission, Mis-

sissippi and Alabama, in this effort. And to institute a multi-state train requires confronting more difficult problems as detailed below.

After the storm, our service east of New Orleans was discontinued to Jackson on the Sunset Limited. When it was first started, the four states—Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida—came together and partnered with Amtrak and the CSX to start service. There was about $4 million invested in that track, Florida putting up the bulk of around $3 million. It was a notable time, it was a true success to have that train begin. And today, there is no way to evacuate people off of the Gulf Coast without that service. So that is of grave concern for the Southern Rapid Rail. There is no train service that goes north from Gulfport, Mobile, some of the cities along the Gulf Coast, so those people would effectively have to evacuate to the east or the west to connect to the Silver Service in Jacksonville or to, as was suggested, any new service to Baton Rouge or the City of New Orleans train to Memphis or the Crescent to Atlanta.

Numerous hurdles were overcome to institute the service in 1993. Congress funded through the Amtrak budget a feasibility study. CSX and Amtrak worked together to identify impediments, including regulatory and physical obstacles. The states closed hazardous highway crossings and built stations while Amtrak supplied needed cars. All of those things took time and to put the train back in order and to restart service, to provide hopeful future hurricane evacuation will take the coordination of three states working together, which provides a level of difficulty that we have not experienced before.

The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission has effectively supported Congressional funding for all operations of Amtrak for 25 years, since our inception in 1981. Any intention to notice the Sunset is of great concern, given the citizens of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida rely upon Amtrak to be our service provider to connect us locally and to the greater United States, both for daily service and also for hurricane evacuation.

The recent philosophy to evacuate long distance service based on financial solvency rather than as a national transit service is troubling. Long distance trains function as most traditional urban transit systems, to provide a valuable community service regardless of financial profitability. And it is well-documented that long distance trains also enhance and feed the existing and developing corridor routes.

We ask that the Sunset Limited route east of New Orleans not be officially noticed and that the Amtrak be required to restore service between New Orleans and Jacksonville in an improved form. Such service could be separate from the Sunset Limited operating between these two city pairs. This initiative will not only restore an additional route and equipment for rail transportation out of greater New Orleans area and the Gulf Coast states in a time of emergency evacuation, but will also restore a critical missing link in the national network that currently forces anyone wanting to travel by rail between New Orleans and Jacksonville to use a circuitous and lengthy multi-leg trip. One must travel to North Carolina and/or Washington, D.C. in order to make the necessary

connections to reach Florida. This adds several days of train travel time.

Ms. BROWN. Ms. Parsons, Mr. Jefferson said that you are over. But she is talking about Jacksonville.

[Laughter.]

Ms. PARSONS. I apologize.

Ms. BROWN. I am going to give you an additional minute.

Ms. PARSONS. All right, all right.

Well, as you can see, I wrote a whole lot and so I——

Ms. BROWN. Some of it can come out during questions. Just your closing.

Ms. PARSONS. Okay.

To work together in the future to have some sort of service across the Gulf Coast will require Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama to fund that route together under the new proposed framework for corridor service. To get there is very difficult in that we have three state legislatures with three different funding cycles and three different priorities, particularly after being devastated by hurricane Katrina. We would ask help in Congressional legislation that would help with marketing and outreach to local elected officials to help provide a multi-year funding source for any new corridor service. To get all the states to work together takes time. And that type of funding is about $2 million per state. It does no good to provide it for one year or if any one state drops out, any new service could fail.

We would appreciate any support on New Orleans to Baton Rouge, we think that is a very important evacuation route. The State of Louisiana, Louisiana Recovery Authority, the City of New Orleans are all behind that. We need the same kind of focused review east of New Orleans to help remove people out of harm's way during time of emergency situations.

Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you. Thank you very much. And I have got to tell you, I am excited about the possibilities of these states coming together—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida—and I think you are going to have to put in Texas also, as a regional transportation area to move people out of harm's way and also it would be an economic engine. So it is just where we need to go. And I am a 100 percent supporter of Amtrak, I have held it together along with all my other colleagues, because there is a lot of talk but when we actually have to put them on board, Amtrak has a lot of support from the House and the Senate.

But the question is, you know, for example, how we are going to move forward in this region. I would love to see Amtrak—I have talked to the board, I have talked to the board members—I would like to see them take the lead in providing that service. But I am willing to do whatever I have to do to get those services back up. If it means somebody else doing it, we will just have to do what we have to do, because, you know, when we look at the fact that an airline ticket is $700 from Jacksonville to New Orleans, people would much rather do the train and you see that there are over three million people coming into New Orleans. I mean we are at the economic hub. If you look at New Orleans, Mobile, Jacksonville, Orlando, Miami. I mean it is the future.

And I think—for two reasons. One is because it is an economic engine and, two, it will be in place to move people out of harm's way. So I need you all to think about it as we do the reauthorization of—last year, it was TEALU, five years ago, ISTEA, I do not know what it is going to be—who it is going to be named after, but I am looking to have major say-so as far as what we are going to do as far as Amtrak, what we are going to do as far as rail completely. I mean we have the best freight rail service in the world. Everybody comes and takes a look at our rail service and you all have done a good job on that. But then we are the caboose when it comes to passenger rail, and we do not use cabooses any more. That is because we have not put the investment into passenger rail.

Fifty years ago when Eisenhower started out with the system, you know, the highway system, that was wonderful. But now we are ready for something new, something innovative. We have got to think green, we have got to think about reinvesting in our infrastructure. And to me, this region should be a major part of the start.

There are several questions. I could start with you, Mr. Moller, to ask you about the freight, because that is part—you know, the freight has the right of way, and they were discussing what happens during an emergency. Is there any kind of agreement. But more than that, I guess in the future, future, how do we separate those tracks so that we can have dedicated tracks for passenger rail. You know, that is the ultimate. And when people—I hear some of my colleagues say well, you know, it needs to pay for itself. No mode of transportation pays for itself—nothing. It does not pay for itself. Nowhere in the world does it pay for itself—nowhere.

So with that, if you want to answer that question, we can start with you, sir.

Mr. MOLLER. Well, Madam Chairman, you have kind of answered it already, but I will add a little bit, if I may.

Ms. BROWN. Just say it a different way.

[Laughter.]

Mr. MOLLER. No, I meant that in a complimentary sense because I am pleased to hear you recognize the freight network.

We have a history of collaboration in times of emergency and so forth. I mean Dr. Bertini talked about the Trinity system that went down to help people out in Houston and so forth. You know, we are constantly faced with different challenges. We have got a network out in Oregon that is out of service because of a gigantic mud slide right now. So we are constantly dealing with these kinds of situations that require immediate attention and so forth.

Obviously the ultimate solution definitely for higher speed operations is to have a dedicated separate right-of-way where possible. And that is the model that is used in Europe. You know, many people like to talk about the one in France, for example. Except in terminal areas, it has its own dedicate right-of-way and that is the only way it can reach those kinds of speeds and still maintain the kind of safety they have there.

I hope that has been responsive to your question.

Ms. BROWN. I will have some follow up question. But you heard about my vision, Mr. Phelps?

Mr. PHELPS. Yes, and I would——

Ms. BROWN. I just want to know do you all want to play with me or do I have to find somebody else?

Mr. PHELPS. Your words are completely refreshing to us. As a person who has worked at Amtrak for over 30 years, I cannot tell you the frustration that we feel. We have got some great employees, we have got people——

Ms. BROWN. Oh, no question.

Mr. PHELPS. —that are ready to deliver the service if we can get the resources. But having year-to-year funding and not knowing what you are going to have from one year to the next does not allow you to plan. And railroads, by their very nature, are very capital intensive and we need capital for rolling stock, for locomotives and cars, stations, the track and signal infrastructure.

Ms. BROWN. Bridges.

Mr. PHELPS. Bridges, absolutely. And for that to happen, there is going to have to be—we have to have more than 800 or 900 million. I mean that is a shutdown figure for us. And thanks to you and other Members of Congress and the Senate, we have been able to at least get enough to limp along, but that is just not letting us grow. We need to grow. We are capable of delivering a world class service if we can just get some decent funding. You know, that is our critical problem right now.

So I would encourage—and I will take your message back to our President Mr. Kummant, that you would like to see Amtrak take more of a lead in this. But our lead, of course, also has to be done jointly with Members of Congress because we have got to have some type of funding or at least a dedicated source of funding, as Ms. Parsons was talking about earlier, in order to make this happen. But we are ready and willing to walk with you on that.

Ms. BROWN. That is great, I mean that is good.

Someone else want to respond to that, the vision question, before we move on?

Ms. Parsons.

Ms. PARSONS. I do believe that our country needs that larger vision in order to move this forward, for day-to-day service, for all the reasons why rail is a wonderful alternative mode of transportation and for hurricane evacuation. We are really missing a comprehensive approach to rail in the U.S. and I think that your Subcommittee could help turn that around.

Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Jefferson.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Mr. Phelps, let me ask you this question. You describe in your testimony the essentials that Amtrak will offer in an emergency situation, or at least what the last year's plan involved. What would you ideally like to see in a contract with FEMA for 2008 that would add or be different from what you had in 2007?

Mr. PHELPS. I think basically the plan that we formed with FEMA in 2007 was strictly more or less based on the actual capacity that we had in New Orleans in terms of equipment. I think having a national plan, to me, is a good idea to have a—we need to have a more organized, orchestrated approach to emergencies that can occur anywhere in the country. And I think a lot of people do

not know, but in times of war, Amtrak becomes a part of the Department of Defense and we move troops—you know, there are lots of things that we do that sometimes are not always thought about by the general public. But I really do think that we need to have more equipment. We are equipment constrained right now and that is the only limiting factor that we have in terms of being able to evacuate larger numbers of people than we can now.

Mr. JEFFERSON. The plan was also restricted to Memphis because that is where you have passenger service now. But if you could improve your 2008 plan so you could go to other destinations, that would require some cooperation from some of the freight lines?

Mr. PHELPS. That is correct. We would need——

Mr. JEFFERSON. But I feel that would be more useful than just going to one destination, is that correct?

Mr. PHELPS. Absolutely. We would like to have multiple destinations because you need to be able to deploy according to where the weather is tracking. In some cases, we may want to go west toward Baton Rouge and in other cases we may want to go north or we may want to even go toward Meridian. But we have to have the flexibility.

And I do not think it is really a bad idea for FEMA to have the jurisdiction, but I think we really need to have a comprehensive plan. And the freight railroads, we really have gotten cooperation in times of emergency. I will have to say that both the KCS and the Canadian National were very cooperative with us in terms of allowing trains to have priority that had evacuation. They are governed by problems that they have with crossing gates that might get blown down and things that might restrict the speed of the train. But they will give the train priority once we are out and running.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Moller, in connection with that, what special dispensations or what special support, if any, is needed to help Amtrak do a better job and reach more destinations in case of national emergencies? I mean what more can the freight carriers do to make this work even better than perhaps it is working now?

Mr. MOLLER. Well, Congressman, I guess as you heard, there has been pretty good cooperation. I guess I would like to go back to the FEMA planning. We heard it in the earlier panel this morning and some of us here just now. There are many, many logistical issues involved with changing a destination. It is not as if you are on a bus and instead of going east on the interstate, we will go west today. There are many federal regulations governing licensing of the locomotive engineers, for example, about being familiar with various territories and so on. You know, I do not want to muck up the conversation, but——

Mr. JEFFERSON. I want you to understand my question is not so much directed at can you do more. What would be necessary for you to do more? I assume you want to do as much as you can. I assume you are cooperating with Amtrak now, as has just been testified to.

Mr. MOLLER. Uh-huh.

Mr. JEFFERSON. But if you could, in an ideal world, find a way to do more than that, how could that work and keep—just for me to know all the things you are talking about—how can we just do

more? We want to be able to move as many people as we can as fast as we can. So that is why I asked the question.

Mr. MOLLER. Well, I guess it gets back to the idea of capacity in that case. You know, imagine, if you will, that we have a weather situation coming here and obviously we have got passengers who want to get out of town. There is obviously freight traffic we want to get out of town as well, tank cars or something along those lines, and so, you know, in many routes we are single track with sidings every so often. And you can imagine trying to move highway vehicles on a one-way street when you are trying to go the opposite direction, you know, people ducking out of the way and so on. So I think capacity is the issue that comes before me at the moment.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Ms. Parsons, you talked about Jacksonville which gave you a minute or so more to talk than everybody else did.

Ms. PARSONS. Thank you.

Mr. JEFFERSON. But I want to ask you about the Sunset Limited east of New Orleans, about the potential benefits you see to it, about obstacles to its restoration, and what limitations exist to the transportation vision you have for the area that require restoring the service in order to realize that?

Ms. PARSONS. Well, our nation is embarking upon a new rail act and within it, it has funding and new criteria to evaluate priorities for the nation in terms of where investments will be made across the country. And in my testimony, I outline within that rail act a couple of places that I think will work against long distance trains, particularly the Sunset Limited to the east of New Orleans and potentially the Sunset west of New Orleans, simply because it was one of the poorest performing trains, not because of Amtrak but because it was the one transcontinental train that ran across the country from west coast to east coast with multiple stops and it had accumulated delays associated with it. So once a train misses its time slot, it is not necessarily guaranteed it all the way across the country.

Mr. JEFFERSON. A little more specific with respect to New Orleans' recovery and the effort being made now to recover, how essential is the restoration of the Sunset Limited, that the Mayor talked about this morning.

Ms. PARSONS. Well, I think that it has great potential to provide—be an evacuation service for all those small cities. There are 12 cities between New Orleans and Jacksonville that are no longer served, that have no rail service at all. I think that it has the potential to remove all of those people.

We had probably somewhere between 11 and 12 percent of all households did not have cars in those cities. New Orleans, by far, had the largest number of households without cars. So there is a need and it could provide that with early planning to get those people to a train station and move them to New Orleans or Jacksonville for connection to other services.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Thomas, in your testimony, you state that a rail evacuation plan must address a means of getting the transportation disadvantaged to a train station for the evacuation. Would you describe what you mean by that and what steps you think ought to be taken to address this issue?

Mr. THOMAS. What I was talking about there, sir, is that the intercity rail is strictly that piece. You are removing it from this station, in this example, to Memphis perhaps. You have to bring these passengers from their various locations to this place where they can get on the Amtrak train. And that is going to involve mass transit. In the environment where you have perhaps people with their personally owned vehicles trying to also leave town, it is going to be perhaps somewhat chaotic within the city because people are trying to move around. So you would have a comprehensive look at identifying where these people live, what their capabilities are to move, that you have the capacity to bring them from their homes or care facilities where they reside, and bring them to this central place where they can be documented and then put on the train for transportation.

So in looking at the use of rail as part of an evacuation program, there is an upfront part of this which I think is crucial to make it an effective program.

Mr. JEFFERSON. In a national plan, do you see any role for the federal government in that or do you think that is a local issue?

Mr. THOMAS. I think it is both. It is always a local issue but there is a role for the federal government here with mass transit, absolutely.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Bertini, you addressed this issue somewhat in your testimony. Could you make a further response to the question?

Dr. BERTINI. Specifically in moving people from their place of residence to the demarcation point?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Talk about moving disadvantaged people to make sure they have a way to get out of town.

Dr. BERTINI. Well, that is primarily a local planning function that can identify locations where potential identified evacuees can be mustered and then brought to the train station and loaded onto the rail cars. And that is best left to the local authorities to identify those individuals most at risk.

Mr. JEFFERSON. I understand that, but with respect to being able to support the move from one place to the other. The local authorities may identify who they are, but putting in a plan that is going to work at the end of the day, Mr. Thomas talks about mass transit, for us it is RTA buses and that sort of thing. Some other kinds of transportation might be available in other places, for us it is pretty much strictly reliance on bus transportation or some local school bus transportation.

Dr. BERTINI. Well, I speak from a position of disadvantage. I have not planned it, I have only done it. And we used buses and used the local bus system which was shut down in the case of Rita because of the impending storm. Almost all of those are ADA enabled and they were able to move large numbers of people to the station very quickly. So we used the regional bus authority.

Mr. JEFFERSON. The very last thing, in his testimony, Mr. Cannon talked about challenges with the use of rail transportation as a means of evacuating people. He talked about different railroads on the track determining where the trains will go, evacuation law enforcement issues, special needs passengers and prepositioning of adequate capacity to support the evacuation. Are these challenges

that can be overcome to make this a viable solution for us or do you think they are challenges that will just be run up against and we cannot really do all that much to work our way through them?

Mr. PHELPS. I think they are absolutely challenges that can be overcome and in fact in time honed over time to where we have it to the point where some things become automatic in a plan. I think one of the things that, you know, if we had service to Baton Rouge, if we had commuter service, I mean as Mayor Nagin alluded to, the more train service you have, the easier it becomes to evacuate, the more flexibility, the more choices you have to evacuate people.

So when you are talking about commuter rail, you are talking about trains that are more frequent and they do not go as long a distance, but you have the higher frequencies and you have greater capacity to move people. So I think going from New Orleans to the west, Baton Rouge, and also New Orleans to some place like Gulfport, Biloxi. And perhaps that is the best way to try to incrementally build the train back to Florida through Pensacola, which I know Chairwoman Brown is deeply interested in.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Anyone want to comment on that issue, overcoming the challenges Mr. Cannon talked about?

Mr. THOMAS. Sir, I would like to make a comment if I can. I mean I think if we make it a priority, we can do it. It is whether we decide as a nation that we want to make this a priority to have this available to our citizens. And if we decide to do that, like everything else we do in this country, we will do it.

Mr. JEFFERSON. What does it take to make it a priority? What are you saying exactly?

Mr. THOMAS. It has got to come from the federal level that this is a mission that this nation will do. And the locals I think will adopt that as part of the collaborative process. But I think there needs to be leadership at the federal level to make it happen.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, Mr. Thomas. Thank you, Madam Chairlady.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Jefferson.

Mr. Bertini, what challenges did you encounter in coordinating and loading of the passenger trains out of Houston? What steps did you take to ensure that the evacuation would run as smoothly and effectively as possible? Do you believe that the federal, state and local governments have learned from your experiences and why did Amtrak approach you to assist in the loading of trains leaving Houston prior to hurricane Rita's arrival?

Dr. BERTINI. Well, the whole plan was extemporaneous and there were no federal authorities that I was aware of. My help was called because the only people available were the Amtrak station staff which was one person and one conductor. So the assistance was provided on an extemporaneous basis.

The problems that arose were relatively minor and overcome on site. Some of the individuals arrived with motorized wheelchairs which are extremely heavy and had to be loaded, so we gathered up volunteers and picked it up. We positioned people in cars based on their special needs. So those with oxygen or wheelchairs went into one car where we could get them resources to observe them. Those that had other needs were placed in other cars. So a lot of

the solutions were arrived at extemporaneously like you did with the situations that you were encountering.

I think our experience has been studied and part of the planning process that the gentlemen before me and around me took in to consideration as they developed their plans.

Mr. PHELPS. Could I make a comment?

Ms. BROWN. Yes.

Mr. PHELPS. Dr. Bertini being approached was no accident. We have had a longstanding relationship with Dr. Bertini. He is—among his many other duties, he is the chair of the Galveston Railroad Museum. He has long been interested in having an evacuation route from Galveston out to Houston and on up north. And so we knew that he was rail savvy and that he brings a lot of capabilities in terms of rail and railroad knowledge. So he was the natural person for us to reach out because we did not have enough resources in that area. In some cases very little. We only have one train that operates tri-weekly, which is another one of the problems with the Sunset, it does not operate daily and that contributes to the operating loss that we have on that train that Karen was indicating. But it is still well patronized. We have more people that ride that train knowing that it is only tri-weekly and they are going to have to pick the right day of the week to come back. So I think the spirit is there and I think the public, if you build it, they will come.

Ms. BROWN. What is the status of restoring service to the Sunset Limited from New Orleans east to Florida and what service do you have now and why has Amtrak not restored this service to this route?

And Doctor, I just want to thank you. When I read your testimony, you are one of those unsung heroes.

Give him a hand, guys. He did a good job.

[Applause.]

Mr. PHELPS. Well, as you are well aware, the track for the CSX Railroad was really—track, signal, everything had to be rebuilt. During that time, we redeployed the Sunset equipment to either other routes or we increased the consist size of other trains for additional capacity. When the CSX restored the track, we had looked at the financials and the Sunset from New Orleans to Florida, the revenue that we were getting—because we have—I know you know that we are audited now by the DOT IG and we have to try to use the equipment in the places where we get the most return on investment and try to get the best benefit. And there were other routes that had higher density. I am not saying that it certainly is not important and I think that was our only transcontinental train and people really liked it. It provided a service, but from a fiscal standpoint also we had that issue.

Ms. BROWN. It is very complicated, it is not an easy answer to the question and it is not an easy question because part of the problem is—let me just give you an example. For three years, my colleagues and I have caught the train from Washington to Virginia. Well, the freight train has gotten in the way for the past three years and this year we were on time and on schedule, but you know, it is a problem when they arrive two and three hours late. Well, that has been part of the problem with the service, but it is coming from another area, the freight gets in the way. But if

the train is arriving at 2:00 in the morning, it does not work. I mean the service just does not work. You have got to have a time—in doing the studies, the key is that it is on time and you can count on it but it cannot be in the middle of the night.

Mr. PHELPS. Your point is well taken and that is one of the problems with a transcontinental train because while it might hit some areas in the right time slot, it is, by its very nature, going to hit some other ones that are not. So one of the things probably going forward in the future if we looked at restoring service would be to have an across-the-platform transfer to another train at a different time. It would connect to a train at a different time that would make more sense for the people along that route.

But you know, right at this point, the corporation is still evaluating and I will certainly take back your comments to Mr. Kummant.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

And I guess if he hears from you and from me, how often he needs to hear it.

In your testimony, you used an evacuation plan from New Orleans to Memphis as the framework to discuss this issue. Has Amtrak worked on other communities to develop similar evacuation plans?

Mr. PHELPS. Well, I think that working with FEMA, you know, we looked at trying to evacuate the Houston area and we felt that perhaps some logical routes might be going north to Fort Worth, Texas for the Texas area. And then we did do some initial work with Jackson and for some reason we had some logistical issues and they decided that it would be better to go to Memphis. I cannot even remember exactly what those were but anyway, the whole point is for us to look at other viable alternatives.

And the reason the Sunset is not probably the best train is because it is along the very coastal routes where the hurricane is most likely to hit. So we do not want to just evacuate to an area that could possibly be hit. Now if we know it is tracking to the west toward Houston, then we could evacuate going toward the east. So it is not to say that we should not have the train because you have to base it based on where the hurricane is tracking and I think that we have enough flexibility to choose more than just those areas.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Moller, freight trains suffered infrastructure damage after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. How quickly did the railroads, your railroads, get the service restarted? And I know that I visited the Mississippi region and you all had a bridge that was completely taken out and you had it up and operational within days and I guess the community is still waiting and you have to go all the way around, it takes about two hours. So you know, it is an example of how the private sector got up and operational within days and the federal, us, we are still struggling to try to get that bridge up and it is causing people in that region to have to—we are talking about in the Mississippi area. Can you expound on that and tell me I am wrong?

Mr. MOLLER. Well, no, I guess we are kind of proud of the performance of one of the railroads that restored service across Lake

Pontchartrain, I think it was 14 days. That bridge was basically——

Ms. BROWN. Wiped out.

Mr. MOLLER. —the deck was cleaned off. I mean it looked like a highway bridge, the track was completely obliterated. And they got barges out there, who knows where they got them from so quickly, but dragged the track out of the water, set it back on the bridge and put it back in service.

Yeah, the bridge across the Bay St. Louis to the east, of course, literally was obliterated. There was nothing left except pilings coming out of the water. So, you know, there was extensive work required and that was one of the main reasons it took so long to get service back east of New Orleans. I think it was January, if I remember right, maybe somebody else would know.

Ms. BROWN. But I do not think we are up and operational yet.

Mr. MOLLER. Yeah, I understand that some of the highway bridges also got horrific damage and some of them are still not back in service.

Ms. BROWN. Question. What, if any, contractual agreement or general understanding exists between the freight railroads and Amtrak in case of evacuation? That came up earlier. Can you answer that? And does the freight railroad make any special assistance to Amtrak in case of national emergencies?

Mr. MOLLER. I will have to check with my colleagues to give you a full answer on that. I frankly do not know.

Ms. BROWN. Okay.

Mr. MOLLER. But having seen it in action, I know that obviously there is collaborative efforts on both sides——

Ms. BROWN. I think it is.

Mr. MOLLER. —to keep things going.

Ms. BROWN. See what you can find me in writing.

Mr. MOLLER. Will do.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Jefferson, do you have anything else?

Mr. JEFFERSON. No.

Ms. BROWN. I have one thing for Ms. Parsons. And I have questions for you all in writing so I will get those to you.

But Ms. Parsons, how would you improve intercity passenger rail service to help to mobilize the economy of the residents of Louisiana? And Mr. Phelps, how would you care to respond to that question also. But you first, Ms. Parsons.

Ms. PARSONS. Well, I think investment is needed. It needs to be a priority at the federal level and at the state level to get new service up and running. And in order for that to happen, we have to provide for the train speeds that are necessary for passenger rail. And that is simply a matter of dollars to get that in place, to replace bridges, close crossings, upgrade track and signals, train the crews and provide the equipment that is needed. It is all a matter of dollars and cents.

I think everybody is willing and ready to go, Amtrak, for the Louisiana, New Orleans to Baton Rouge piece, has been working with the State of Louisiana. They know how much it is going to cost for the capital and the operations. It is just a dollar issue. So we are there.

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Phelps, you want to comment?

Mr. PHELPS. Well, I could not agree more. I think that we have to recognize that the freight railroads, you know, they are private companies and they are going to require investment if we are going to put traffic out there that is going to impede their ability to deliver service on time. And we are going to have to invest in additional sidings, in some cases double track, but all of that, sometimes people get sticker shock instead of being visionary and looking at the return on investment we can get. When we put that kind of money that is going to be needed, we can get a return on investment, because I do not know about everybody else, but we are tired of being viewed as a third world country when it comes to rail. It is just like when people go to Europe or Japan, even Taiwan, they have systems that people have recognized it is a quality of life issue and they have poured a lot of money into it and it is very successful and very appealing and people use it. And there is no reason why the United States should be anything different.

Ms. BROWN. Yes, sir, those are my closing remarks.

Mr. Thomas, I do not want you to feel left out. I have one question for you too.

You stated that a rail evacuation plan must address means of getting the transportation disadvantaged to the train station for evacuation. We saw that, it was just horrible. Please describe some steps that we can address the concerns and a long term public outreach campaign you also said is very important to the individual so they understand where to go and what to do.

Do you want to further respond to that?

Mr. THOMAS. I will briefly, Madam Chair.

The best laid plans, as they say, may not work if you do not have the ability to execute them. And in this case our customer of the plans, if you will, is the citizen. And the citizen has to have confidence that we have built a plan that is going to be effective. And part of that process is a public outreach campaign that we educate the public on what their role and responsibility is to be part of this evacuation. They have to understand and we have to help them understand and give them the tools to understand how they play in this equation. It is not simply the storm happens or the event happens and we tell them to evacuate. This is an ongoing process that I think in Florida has been done many, many years. When I lived in Florida, I remember having my hurricane kit in the garage ready to go if the county notified us we had to leave. I think we are talking those levels of understanding at the local level.

I think the other challenge that we kind of have not talked about this morning is with the special populations we talk about, the elderly, the medically challenged that need some assistance. We have got the indigents that have no means of transportation that we need to support. I think there are other special populations out there too and this came up I think during Katrina, with registered sex offenders. How do you deal with that group that may be part of your population that you are evacuating. You do not want to compromise the security and safety of other citizens as well.

So there are some complex issues here that are in the weeds of this question, this whole process, but we cannot overlook this detail as we put this together.

But going back to an earlier question, I mean I think this is just a—I may look at things too simply sometimes, but I think if we decide to do this, we can do it.

Ms. BROWN. I agree with you, I wholeheartedly agree with you.

And recently, thanks to the help of Mr. Jefferson, I passed my bill to include children in the planning of evacuation. It is amazing, after the hurricanes, we had evacuation plans for animals and pets, but we did not include children. And children are special needs and they are not mini-adults. And there are certainly things that we need to include in the planning. So that has been passed by the House and the Senate and signed into law. So that is the plan going forward.

Mr. Jefferson, do you have any final statement?

Mr. JEFFERSON. I would like to thank you for bringing the resources here to hold this hearing and for your longstanding special interest in New Orleans and our recovery and in the issues facing our hurricane evacuation. And of course, now with the issues of how we get our passenger transportation restored here fully, how to have an integrated plan that works for our region, and the commitment that you have to our people. It has been extraordinary to see some Member who really has her own district to worry about and all the other things around the country, who spends so much time and interest in our area. So I just wanted—if somebody was not here when I said it at the beginning, I want to say it again, we really do appreciate the support you have given us and the support you continue to give us in this region. And we look forward to your leadership on issues that come up now for major transportation bills, particularly rail transportation issues we are facing now. So thank you very much for bringing the Committee here, we appreciate it.

[Applause.]

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Jefferson. And when they have their meetings, I go to the meeting and I say I am your Member at large.

In closing, I would like to give you all one minute for any additional things that you want to say before we discontinue or end the meeting.

Mr. PHELPS. I just want to say that Amtrak is ready, willing and able to walk in step with New Orleans, the State of Louisiana and the whole Gulf Coast region. We really want to be more and more of a good corporate citizen. Environmentally, we are probably one of the greenest forms of transportation. We offer a great alternative, and I think you have to have all three modes of travel—you have to have rail, you have to have airlines and you have to have your highways. But you need all three equally at least funded reasonably. And I think the growing awareness that I am seeing is encouraging because I see more and more Members of Congress recognizing that every day and we have had more support in both the House and the Senate than I have seen in years. So we look forward to the future.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

Mr. PHELPS. Thank you.

Mr. MOLLER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Representative Jefferson.

I want to thank you again for holding this hearing and letting us get some of these thoughts on paper. It sounds like there may be a thought of putting together some kind of a planning exercise or something, based on some of the comments we have heard today. And I guess I would just encourage you as the legislative process proceeds to include all of the stakeholders. There are a lot of technical issues, as I just touched on a moment ago that can really make or break some kind of a plan. All of us want these kinds of things to succeed and we do not want to inadvertently overlook some critical point.

Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

Dr. BERTINI. Congresswoman, I would like to add a personal note of thanks.

Very rarely as a physician do we like to be pulled out of our operating rooms, as you have done with me today. But I have been tremendously impressed with your insight in pulling together people that really understand this problem, real railroad operators and individuals like myself that understand the populations at risk. You have helped restore my confidence in government.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

Mr. THOMAS. I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here and support the Committee in its work and look forward to providing continuing support as you go forward.

Ms. PARSONS. Well, thank you so much for holding this today. It has really been the first time I have had a forum to speak about our poor overlooked Sunset Limited east service and also to bring to light the New Orleans to Baton Rouge service.

As we go forward, whatever you can do to help us put together a comprehensive approach to rail transport in the U.S. would be appreciated, including an investment at a magnitude that really makes a difference. I think that is what is missing. Everybody here, their hearts are in the right place, including Amtrak, who was our service provider for the Gulf Coast, they are our partners in crime as we go forward and we just want to make sure that the Gulf Coast gets the funding that it needs and deserves to move people out of harm's way.

Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you. I had indicated that if someone in the audience that was not on panel one or panel two wanted to have an opportunity to have a one minute, this is your time before we adjourn. Is there anyone in the audience now that would like to have a word?

[No response.]

Ms. BROWN. Well, let me just say thank you all for coming out. We are going to—the Committee is here from Washington. Tomorrow we will go visit the Army Corps and look at where we are as far as the Army Corps and what kind of work they have done in the area. And we will visit with the VA Hospital, making sure that is moving forward like it should. We are very interested in the region and doing all we can to make sure that it is everything that it once was and what it is going to be in the future.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

[Whereupon, at 1:40 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

Statement of the Honorable Corrine Brown, Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials
Field Hearing on the Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies
February 11, 2008

The Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials will come to order.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the Role of Intercity Passenger Rail during National Emergencies.

I want to thank Mayor Ray Nagin and the City of New Orleans for hosting today's hearing. The Mayor made it possible for the Subcommittee to hold today's hearing here at the Union Pacific Terminal. This station is the major Southern hub for Amtrak and

played a crucial role in the recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina.

Since the tragedies surrounding September 11th, emergency management and preparedness has played an elevated role in the daily lives of citizens and government alike.

That national emergency and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated the critical role intercity passenger rail holds in emergency response situations. An intermodal transportation system that offers a range of options during any emergency situation must be an essential part of any emergency plan.

Passenger rail offers many benefits during a disaster. It can move large numbers of people out of harm's way, it can bring critical supplies to needy areas, and it offers an alternative form of transportation to combat overly-crowded highways, as we witnessed during the evacuation of Houston in Hurricane Rita. Passenger rail should be a vital component of every region's emergency plan and the federal and state government must commit the necessary investments to make this possible.

While the Federal Emergency Management Agency made changes to their response planning following Hurricane Katrina and Rita, it is clear there

is more we can do to make sure passenger rail is fully utilized.

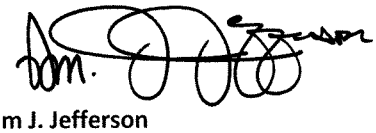
I hope today to hear that progress is being made to fully restore the Sunset Limited line. The loss of service on the Sunset Limited from New Orleans to Pensacola directly impacts the ability of people living along the Gulf Coast to respond to emergency situations. Further, it has limited the ability of the people of Florida to ride Amtrak to visit family and friends along the Gulf Coast and New Orleans. This is a serious problem and I believe that now, over two years since the devastating hurricane season of 2005,

we should have more answers about when Sunset Limited service will be restored.

I'd like to welcome today's panelists and thank them for joining us. I look forward to hearing their testimony on how passenger rail can better be utilized during national emergencies and what Congress and the federal government can do to make that possible.

Before I yield to Mr. Shuster, I ask that Members be given 14 days to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and materials by Members and witnesses.

Without objection, so ordered. I now yield to Mr. Shuster for his opening statement.



Statement of Honorable William J. Jefferson

Before the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials for Transportation and Infrastructure

Good morning. I am extremely grateful to Chairwoman Brown and the members on the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials for the time they are giving the matters before the committee today. I would also like to welcome you to this great city, my city, New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Role of Intercity Rail during National Emergencies is obviously of great concern not only to the transportation needs of our nation, but also to rebuilding our community.

Hurricane Katrina was the costliest and one of the most deadly disasters in United States history. Nearly 1,500 lives were lost. 275,000 properties were destroyed. 19,000 businesses were obliterated, implicating thousands upon thousands of jobs. This devastation continues to be the burden all of our citizens as they work, rebuild and travel to our city.

One of the many factors contributing to the loss of our people during Katrina was insufficient transportation. There was and is not now a transportation source in the city that can effectively evacuate a large population. Furthermore, nearly 40,000 households in New Orleans pre-Katrina did not have access to an automobile. Those that were able to transport themselves and their families out of the city were met with gridlock for long hours traveling in all directions—to Baton Rouge, to Jackson to Atlanta to Houston. Evacuation was costly both in wasted time and trip expenses for citizens, students and tourists in the city when the storm hit.

"Fleeing" to safety at some point is not safe. Some people lost their lives during the evacuation. There were fatal car accidents, deaths from heat exhaustion and vehicle breakdowns that caused catastrophic results. There

obviously needs to be more sufficient evacuation methods in place to make the evacuations less dangerous.

Following the terrible storms of 2005, city and state planners have been vigorously searching for a way to evacuate areas more effectively, efficiently and safely. Intercity passenger rail service promises at least a partial solution in this regard.

This committee has determined over the years that intercity passenger rail has numerous advantages in disaster situations. It has been used effectively to evacuate residents, transport first responders, equipment and supplies to aid in disaster relief and often responding to people lacking alternative modes of transportation. It has even proven useful in helping those with special needs.

Following 9/11, intercity passenger rail played an important role in recovery efforts. Amtrak was able to transport over 1,000 police officers, fire fighters and emergency workers to assist in New York City. Furthermore, to help evacuation efforts for Hurricane Rita, Trinity Railway Express, worked with Amtrak to have their trains redirected to run between Houston and Dallas, transporting a hundreds of people to safety. Finally, another 300 people were taken to safety by way of the Sunset line.

An intercity rail would greatly assist in our recovery here. After the storm, the Louisiana Department of Public Transportation with federal government assistance provided free intercity bus services for displaced workers living in communities along Interstate Ten (I-10). LA Swift, as it is called, provides necessary transportation to more than 400 citizens daily to employment in the Greater New Orleans area.

Congestion along the interstates between Baton Rouge and New Orleans sine have increased dramatically since the storm of 2005. James Porter and Roger Kennedy of the Louisiana Department of Transportation reports traffic along the I-10 to and from Baton Rouge to New Orleans has increased 14%. Shaun Mena, a New Orleans native, working and living in Baton Rouge states that he would like to move back to New Orleans but the commute from his job in Baton Rouge has

become unbearable. In addition to the high cost of fuel and the wear and tear on his vehicle, the hours each spent on the road makes the trip impractical.

A possible solution that would help Mr. Mena is a better passenger rail system in Louisiana. He and other citizens would benefit from a reliable, low cost transportation system, making it possible for him to live in New Orleans and work elsewhere. Others not living in the city would have a reliable and affordable transportation source to effectively travel to and from the city and other areas in the southeastern part of the state. A rail system would operate wholly independent of the highway, making congestion less and travel more predictable.

Furthermore, a passenger rail system could save consumers money. Currently, the average cost for a gallon of gas is approximately $3 per gallon. With an average car getting fifteen miles per gallon, a trip from Baton Rouge to New Orleans would cost about $32. While there are only estimates of the prices per person for a rail service, the estimates are no where near as costly at the $32 round trip.

Telley Madina in Business Retention and Planning for the City of New Orleans, perceives a rail system as a great economic contribution for the city and areas along the corridor. "It would definitely bring more money into the city," Mr. Madina said. Additionally, he stated that it would bring more business to the area, even getting more people out to games celebrating his favorite New Orleans Saints and Hornets.

In summary, having an intercity rail in Southeast Louisiana and even expanding the Sunset Line to Florida helps in many areas. It means getting our people to safety in the face of terrible storms of the future. It means offering our people that do not have the ability to flee to safety a viable option. It means a safer commute for those traveling each day. It means a connection to our varied communities. It means affordable mass transportation for everyone. It means less congestion on our roads and less pollution in our air. It means business development and opportunity. It means essential help forour recovery.

Testimony of John E. Bertini, Jr., MD, FACS (Chairman Board of Directors, Galveston Island Railroad Museum & Terminal) before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials regarding "The Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies" on Monday 11 February 2008 at 10:00 AM in the New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal 1001 Loyola Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana

Congresswoman Brown, thank you for the invitation to appear before your subcommittee. I am John Bertini. On Thursday morning September 22nd 2005 I received an early morning call from Ms. Joy Smith, an official of Amtrak, asking if I would organize and assist in the loading of trains departing from Houston's Amtrak station taking evacuees out of Hurricane Rita's projected path. Amtrak had dispatched a four passenger car and one dining car train to Houston to evacuate people who had fled Hurricane Katrina less than a month before and were still sheltered in Houston. I provisioned the train with food and water, loaded several hundred people in 20 minutes and sent them on their way on a rapid trip to San Antonio were they received care and shelter.

Just after the Amtrak train departed to the west, a Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Trinity Rail Express commuter double decked train arrived to take another several hundred people, many with disability and infirmity, rapidly to Dallas with a intermediate stop for a meal. These people, their belongs, medical equipment and supplies, were rapidly boarded with order and calm.

I know firsthand the power and problems of passenger rail evacuation. The potential far out weights the impediments obstructing the development a feasible rail passenger disaster evacuation plan for our Gulf Coast and the nation in response to either natural or manmade disasters.

The major problems are a lack of a comprehensive plan involving the Homeland Security Agency, Amtrak, the Class 1 railroad companies, state and local

officials. Such a plan would need to provide the equipment, logistics of rapid response, the mustering of select evacuees and the care of these people as they travel to the destination point with provision for their return. There are practical problems of freight traffic volume, lack of railcars, care of the elderly and infirm, rail infrastructure limitations and staff training that would all yield to coordinated planning and practice exercising.

The potential of the passenger rail to move many of those who are residing within institutions such as health care facilities or have restricted mobility either because of age or disability or those who lack access to private transportation is unmatched by forms of transportation crippled on the crowded evacuation roads. People can be cared for and feed while rapidly fleeing danger under the care of a small number of crew. The response to resource ratio can be quite favorable, provided the evacuation plan is well constructed by those who understand both railroads and disaster planning.

Thank you.

Testimony Of

Glenn M. Cannon
Assistant Administrator
Disaster Operations Directorate
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Department of Homeland Security

Before the
United States House of Representatives
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee
on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials

"The Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During Times of National Emergency"

February 11, 2008
New Orleans, Louisiana

Good Morning Chairwoman Brown and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Glenn Cannon, and I am the Assistant Administrator for the Disaster Operations Directorate at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a proud part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

It is my pleasure to discuss with you today future planning for rail transportation to support evacuations during disasters and the challenges of using rail for such evacuations.

FEMA has developed in-depth experience in disaster response. In order to realize Administrator Paulison's vision for a new FEMA and improve our Nation's all-hazards preparedness, protection, response, recovery and mitigation systems and capabilities, we are taking the first steps in a multi-year effort that will significantly increase FEMA's core operational capabilities. The cornerstone of this effort is adopting a more leaning forward and collaborative approach to disaster response, as well as strengthening our capabilities across the full spectrum of operational and support missions. Our ultimate goal is to transform FEMA into the Nation's preeminent emergency management and preparedness organization.

FEMA learned a number of important lessons following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Many of these lessons were identified in after action reviews conducted by Congress, the White House, and non-governmental organizations. The lesson learned that has the most bearing on today's conversation is the need to strengthen regional evacuation planning and coordination structures and capabilities to facilitate future responses.

In addition, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA) articulated new expectations for FEMA, established new leadership responsibilities, expanded our scope of missions, and called for FEMA to undertake a broad range of activities. Providing critical planning and resource support to help our State and local government partners in the Gulf Coast region prepare for disasters has been one of our highest priorities for the past two years. One of the activities that we have been most intensely engaged in has been in the area of evacuation planning.

BACKGROUND

Within the Federal government, FEMA has the primary responsibility for leading and coordinating preparedness and response efforts. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), authorizes FEMA to provide assistance to States and disaster victims in presidentially declared major disasters and emergencies. FEMA's Disaster Operations, Disaster Assistance, and Logistics Management Directorates also provide precautionary evacuation and return assistance to at risk populations in accordance with the Stafford Act. However, in this effort, FEMA does not, nor can we, act alone.

RAIL EVACUATION PLANNING EFFORTS IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA has provided substantial assistance to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to support the development of a Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan that also

extends to adjacent States that may host Gulf Coast evacuees, so-called "impact" states. This effort is designed to coordinate several States' evacuation plans to create a more cohesive and unified effort. To achieve this goal, multi-agency teams engaged with each State to identify requirements and capabilities and developed a plan that integrates shelter planning with transportation planning. The result of these efforts will be a more timely, better organized, and better coordinated evacuation by those with their own transportation, as well as for those who need assistance in evacuating by bus or air. A Gulf Coast Mass Evacuation Capabilities Enhancement Meeting was convened in spring 2007 to validate the Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan and to further identify gaps for the evacuation of special needs patients.

FEMA has also established a Warm Cell Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to conduct specific planning for a mass evacuation of the 12 coastal Parishes of Louisiana. The Warm Cell's Transportation Management Unit and Medical Management Unit worked with other Federal and State agencies to identify assets for transportation requirements, validate transportation and medical evacuation plans, identify gaps and shortfalls within the State, and provide solutions. This planning effort, closely coordinated with Louisiana State and local planning representatives, helped ensure that a comprehensive evacuation plan including transportation, sheltering, mass care, and repopulation, is ready to support Louisiana. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) also supported the Warm Cell activities by providing ground and rail transportation subject matter experts and planners

In addition to these broader scope regional planning efforts, FEMA has supported multi-modal evacuation planning specifically for Louisiana and the City of New Orleans. A major component of this evacuation planning leverages the capabilities of the National Passenger Railroad Corporation (Amtrak) and intercity rail transport to evacuate the New Orleans metropolitan area. In July 2007, FEMA entered into a contract with Amtrak to provide emergency railroad transportation services for evacuating persons from New Orleans to other locations in the Gulf Coast Region, in the event of a declared emergency during the 2007 Hurricane Season.

The contract required Amtrak to provide support for the evacuation of New Orleans in the event a mandatory evacuation of the city became necessary. This contract covered two basic components: Preparedness Planning and Mobilization and Event Mobilization/Demobilization. The Preparedness Planning and Mobilization component provided an Operating Plan which provided for 24 rail cars with stored equipment, food provisions, an equipment mobilization plan, refrigerator rail cars, staff mobilization plans, insurance, and standby costs. The Event Mobilization/Demobilization component included the Amtrak "Go Team" Management and other staffing, equipment mobilization, daily continued state of readiness, equipment, route related labor, non-route related labor, turn around servicing, mobile command center, evacuation operations for New Orleans, and return of evacuees to New Orleans.

As part of the Preparedness Planning and Mobilization component, Amtrak, in close coordination with FEMA and subject matter experts from the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), developed an Operating Plan to implement this contract. Since the focus of the support was for the State of Louisiana and the City of New Orleans, each played a critical role in developing the plan. The Operating Plan clarifies the

operational aspects of a precautionary evacuation of an ambulatory general population potentially facing a catastrophic level disaster (Category III or greater hurricane). The Plan supports 6,000 evacuees being transported by rail from New Orleans' Union Passenger Terminal to the Memphis, Tennessee Rail Depot using two 24-car trains, each with a 1,500 person capacity. Each train would make two trips in a 48-hour evacuation window. The Plan also incorporates a screening process for registration, manifest of passengers being transported, temporary surrender of weapons, medical screening (verified ambulatory), and a provision for providing every evacuee with a food and water.

Public health and medical concerns were addressed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in the Operating Plan. Under the Operating Plan, HHS would provide two Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) on each emergency evacuation train. These EMTs would have appropriate equipment and medical caches to perform basic life-saving and patient stabilization procedures, and if needed would provide this service to the evacuee population while in transit. The EMTs would also coordinate the transport of acute care patients from the train to Emergency Medical Services/definitive care organizations closest to the train. The medical support staff would remain on the trains until the mission is completed.

CHALLENGES OF RAIL EVACUATIONS

Despite the substantial planning that has been accomplished to support Louisiana and New Orleans, there are still challenges that will need to be addressed regarding rail evacuation planning and readiness for future disasters. Many of these same challenges are likely applicable to other cities and rail systems.

DOT's "Catastrophic Hurricane Evacuation Plan Evaluation, June 1, 2006" highlighted the importance of transportation planning. There are broad rail evacuation challenges that we face.

First, planning efforts are often quite complicated and require detailed involvement by many jurisdictions and across multiple agencies. Utilizing passenger rail for evacuations during major disasters/national emergencies not only requires detailed planning efforts, it requires the technical skills of individuals experienced in rail systems. The emergency management community has insufficient personnel, specifically subject matter experts, qualified in evacuation planning. Additionally, no planning effort is complete without exercising plans.

Second, we must ensure that States fully leverage standardized, scientifically-based risk assessments available for planning. These assessments, coupled with a capabilities inventory based on gap analyses, can lead to more reliable plans. States may not be accustomed to using such techniques due to a lack of training, inadequate funding, and personnel shortages.

Third, to facilitate evacuation planning and use of all modes of available transportation, States need to develop and take advantage of Mutual Aid Agreements, memoranda of understanding, and contracts. Often, developing these instruments cannot occur until near the end of the planning cycle, coming after risk assessments, gap analyses, capability inventories and concepts of operation are well underway. This issue was acknowledged previously in a Government Accountability Office Report. (Report 07-44, December 2006.)

In addition to the broad evacuation challenges mentioned above, there are specific rail evacuation challenges I want to mention.

- **Different railroads own the tracks**. As I am sure this Committee knows, the vast majority of railroad right-of-ways that are used for passenger rail service is in fact owned by private, freight railroad companies, and the use of such right-of-ways by passenger rail entities is governed by established agreements. For example, in New Orleans, the northern route to Chicago was considered by Amtrak to be the most technically feasible for evacuations because of existing lease agreements and Amtrak's regular operations on this line. Amtrak has current lease agreements with other railroads and their train crews are approved to operate on a limited number of these right-of-ways. Also, each railroad independently determines when they will cease operations in the face of an approaching hurricane. The existence of these agreements and the close cooperation of each railroad line in use are critical to the planning effort.

- **Determining where the trains will go.** Unlike coordinating evacuations via bus, or personal vehicle, coordinating evacuations by rail requires a higher level of planning as a result of additional logistical requirements. Evacuation of a population by rail requires the collection or coordination of a large number of individuals from diverse locations to a fixed starting point, and the forward transportation of that population to a fixed destination. Because a train can only operate on fixed track, destination locations must be identified in advance of any event, and the response community of that destination location must be prepared to receive the evacuees. In particular, once the evacuee population has reached the destination, the recipient State and local governments and responders must be able to provide adequate services, such as forward transportation and sheltering. As a result, the destination location(s) must be mutually agreed upon by the evacuating State, recipient State and local government, FEMA and its operational partners, and Amtrak. Those coordinating the evacuation must be assured that arrival locations are suitable for a safe unloading operation and that arrangements are in place to care for the evacuees.

- **Evacuation Law Enforcement Issues.** In executing planning for the 2007 hurricane season, Amtrak indicated its desire to have an Amtrak police officer in each rail car. Because of the size of the Amtrak police force, and the requirement to maintain normal operations, it is unlikely that Amtrak police could be stationed in every car. This will require prearranged agreements for additional law enforcement officers to supplement existing forces. Depending on the immediacy of the need, and the availability of support agencies, this could pose a limiting factor.

- **Special Needs Passengers.** Without additional major structural modification, the typical passenger rail car can only transport ambulatory evacuees and a limited number of limited mobility passengers. In addition, Amtrak is not capable of conveying special medical needs passengers, such as those on stretchers. Trains can accommodate a limited number of ambulatory or wheelchair bound patients not needing medical attention and medical staff. Amtrak can accurately track the location and type of carriage, and can provide an estimate of the number of wheelchairs that can be accommodated on each train.

- **Prepositioning of adequate capacity to support an evacuation.** In order to be prepared for a potential evacuation, equipment and personnel were required to be prepositioned in New Orleans, at a cost of approximately $ 700,000 in 2007. In the longer term, FEMA will consider the feasibility of applying this evacuation model to other regions of the country.

The planning efforts we have undertaken with Louisiana exemplify the type of emergency planning envisioned in the National Preparedness Guidelines—a multi-jurisdictional, interagency planning endeavor that promotes unity of effort and determines actions, policies and processes to be followed in advance of an actual emergency. New Orleans is only one of many cities in States at risk from hurricanes that could take advantage of incorporating passenger rail into their local and State emergency planning efforts. FEMA will encourage and support additional urban areas to adopt this type of planning initiative. We will continue to offer similar technical assistance to other Gulf Coast States that would like to take advantage of this evacuation planning model. I will be pleased to respond to any questions.

OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY & PUBLIC SAFETY

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

C. RAY NAGIN
MAYOR

COL TERRY J. EBBERT USMC, (RET)
DIRECTOR

February 7, 2008

Madame Chair and Committee Members. I thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructures' Subcommittee on railroads, pipelines, and hazardous material.

I am Colonel Terry J. Ebbert, The Director of Homeland Security for the city of New Orleans and am responsible for Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services, Criminal Justice and the Office of Emergency preparedness. I have served in this position for the past five years.

The City of New Orleans, like all of our large urban areas, has great public safety planning and operational challenges. We at the local level have limited resources available to deal with catastrophic incidents. Our planning is based on our capabilities and the requesting of additional state and federal resources. Transportation evacuation planning was, and continues to be, of great concern to me and my departments.

New Orleans is the only major urban area in the United States that has no authorized federal or Red Cross support for "Sheltering in Place" during major hurricanes. This situation requires multi state and Parrish planning for mandatory general population evacuation. As you are aware "mandatory" is not "forced" evacuation. My police officers will not breakdown doors and remove citizens from their homes by force. We must create a plan that the citizens believe will work to ensure their cooperation. Several major milestones must be completed to successfully evacuate 1.3 million people from South East Louisiana. :

1. A coordinated regional plan for self evacuation

2. A City Assisted Evacuation Plan to move 25,000 citizens without personal transportation

1300 PERDIDO STREET * SUITE 8E15 * NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA * 70112
PHONE 504.658.6900 * FAX 504.658.4066

OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY & PUBLIC SAFETY
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
C. RAY NAGIN
MAYOR
COL TERRY J. EBBERT USMC, (RET)
DIRECTOR

3. A sheltering plan that supports both evacuation plans

4. A public education plan that convinces all citizens that it is their best interest to work with Public Government and plan to evacuate.

To accomplish these very difficult goals requires close coordination of planning at every level of government that utilizes all available resources to the maximum capability. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina we were criticized for not utilizing rail transportation. I tell you, as I did both the House and Senate Investigative committees that the non use was not a result of not attempting to plan for their utilization. The problem remained that we were a local agency, with no capability to coordinate a memorandum of understanding with federally subsidized AMTRAK.

During the past two and a half years I have continued to work closely with my state and federal partners to ensure that we could utilize rail transportation to move a major portion of our most fragile elderly and young citizens. During the past two years hundreds of planning hours have been dedicated to this effort and we have been able to successfully obtain dedicated rail resources for 2006 and 2007. These two plans were completely different and we are getting ready to start the process from scratch for the third time. This is a very difficult process that should not need to be repeated every year.

1300 PERDIDO STREET * SUITE 8E15 * NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA * 70112
PHONE 504.658.6900 * FAX 504.658.4066

OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY & PUBLIC SAFETY
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

C. RAY NAGIN
MAYOR

COL TERRY J. EBBERT USMC, (RET)
DIRECTOR

The question that keeps reoccurring to me is, "Where is the National Rail Transportation Plan"? The National Rail Plan should be developed, on a regional basis, to enable all urban areas to take advantage of railroads in evacuation planning. Leaving rail on the sideline, or with only limited capability, and moving large numbers of citizens by commercial and military air appears to be a large waste of taxpayers' money. Federal contracting of commercial buses, to be placed on-call and moved into evacuation areas prior to a storm, is problematic due to traffic and availability. Trains are mobile and plans can be developed to move assets to any area requiring assistance. Trains are unaffected by vehicle traffic congestion. Trains are the safest and most comfortable mode of transportation to move elderly and those with minor medical problems. Moving large numbers of people by train makes operational and fiscal sense. Pre designated shelters, supported by rail transportation moving over unrestricted passenger and freight lines, is a safe, affordable and dependable means of evacuation. I believe it is unrealistic to expect South East Louisiana to successfully evacuate 1.3 million people, in a limited 48 hour window, without extensive support of rail capability. To accomplish this task, emergency rail assets must be made available to all local urban areas. To do this we need a National Framework to make it happen. Those of us at the local level look to your assistance at making this happen!

Thank you for your support in examining the increased capability of railroad evacuation operations. I will be happy to take your questions.

1300 PERDIDO STREET * SUITE 8E15 * NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA * 70112
PHONE 504.658.6900 * FAX 504.658.4066

STATEMENT OF

JEFF MOLLER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - SAFETY AND OPERATIONS

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS

BEFORE THE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES,
AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

**FIELD HEARING ON THE ROLE OF INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL
DURING NATIONAL EMERGENCIES**

FEBRUARY 11, 2008

**Association of American Railroads
50 F Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-639-2100**

On behalf of the members of the Association of American Railroads (AAR), thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. AAR members account for the vast majority of railroad mileage, employees, and revenue in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

New Orleans Gateway Infrastructure Improvement Project

The New Orleans Gateway is a key gateway in the nation's rail network and is vital to the national, regional and local economies. Several years ago (prior to Hurricane Katrina), the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) and the Regional Planning Commission formed a partnership with the AAR to study possible improvements to the New Orleans Gateway.

The parties have nearly completed a feasibility study that has identified a number of improvements that could enhance the operation of the New Orleans rail network and, at the same time, create potentially significant benefits to the community. These improvements include more fluid routing options for rail traffic to allow all trains (including passenger trains) to get into and out of New Orleans more quickly. This could positively impact current operations and accommodate traffic growth by allowing rail traffic to move more efficiently during the critical hours leading up to a severe weather incident.

By possibly closing or separating highway-rail grade crossings, the project could also reduce delays for vehicles, reduce emissions caused by delayed highway traffic and trains, and support a more competitive economy for the region.

Nearly all of these improvements can be made within existing railroad rights of way, meaning there would be limited impact on the community at large. The LADOTD and the Regional Planning Commission are continuing their partnership with the railroads and could begin a formal Environmental Impact Study later this year.

Why Public-Private Partnerships Are Important

U.S. freight railroads move vast amounts of just about every type of cargo, connecting businesses with each other across North America and overseas over a rail network spanning more than 140,000 miles. Railroads account for some 40 percent of U.S. freight ton-miles (more than any other mode of transportation), but because of their cost-effectiveness they haul this traffic for less than 10 percent of intercity freight revenue.

From 1980 to 2007, U.S. freight railroads reinvested approximately $420 billion — more than 40 cents out of every revenue dollar — on infrastructure and equipment, creating a rail network that is second to none worldwide. In recent years, U.S. freight railroads have typically spent $18 billion to $20 billion per year (after depreciation) to provide the high-quality assets needed for safe, efficient operation. This extraordinary level of spending shows the diligence with which railroads approach capacity and service issues.

U.S. freight railroads are, with minor exceptions, privately owned and operated. Unlike trucks and barges, freight railroads have traditionally received minimal government financial assistance for infrastructure construction and maintenance. Instead, railroads have traditionally financed nearly all of their infrastructure investments through their own earnings and by borrowing from outside capital providers.

A way to help states and localities improve rail networks that generate public benefits is through a more pronounced use of public-private financing partnerships for rail infrastructure improvement projects. These partnerships — and the New Orleans Gateway Infrastructure Improvement Project is a good example — provide a means for transportation planners and providers to effectively meet vital transportation needs by combining the efficiency of the private sector with the equity of public participation. These partnerships

are not "subsidies" to railroads. Rather, they are an acknowledgement that private entities should pay for private benefits and public entities should pay for public benefits.

Partnerships reflect the fact that cooperation between interested entities is far more likely to result in timely, meaningful solutions to transportation problems than a go-it-alone approach. Without a partnership, projects that promise substantial public benefits in addition to private benefits are likely to be delayed, or never started at all, because it would be too difficult for either side to justify the full investment needed to complete them. In contrast, if a public entity shows it is willing to devote public dollars to a project equivalent to the public benefits that will accrue, the private entity is much more likely to provide the private dollars (commensurate with private gains) necessary for the project to proceed.

Partnerships are even more important in light of expected rail traffic growth. According to recent U.S. Department of Transportation projections, U.S. freight railroad demand will rise 88 percent by 2035. A recent study by Cambridge Systematics found that an investment of $148 billion, including $135 billion for Class I railroads and $13 billion for short line and regional railroads, will be necessary for infrastructure expansion to meet the DOT's forecast demand and maintain rail's current market share. Class I railroads anticipate being able to generate (through gains in earnings and productivity) some $96 billion of the $135 billion in new capacity identified by the Cambridge Systematics study. That leaves a $39 billion funding shortfall, or around $1.4 billion per year, that will need to be funded from public-private partnerships, investment tax credits, or other sources.

Passenger rail growth would come on top of growth in freight traffic. That's why, going forward, capacity will likely be the single most important factor shaping the freight rail–passenger rail interface.

Public-Private Partnerships With Railroads Work

The immense public benefits of freight railroading — including lower pollution and energy consumption; reduced highway gridlock; and enhanced mobility, safety, and security — would accrue more quickly if more public-private partnerships for freight railroad infrastructure projects were implemented. Public officials around the country have recognized this point, and have worked together with freight railroads on win-win partnerships, just a few of which are described below:

- The best known existing public-private partnership involving freight railroads is the *Alameda Corridor*, a $2 billion, 20-mile rail expressway connecting the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach with rail yards near downtown Los Angeles. The partnership involves two highly-competitive railroads; two ports; and local, state, and federal governments. The Corridor began operations in April 2002 and is already providing public benefits, including expanded port capacity; reduced noise and congestion delays on local streets and highways; improved safety; major reductions in pollution from highway vehicles and locomotives; and more efficient freight rail movements.
- Perhaps the most extensive rail-related public-private partnership envisioned today is the *Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program* (CREATE), a $1.5 billion project involving the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, and major freight and passenger railroads serving the region. CREATE's goal is to modernize and improve transportation in the region by separating tracks and highways to speed vehicle travel and reduce congestion and delays for motorists; updating track connections and expanding rail routes to reduce transit times; and adding separate, passenger-only tracks in key locations to remove bottlenecks that have slowed passenger and freight movements in the region for decades. The $330 million first stage of CREATE recently got underway.
- A multi-state partnership is underway to increase the flow of consumer goods on the *Heartland Corridor* between the East Coast and Chicago by, among other things, raising the height of nearly 30 rail tunnels to allow use of efficient double-stack containers. The project is also expected to aid in economic development along the corridor.
- In November 2005, trains began using the 2.2-mile *Reno trench* that separates trains running through downtown Reno, Nevada from motor vehicle traffic. More than 30 trains a day are expected to travel through the 33-foot deep trench, which is the result of a partnership involving a major freight railroad and numerous government entities. Funding for the $282 million project came mainly from the railroad, municipal bonds, and the DOT's Transportation Infrastructure Finance

and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan program. The project boosted downtown redevelopment efforts and eliminated 11 highway-rail grade crossings.

A sharper focus on public-private partnerships is supported by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), an organization representing highway and transportation departments in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In a January 2003 report, AASHTO noted that "[R]ealizing the public benefits of a strong freight-rail system at a national level will require a new partnership among the railroads, the states, and the federal government. ... Relatively small public investments in the nation's freight railroads can be leveraged into relatively large benefits for the nation's highway infrastructure, highway users, and freight shippers."

Freight Railroads and Passenger Railroads

Our nation's privately-owned freight railroads are successful partners with passenger railroads all across the country. More than 95 percent of the miles over which Amtrak operates are owned by freight railroads, and hundreds of millions of commuter trips each year occur on commuter rail systems that operate at least partially over tracks or right-of-way owned by freight railroads.

As noted earlier, going forward, capacity will likely be the most important factor shaping the relationship between freight and passenger rail. U.S. freight railroads are moving more freight than ever before, creating capacity constraints on important rail corridors and points throughout the U.S. rail network. Available capacity varies from one rail line to another, but, overall, excess capacity is limited, and there is no question that U.S. freight railroads today are using their assets much more intensively than they were even a few years ago. And since demand for freight rail is projected to rise sharply in the years ahead, serious capacity issues will remain with us.

Freight railroads are vital to our economy, lowering shipping costs by billions of dollars each year; providing our farmers, manufacturers, and miners a tremendous competitive advantage in the global economy; and producing huge public benefits. But if passenger railroads impaired freight railroads and forced freight onto the highways, highway gridlock would get worse; fuel consumption, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions would rise; and our mobility would deteriorate — outcomes that are completely contrary to the goals of expanding passenger rail in the first place.

Freight railroads want passenger railroading to succeed in this country. Passenger rail progress, though, must be complementary to — not in conflict with — freight rail development. That means that we have to work together to address these challenges.

Conclusion

In the years ahead, a rapid increase in our nation's traffic will stretch already constrained transportation infrastructure, including railroads. Meeting this challenge is a critical and difficult task. If not done effectively, it will weigh heavily on our nation's productivity and quality of life.

Enhanced freight rail transportation must be part of the solution. While railroads have made tremendous strides in improving their ability to serve their customers efficiently and reliably, the challenges of operating a rail system capable of meeting future needs is daunting and will require the benefit of effective public policy. Freight railroads look forward to working with this committee, others in Congress, and other appropriate parties to help ensure that the U.S. freight rail network remains the best in the world and continues to effectively meet our country's freight transportation needs.

Question for the Record

Jeff Moller
Executive Director - Safety and Operations
Association of American Railroads

Before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials

"Field Hearing on the Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies"

At the February 11 Field Hearing House T&I Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials in New Orleans[1], Chairwoman Brown posed the following question to AAR:

> "What, if any contractual agreement or general understanding exists between the freight railroads and Amtrak in the case of evacuation? That came up earlier. Can you answer that? And does the freight railroad make any special assistance to Amtrak in case of national emergencies?"[2]

While AAR is not aware of any formal contractual agreement between parties to address evacuation issues, there is a long history of mutual cooperation between Amtrak and its freight railroad partners. Amtrak has been a full member of the AAR for more than 20 years and is an active participant in a number of the operating committees where coordination occurs. Amtrak maintains a 24-hour Operations Center in Wilmington, DE and has direct ties to the freight railroads control centers as well as with the AAR's Operations Center. During emergency situations such as *Katrina* AAR is in regular contact with Amtrak and the railroads through scheduled conference calls and status reports. Such calls have extended to include FRA, FEMA and others when necessary. Railroads have cooperated with Amtrak to reposition equipment and establish new routes (such as a planned commuter service between New Orleans and Baton Rouge). Amtrak has returned the favor by providing sleeping cars and diners for freight repair crews when needed.

We would be pleased to host a visit to AAR's Operations Center or facilitate visits to any of the railroad's control centers as appropriate to demonstrate our communications and coordination capabilities.

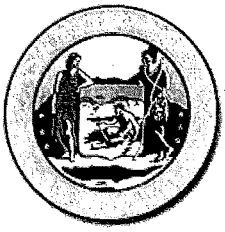
---

[1] "The Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies"

[2] Starting on page 108, line 2535 of the transcript

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials



Name:	**Mayor C. Ray Nagin**
Address:	**City of New Orleans** **Office of the Mayor** **1300 Perdido Street** **New Orleans, LA 70122**
Organization Represented:	**City of New Orleans**
Telephone Number:	**504-658-4900**

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials

"The Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies"

February 11, 2008

Testimony of C. Ray Nagin
Mayor, City of New Orleans

To Chairwoman Brown, Ranking Member Shuster and other Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials:

Thank you for choosing New Orleans as the site for your hearing on "The Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies." We are particularly pleased to host you here at the Union Passenger Terminal (UPT). It is an historic building which currently plays an important intermodal role in our transportation network, and will play a critical role in future emergency evacuations.

As you are aware, Hurricane Katrina and the breaching of the federal levees left unprecedented damage in New Orleans and the region. Katrina produced the first mandatory evacuation in New Orleans history, and the largest displacement of people in U.S. history -- 1.3 million. But we know that access to more options for safely evacuating people without their own means of transportation might have greatly reduced the loss of human life following the storm and would have meant that fewer children, seniors and families would have had to experience the difficult conditions that followed Hurricane Katrina.

Union Passenger Terminal History

I would like to give you a little history about the building we are in. The Union Passenger Terminal has existed in New Orleans for more than 50 years. It opened in 1954 to consolidate passenger rail operations in one location and reduce the number of dangerous grade crossings throughout the heart of the city. The UPT was an ultramodern facility when it was built, and the beauty of the facility is re-emerging today as a result of the restoration work that is underway. It is also the site of a distinctive mural on the history of Louisiana done by the late Conrad Albrizio, a renowned artist and professor of art at Louisiana State University. These murals were recently restored by the New Orleans Building Corporation, a public benefit corporation charged with managing and developing under-used, deteriorated, or vacant City properties

The terminal escaped major damage following Hurricane Katrina. As one of few intact and centrally accessible city buildings, the UPT played an extraordinary role during the aftermath. It served as both the criminal justice center and the jail. Currently, the station is the major Southern hub for Amtrak which operates three trains (Sunset Limited, City of New Orleans and Crescent) from the city.

This facility has been greatly improved in the recent past, and will continue to undergo major renovations during the next five years. We appreciate the funds that the federal government has invested in planning and implementing important upgrades to the UPT. We are making plans for a track reconfiguration that will support evacuation and increase intercity rail capacity. Another grant is being used for making platforms, doors and restrooms ADA compliant and conducting other improvements. Our vision is to link this building with our historic streetcar lines as well, improving our famous and iconic public transit network.

The Recovery of New Orleans

Just as we are improving our transit system rather than simply rebuilding it, we also are working to build a better New Orleans. We have undergone an extensive recovery planning process and were the first municipality in Louisiana to have our plan approved by the Louisiana Recovery Authority. We have been creative in seeking financial resources since the storm and worked with the City Council to borrow more than $45 million from various City departments to invest in the immediate recovery of our public safety facilities.

I have said before that 2008 will be the tipping point in our recovery. Although we know that we do not have all of the money we will need to fully restore our city and critical services, we now have the tools to accelerate our recovery. We have access to a state revolving loan fund, the initial portion of a $260 million bond issue approved by voters before the storm, and some of our federal recovery dollars. In total, we have access to more than $1 billion for our rebuilding efforts. Citizens and visitors will see unprecedented construction activity in the coming months. We plan more than $363 million in road and street improvements alone.

This represents only projects that will be undertaken by City government and does not include other governmental entities, businesses or individuals. Since Hurricane Katrina, we have issued more than 81,000 building permits valued at more than $5 billion. Experts predict we will see $60 to $100 billion in rebuilding activity during the next five to seven years.

Louis Armstrong International Airport also is rebounding. It currently provides 78 percent of seats offered pre-Katrina and 84 percent of pre-Katrina flights. Planes are departing for 88 percent of pre-Katrina locations.

Our port is now back to 2002 levels, above 2005. In addition, our sales tax collections are expected to reach 93 of pre-Katrina dollars. Employment is up in 14 out of 20 sectors.

We are seeing increased strength in our tourism industry. Our Mardi Gras celebration, which ended last week, was a major success. A total of 3.6 million people visited New Orleans in first six months of 2007. That is almost as many people as visited in all of 2006. Visitors are projected to spend $4.5 billion in New Orleans this year. The record was set in 2004 at $4.9 billion

But the most important measure of our recovery is the people, and our citizens are coming home. Today, the population of New Orleans is approximately 71 percent of pre-Katrina, or about 323,000 people. During the workday, the City's population increases to approximately 365,000, as people enter New Orleans for work and to conduct other business. People are investing in their neighborhoods, in their businesses and in the future of our City.

Evacuation Planning

We must be able to assure these citizens that we have the capacity to react quickly and responsibly in the event of another emergency. In order to be prepared for all situations, we must have a thorough plan for future evacuations, including preparation to help our neediest citizens. The use of rail for an evacuation is an ideal method of moving large numbers of individuals safely and rapidly while reducing the effects on a highway system that is certain to be overburdened.

After Hurricane Katrina, my Office of Homeland Security developed the City Assisted Evacuation Plan (CAEP), with a major component centered on rail service and the Union Passenger Terminal. Our strategy is to use the rail assets to move our elderly and those with minor medical conditions from the City. While there are many reasons for taking this approach, one of the most important is that rail cars provide a much higher level of comfort than bus transportation. If we are able to provide these vulnerable citizens with a more comfortable and reliable means of evacuation, we will increase their willingness to leave.

We were able to incorporate the use of railways into our evacuation plans during the past two hurricane seasons as a result of the cooperation of the federal government and various states. In 2006, our plan called for rail to take our citizens to Jackson, Mississippi, for further transportation to other shelter sites; under last year's plan, 6,000 citizens would have been evacuated to Memphis, Tennessee, where they would have been sheltered.

We strongly feel that the use of rail is critical to a successful future evacuation of the city of New Orleans. We are grateful for the roles the state and federal governments have played in providing these assets in the past, but obtaining these agreements was not easy, as I know Col. Terry Ebbert, our Director of Homeland Security, will discuss. We ask for your leadership in the use of rail for a tool in emergency evacuation.

We also ask you to support full funding for Amtrak service from coastal cities such as New Orleans. This would provide important regular passenger rail transportation and would play a critical role in emergency transportation planning and execution across the country. We would like to see the Amtrak Sunset Limited service that was available before the storm reactivated to take rail travelers east to Jacksonville, Florida. Not only is rail an energy efficient and comfortable mode of transportation, but maintenance of the track and car infrastructure for passenger rail is supportive of its use for emergency purposes. Finally, we seek $80 million for rail fortification and start-up costs for a commuter rail line from New Orleans UPT to Baton Rouge, which would also be used for evacuation.

Conclusion

Madam Chair and Fellow Committee Members, I want to again thank you for your attention to this critical matter and for your dedication to our full recovery. We are making great strides, but our work will continue for several years. We still face critical challenges, but we are following through with the commitment I made that we would not only rebuild, but that we would rebuild better, stronger and smarter.

New Orleans is one of the most distinctive cities in this country. I look forward to working with you as we continue to restore this crown jewel and ensure the future safety of our citizens.

For:	U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Date:	February 11, 2008
Public Hearing:	The Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies
Testimony of:	Karen Parsons, Executive Director Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission

Chairman Brown and Honorable members and staff of the Congressional Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials,

On August 29, 2005, the Gulf Coast experienced the worst natural disaster in US history. Hurricane Katrina devastated the Louisiana and Mississippi coasts causing unimaginable death and destruction. Many factors have been identified as contributing to the great loss of life, but in New Orleans, one principal factor was that too many people did not evacuate when the order was given. Insufficient transportation was available to evacuate the entire population. Prior to Katrina, nearly a quarter of the city's population did not own an automobile. If adequate transportation could have been available when the evacuation order was given, would it have been used? While this is an interesting question to consider, our purpose here today is to discuss the role of intercity passenger rail during national emergencies.

Many Americans are returning to intercity passenger rail as a viable mode of transportation as has been demonstrated over the last five years with Amtrak's record increase in ridership. Passenger rail for emergency evacuation and post-event recovery also has significant benefits other modes of transportation do not have. New Orleans is a large city sandwiched between the Gulf Coast to the south and Lake Pontchartrain to the north, with limited evacuation corridors. I-10 and Highway 61 are the primary westward routes to Baton Rouge: eastward, I-10 crosses the Twin-Spans to Slidell, and the Causeway crosses Lake Pontchartrain to the north. During emergency evacuations Contra-Flow procedures are used to accelerate traffic out of the city. But even with Contra-Flow, it takes four to six hours to travel the 90 miles to Baton Rouge. Had adequate bus transportation been available to evacuate those people who remained, they would have contributed severely to the highway congestion. Since trains operate along different corridors, hundreds of people could be moved with little or no impact on the over crowded highways.

Aircraft can move hundreds of people long distances over a short period of time yet contribute to traffic congestion getting to the airport while being significantly impacted by relatively low wind speeds. Airports are usually the first facilities to cease operations when a storm approaches. Trains can operate up until the last moment moving people out of harms way.

But the use of passenger rail for evacuation, as does any successful operation, requires planning and preparation. It takes time to position the trains and their crews to the city being evacuated. As we found out during Katrina, once the decision is made to evacuate, there may not be sufficient warning time to move Amtrak train equipment from other parts of the country. Having

an established intercity passenger rail service provides immediately available resources with known capacity from which to plan and execute the evacuation.

While passenger rail transportation is an important resource for evacuation, the greatest contribution of an intercity passenger rail system comes in the post-disaster recovery phase. Katrina displaced thousands of residents when their homes were damaged and destroyed. Even now, more than two years after the storm, many people have still been unable to return home to Southeast Louisiana. The communities surrounding New Orleans have felt the impact of people wanting to return but no longer having a home to return to. And New Orleans businesses are feeling the impact of workers unable to commute. For the last two years, the State of Louisiana has successfully operated the LA Swift bus service to provide transportation for displaced citizens in communities between Baton Rouge and New Orleans to return to their jobs in the Greater New Orleans Area. The unprecedented success of this bus service only demonstrates the need and value of intercity transportation to the recovery of devastated communities.
The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission is supporting the efforts of the State of Louisiana to establish intercity passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans to provide reliable economic transportation for people living throughout the corridor. The rail service will provide planners with immediately available passenger rail equipment and established capabilities from which to prepare for the next major storm. But more importantly, it will provide an immediately available transportation system to boost the recovery effort.

The Baton Rouge – New Orleans Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Vision Plan calls for two trains, each with a capacity of 300 passengers making four round trips daily between Baton Rouge and New Orleans with four intermediate stops in the communities along the corridor. The route is owned by the Kansas City Southern Railroad, which operates freight trains between New Orleans and Shreveport. Significant capital improvements will be required to support the passenger train at speeds up to 79 miles per hour. The initial travel time for the 80-mile route will be approximately two hours but will be reduced to one hour and 30 minutes as the improvements are made to the track and bridges. And, as this intercity passenger rail service initiative gains momentum, additional stops and more frequency can be added. Amtrak and the Kansas City Southern Railroad have been enthusiastic partners in developing this new service, and we thank them for the time and resources that they have contributed to our planning efforts.

Fares for the new service will be less expensive than traveling by automobile. The cost of fuel to drive between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is approximately $12.25. The projected cost of a single ride train ticket between the same two points is $11.00 with discounts for multi-ride and monthly passes. A taxi from the Louis Armstrong International Airport to a downtown hotel costs $29.00 – the cost of a train ticket will be only $7.00 from the airport to the Union Passenger Terminal.

Not only will the passenger rail service contribute by providing additional instantly available train resources that can be used for evacuation before the storm and transportation for workers after the storm, every community along the route will benefit from the service. Large companies will be more attracted to areas with good transportation systems creating more jobs. With a reliable and economic transportation system, businesses will be able to recruit from a larger employment pool. Affordable housing will be developed and public transportation systems in smaller communities will grow to service the commuting public. Shops and businesses will open in areas with access to the rail system. The intercity passenger rail service will stimulate much

needed growth and economic developments in southeast Louisiana. Looking at the rapid economic development that occurred with other new passenger rail services in Maine, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, New Mexico, Oregon, and California, the Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission is very confident that this new intercity passenger rail service will stimulate economic development in the region. And, we are proud to have contributed the first $2.5 million to move this project forward and to have assisted the State in obtaining an additional $2.0 million for grade crossing improvements along the corridor.

New Orleans and the State of Louisiana are planning ahead. We know Katrina will not be the last storm to hit the Gulf Coast. Implementing the intercity passenger rail service within Louisiana will provide a ready reserve of equipment and trained personnel to assist in future evacuations and recoveries, potentially capable of assisting residents along the extended Gulf Coast. It is important to note this may be possible because the service will reside within Louisiana state boundaries and not as a multiple state corridor. The Louisiana state legislature is able to act independently of Mississippi and Alabama in this effort. To institute a multi-state train requires confronting other, more difficult problems as detailed below.

On March 31, 1993 the Sunset Limited began operating east of New Orleans. This reconnected a major missing link in the national network that had been this way since the beginning of Amtrak. This long-distance rail service between New Orleans and Orlando, Florida ceased immediately prior to Hurricane Katrina devastating the Gulf Coast. The CSX Railroad completed first-rate track restoration in March 2006, only 7 months later. Yet resumption of service has not occurred and could be a vital link for hurricane evacuation for the 12 communities that were formerly served in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida between New Orleans and Jacksonville. In 1992 these four states invested over $4 million dollars in capital improvements in a joint agreement with CSX and Amtrak in order to provide for significant track upgrades and capacity sufficient for passenger rail speeds and to ensure public access to the CSX Gulf Coast corridor in order to initiate Sunset Limited service east of New Orleans. It is notable that Florida committed the most at nearly $3.5 million dollars. To date Amtrak has not officially Noticed the train for discontinuance but at the same time they have not made any effort to restore any service between New Orleans and Jacksonville. Noticing service east of New Orleans would be a devastating obstacle to overcome in the effort to restore the service in the future requiring renegotiation of CSX requirements before any service could begin.

Numerous hurdles were overcome to institute service in 1993. In 1991 Congress funded, through the Amtrak budget, a feasibility study to evaluate service between New Orleans and Jacksonville. CSX and Amtrak worked together to identify impediments including regulatory and physical obstacles. Amtrak helped to address local speed ordinances for slow running followed by a long list of capital improvements funded by the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. These improvements also improved the running time of CSX freight operations. The states also closed hazardous highway crossings and built stations while Amtrak supplied needed cars for the new service. This was a jubilant and progressive time for all participants involved, resulting in new and valuable service. The commitment of Amtrak, CSX and the four states to work together to assure this service was significant. Our commission hopes this public hearing will help to galvanize and unite the Administration, Congress, and Amtrak to honor the state's investment and support their early and continued commitment to service along the Gulf Coast.

The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission has actively supported Congressional funding for all operations of Amtrak for over 25 years, since our inception in 1981. Any intention to Notice the Sunset is of great concern given the citizens of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida rely upon Amtrak to be our service provider, to connect us locally and to the greater United States. The recent philosophy to evaluate long-distance service based on financial solvency rather than as a national transit service is troubling. Long distance trains function as most traditional urban transit systems, to provide a valuable community service regardless of financial profitability. It is well documented that long-distance trains also enhance and feed the existing and developing corridor routes. We ask that the Sunset Limited route east of New Orleans not be officially Noticed and that Amtrak be required to restore service between New Orleans and Jacksonville in an improved form. Such service could be separate from the Sunset Limited, operating between these two city pairs. This initiative will not only restore an additional route and equipment for rail transportation out of the greater New Orleans area and Gulf Coast states in a time of emergency evacuation but it will also restore a critical missing link in the national network that currently forces anyone wanting to travel by rail between New Orleans and Jacksonville to use a circuitous and lengthy multi-leg trip. One must travel to North Carolina and/or Washington D.C. in order to make the necessary connections to reach to Florida. This adds several days of train travel time.

As the important role of intercity passenger rail service is crystallizing in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, all train service to the Gulf Coast should be unwaveringly continued and improved. Therefore, the SRRTC continues to support both the long-distance services and state funded corridor initiatives that connect the greater New Orleans area to the rest of the Gulf South region and the nation. Trains have a unique ability to provide hurricane evacuation for the carless society among us during national emergencies and crisis. The carless society is made up of senior citizens and disabled persons; as well those who choose not to drive or cannot afford an automobile. Along the Gulf Coast this number is large.

Demand for service in the New Orleans area has not abated since Katrina. Households receiving mail, a reliable source of information about the number of returning and new residents, indicates that mail was delivered 86.3% of pre-Katrina households in the 6-parish Area in November 2007. In August of 2005 tax collections by the City of New Orleans stood at $9,758,559 and as of November 2007 had exceeded that amount, elevating to $9,876,817. The labor force size in the New Orleans MSA was 197,060 in August 2005 and in November 2007 has returned to 158,793, 80 percent of pre-Katrina numbers. [1] All data trends reflect a steady increase of residents over the months since Katrina. In addition, the region has a growing population of Hispanic people who rely on public transportation.

As New Orleans and the Gulf Coast revive and provide a unique opportunity for rebuilding smarter, a new order is surfacing here and across the country that places a higher value on sustainable transportation patterns. The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission believes train travel has a crucial role in transitioning the U.S. into sustainable mobility and should be lauded, particularly in the Katrina devastated SE United States, instead of being marginalized. Congress should create policies that direct greater funding in support of train mobility and sustainability.

---

[1] Source: Sammamish Data Systems compiled from USPS Delivery Statistics Product; The New Orleans Index, Tracking Recovery of New Orleans and the Metro Area; Greater New Orleans Community Data Center and the Brookings Institute, April 2008.

In 1998 the route between New Orleans and Mobile/Jacksonville was approved as one of eleven designated High Speed Rail corridors in the U.S. In the intervening years we have pursued and succeeded at gaining $6.7M in federal appropriations to complete a Federal Railroad Administration required Corridor Plan and environmental clearance. We have been working diligently to identify and cost out capital needs that will allow high-speed operations of passenger rail service that could infuse the regional economies through support of business, labor and government. Essentially, this commission has operated with the understanding that we were following the approved federal transportation planning guidance and strategies to plan for mobility, access and freight and passenger rail needs for the next 20 years.

The SRRTC understands that freight rail demands have changed in the 15 years since the Sunset Limited eastern service was initiated. Our commission completed a feasibility study in 2006 of the segment between New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama which, concluded $260M of investment is needed to run 2 round trips daily at 70 mph at peak travel times with an annual ridership of 90,200, which would compete successfully with auto and air travel. By increasing frequency of the train to 6 round trips each day ridership increases to 327,400. At the same time the investment accommodates freight traffic growth that is forecast. The CSX railroad was a sub-consultant in the study and provided in-house data on freight growth in the corridor to substantiate a 20-year forecast.

More recently and in-line with increasing pressure on states to pay for any new service and to move toward a series of corridor services between city pairs (New Orleans to Mobile/Mobile to Jacksonville), we have asked Amtrak to provide us with their estimation of operational costs to provide service within our jurisdiction, between New Orleans and Mobile twice daily. This was tentatively estimated at $6M. While seemingly rational to ask states to contribute to the cost of new corridor service, it presents a host of difficult problems for a multi-state corridor such as ours. Most notably is that three state legislatures must agree to a long-term commitment and act together. It is difficult, if not impossible to accomplish given each state has different priorities and funding availability in any given year. For member states of the SRRTC the geography works against us as Louisiana and Alabama have 20 miles or less of track and Mississippi has the bulk of the 145-mile long corridor. Proportionality of cost would need to be agreed upon and if accomplished, should any one state neglect payment the service could still be jeopardized. Thus the reason for the original framework of long-distance trains, underwritten by taxpayers and operated by one national company. As with the Down Easter operating from Portland, ME to Boston, MA, it is more likely that only states with a great desire or need will provide the funding. In consequence this strategy penalizes a combination of states such as ours that through circumstance have less where-with-all to prioritize this need over the immense number of critical needs identified in post-Katrina planning.

In addition, as the House of Representatives contemplates the companion bill to Senate Bill 294, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007, we would like to point out several items of concern. In Section 207, Independent Auditor To Establish Methodologies For Amtrak Route and Service Planning and Section 208, Metric and Standards, the present language may provide a tool to undermine and terminate present long-distance services. Criteria to evaluate trains and ultimately determine what corridors will receive state grants includes 1) current or expected performance and service quality of intercity passenger train operations, including cost recovery, on-time performance and minutes of delay and 2) ridership.

It is well known that the Sunset Limited had one of the worst on-time performance and delay records of all long-distance trains. The communities served should not be penalized for receiving poor service due to their location on the route. As the Sunset Limited was the only transcontinental train it suffered from the frailties and accumulated delays associated with its high mileage. Without adequate frequencies or on-time trains, ridership was decreasing in the last years of operation east of New Orleans. This potentially demonstrates an even greater need to provide a service that serves people, perhaps a separate service that does not run from one side of the country to the other but one that can still be an overall improvement over a shorter distance (New Orleans to Jacksonville). Therefore, the service provider should be asked to solve and improve service. Instead, language in Section 207 could effectively end service on both sections of the Sunset Limited, east and west of New Orleans.

States having a poor long-distance service record today that try to move toward state supported city-pair services may also be at a disadvantage in this legislation. Within Title III-Intercity Passenger Rail Policy, under Section 301, Capital Assistance for Intercity Passenger Rail Service; State Rail Plans; Project Selection Criteria, it outlines that in order to be eligible for capital grants (that would ultimately improve our problematic corridor) "preference is to be given to projects with high levels of estimated ridership, increased on-time performance, reduced trip time, additional service frequency to meet anticipated or existing demand, or other significant service enhancements as measured against minimum standards developed under section 208 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007." As the methodologies are to be developed based in part on 1) current or expected performance and service quality of intercity passenger train operations, including cost recovery, on-time performance and minutes of delay and 2) ridership (see section 207 and 208) it easy to conclude the legislation is working to defund problematic routes. Title III then could effectively put any state run corridor between New Orleans and Mobile or Mobile and Jacksonville last in line for federal funding.

The long and the short of S 294 language if enacted as written means the Sunset Limited long-distance service between California and Florida could be justifiably ended without the possibility of petition. Importantly, any new city-pair corridor service east of New Orleans, described as best practices by Amtrak today, would not be eligible for federal funding under Title III, relegating all capital investment for any new service to the states. Ironically, SRRTC has advocated for a Rail Title that would create an 80/20 funding source and would provide for a multi-year Amtrak re-authorization. Senator Lott of Mississippi was instrumental in creating and advocating for this important Rail Title. Unfortunately, in substance it is not favorable to the Gulf Coast situation. We suggest that a better approach would be to allow some portion of available funds to be allocated for corridors that are lower performing in order to provide some equity among all routes while enabling the fledging new Rail Title to move ahead. Another suggestion is to include marketing and outreach funding for new corridors service routes that must tackle education and coordination among multiple state legislatures.

While the density of our cities served does not compete with the Northeast Corridor, California and other high population areas, our transportation needs are no less critical and no less important. The national intercity passenger rail system was created to serve all of America, rural and urban, north, south, east and west. SRRTC pursued initiation of service east of New Orleans through the 1980's and early 1990's to supply fundamental transportation to communities along

the Gulf Coast and we continue to do so today. Our motivation has expanded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to include citizen concerns for safely exiting Gulf Coast cities in the approach of a hurricane. Rail transportation has the unique ability to provide this valuable service in a time of national emergency while providing a better standard of living for all of our citizens and acting as an economic catalyst on a daily basis.

Thank you for allowing Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission to provide comments.

TESTIMONY OF

RICHARD PHELPS
VICE PRESIDENT, TRANSPORTATION
AMTRAK

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2008
10:00 A.M.
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Good morning, Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee. My name is Richard Phelps, and I am Amtrak's Vice President of Transportation. In this capacity, I am responsible for the operation of all Amtrak trains, a responsibility that would encompass the operation of evacuation trains from New Orleans. I would also like to thank Mayor Nagin for his city's hospitality and for hosting this field hearing. As you probably know, Amtrak began operations on May 1, 1971, and since that first day, New Orleans has been a stop on our system, with scheduled service to Washington, DC, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Memphis, and we have served it ever since.

Let me briefly outline Amtrak's plans for disaster relief in the region in the event of another hurricane. We have done some significant work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on planning evacuations since Katrina, and Amtrak was under contract with FEMA for the 2007 hurricane season, which extended this year from June through November. This contract expired on November 30, 2007, and we will begin talks with FEMA this month about renewing it for the 2008 season. Therefore, any references I make to an evacuation plan refer to the plan we put together for the 2007 season. Evacuation plans are very complex, and the logistics of railroad transport aren't the only consideration.

We move the evacuees, but we must bring them to points where FEMA can arrange for shelter and feeding, and we can really only advise FEMA about the feasibility of rail evacuation to those points. One advantage of railroads is our ability to move large numbers of people at once, but it's important to remember that we can only move them on fixed lines. We need to keep this in mind as I discuss the logistics of an evacuation to Memphis, which was the destination we envisioned in our joint planning with FEMA in 2007.

I think it's important to start by setting out the conditions that are necessarily going to govern any evacuation effort. Because of the nature of hurricanes, we assumed we would have a relatively limited amount of time to implement our plan, and there are a couple of governing assumptions that I should explain before we get into the description of the actual plan. The first assumption is that Amtrak would receive its evacuation instructions from FEMA approximately 72 hours before the hurricane makes landfall; FEMA, of course, will issue these instructions at the request of the state of Louisiana. Landfall time would be determined by the National Weather Service. From this assumption flows another, and that is the timing of the individual parish levee boards' decisions to close the levee gates around New Orleans. In 2007, we assumed that the board would close the levee gates 12 hours before the hurricane's announced landfall time. Obviously, a lot

can happen, and we understand that it is possible the levee gates could actually be closed 24 hours before the announced landfall time, which would reduce the amount of time we have to conduct the evacuation from 60 hours to 48 hours. This would reduce the number of outbound trips trains can make, and lower the total number of evacuees we could carry.

All the rail lines out of New Orleans pass through levee gates, and some pass through multiple gates, so general gate closure will effectively seal the rail routes; any individual closure on a line with multiple gates like the Canadian National line to Memphis via Jackson (which passes through three sets of levee gates) would close the entire line to trains leaving Union Terminal. Because this would prevent further rail evacuation and leave equipment in the path of the oncoming storm, we would remove every piece of rolling stock that could roll from the city before the storm struck. This would have provided us with cars that could then have been used to transfer evacuees to other locations or to bring in additional responders for relief efforts. Equipment that was inside the city after the gates closed would be moved to high ground to limit water damage.

The first twenty-four hour period of our 2007 plan would be spent mobilizing and deploying personnel and equipment to New Orleans. Amtrak has designated

members of a "Rail Evacuation Team" (or "RET") who would have deployed to New Orleans in that period to organize and prepare to receive the evacuees. To coordinate with the State evacuation planners, a "Mobile Command Center" bus would also have moved to Baton Rouge, to link up with the Louisiana Department of Transportation Emergency Operations Center so it could provide 24 hour liaison with Amtrak's Central National Operations Center in Wilmington, Delaware. The team would have included Amtrak police and Emergency Preparedness employees who could provide 24 hour coverage of the State ESF-1 functions, which encompass emergency transportation and infrastructure operations.

All revenue service to and from New Orleans would have been suspended. Individuals holding tickets on scheduled trains whose equipment was diverted to evacuation service would be given priority on those trains. Normal service from New Orleans would have been cancelled to allow equipment to be used in the evacuation. Inbound trains would have turned at major intermediate points. Equipment currently in New Orleans would be used for evacuations, and we would bring in whatever additional equipment we deemed necessary. On any given day Amtrak has three trainsets in New Orleans for normal operations and they would have been pressed into service for evacuations.

Under our 2007 agreement, evacuation would have begun at New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal twenty-four hours after we received notification from FEMA and several trains would have departed from New Orleans for Memphis over the next thirty-six hours. We planned our operations with an understanding that the situation would naturally be fluid, and I need to emphasize that it depended upon two key government decisions – FEMA's notification to Amtrak, and the Federal Railway Administration's notice to the railroads that the evacuation had begun, and that evacuation trains had priority.

On the map we have here, you will note that we have highlighted our normal services to and from New Orleans in black, and potential rail evacuation routes in red. When planning for an evacuation, we want to move people inland, and the two lines that physically offer the best evacuation routes out of New Orleans are the Kansas City Southern line to Baton Rouge and the Canadian National line to Memphis via Jackson. We would stay away from the coastal routes, since those would be vulnerable to disruption. Our 2007 planning was focused on an evacuation to Memphis, and I will discuss our plans in that regard. Once I have done so, I will come back to the issue of routes and destinations to offer some closing comments.

The evacuation to Memphis would have begun when the first train departed New Orleans twenty-four hours after we received the FEMA alert. This would have been an eight-hour trip over Canadian National rails, and it would be the first of four trips to Memphis, which could have collectively evacuated a total of 5,800 people. Amtrak's employees in New Orleans would have secured the station and departed on the last trains out of the city, bringing any unused emergency food and water supplies out with them. We would also have moved all of the defective and unserviceable equipment that could roll just after the last train departed. This would have required a waiver from the Federal Railway Administration.

To support our planned evacuation, Amtrak stocked a total of 18,000 emergency "snack pack" meals and 72,000 bottles of water at its commissary facility in New Orleans UPT to feed evacuees. We also created "go kits" for every participating engineer and conductor that included such vital items as rule books for the railroads over which we will be operating, portable radios and satellite phones, gloves, safety glasses, batteries, lanterns and switch keys. Operating crews assigned to the RET who would have operated trains were specially trained and qualified to operate over CN between the Amtrak terminal in New Orleans and Memphis, and employees were designated to man the team that would augment Amtrak work forces in New Orleans with 16 trained police members from our

police department and 32 customer service employees to ensure that the trains were properly stocked, and the evacuation was orderly and efficient.

Once the trains departed, our station in New Orleans would be available for use as a shelter. I think it's useful at this point to pull up our last chart, which summarizes the contributions Amtrak was prepared to make in 2007 in the event of a serious hurricane on the Gulf Coast. Some of those services are the subject of ongoing negotiations with FEMA, while others, such as the depot shelter, will be available as a result of compliance with local codes or agreements.

I think that describes the essentials of the plan we were prepared to execute. I don't yet know what the terms of a 2008 contract with FEMA will be. I would like to close by offering a couple of comments on the logistical difficulties involved in this. From an operational point of view, it's easiest to operate on the routes we normally use: our crews know them, the owning railroads are used to hosting passenger service, and they allow us to operate at useful speeds. Alternate routes such as Baton Rouge require more advance planning and coordination, and necessarily conducive to the desired operating speeds. Coastal routes are very vulnerable to weather damage, and we don't want to run trains over them during a hurricane. The best options for evacuation are inland routes that we operate on

daily, and it is for this reason that Jackson and Memphis are good destination points for evacuees.

All of us have learned a lot in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, but we have used that experience to build a good plan that will make a real difference in the face of an impending natural disaster. I think the plans we have arrived at are reasonable and, given that we have a number of trains positioned in New Orleans and crews trained to operate them over an evacuation route that hosts normal scheduled service, I think they're feasible. This concludes my testimony, and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

TESTIMONY OF

RICHARD PHELPS
VICE PRESIDENT, TRANSPORTATION
AMTRAK

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

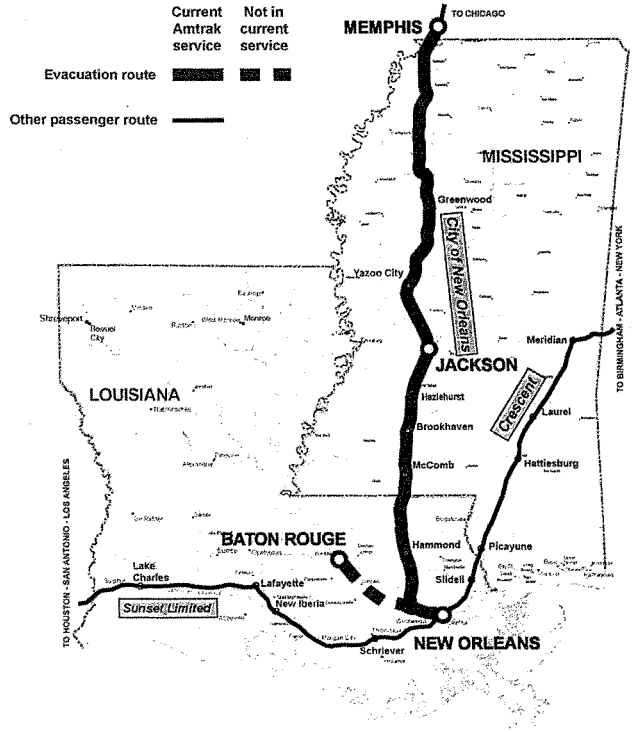
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2008
10:00 A.M.
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

AMTRAK®

Evacuation – Key Trigger Events

- National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts landfall date and time
- State of Louisiana asks FEMA to initiate rail evacuation
  - Ideally, 72 hours before landfall
- FEMA notifies Amtrak it intends to execute evacuation plans
  - Planning assumes 60 hour window
  - 24 hours to organize evacuation
  - 36 hours to evacuate
- Levee gate closure seals rail routes, ends evacuation
  - Assume closure 12 hours before landfall, ***BUT:***
  - Closure could be as much as 24 hours before landfall

Rail Routes – New Orleans and Vicinity

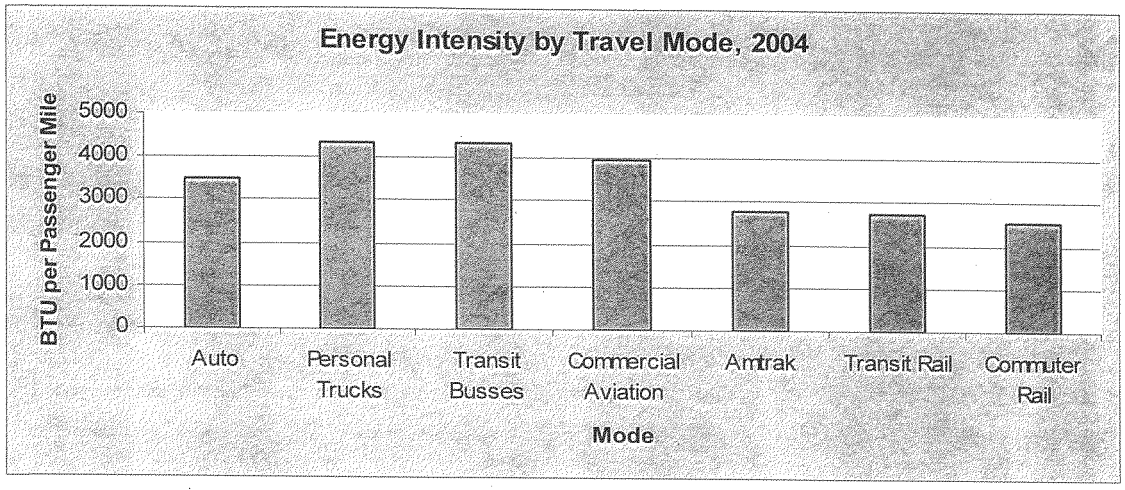


Amtrak's Support to Relief Efforts

- FEMA Contract Support, 2007
  - Three trainsets normally present (*City of New Orleans*, *Crescent*, *Sunset Limited*)
  - Logistical preparation for evacuation
    - 18,000 stockpiled emergency "snack pack" meals
    - 72,000 bottles of water
  - Emergency crew preparations
    - Designated qualified crews for evacuation trains and staff
    - "Go kits" for crews
    - Designated crews qualified on route and rulebook
    - Liaison teams and equipment prepared for movement to Baton Rouge
- New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal a designated shelter
  - Food and water stored in commissary
  - Station grounds used as emergency facility during Katrina

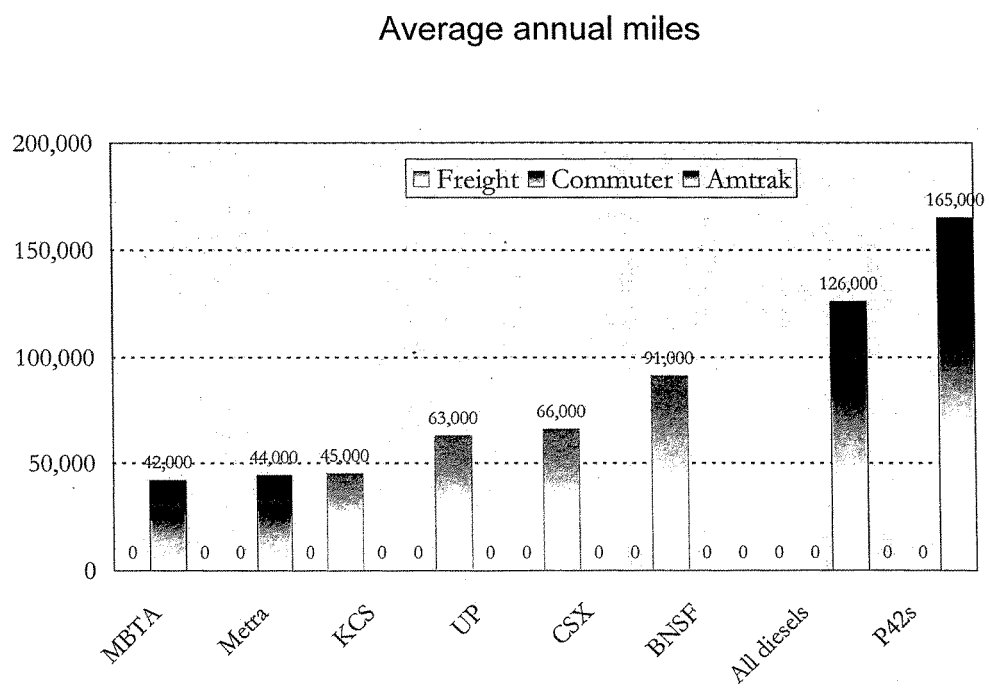
Backup Slides

Comparative Energy Intensities



Source: U.S. DoE, "Transportation Energy Data Book, Edition 26 – 2007"

Amtrak's Diesel Locomotive Utilization – Higher Than Freights & Commuters



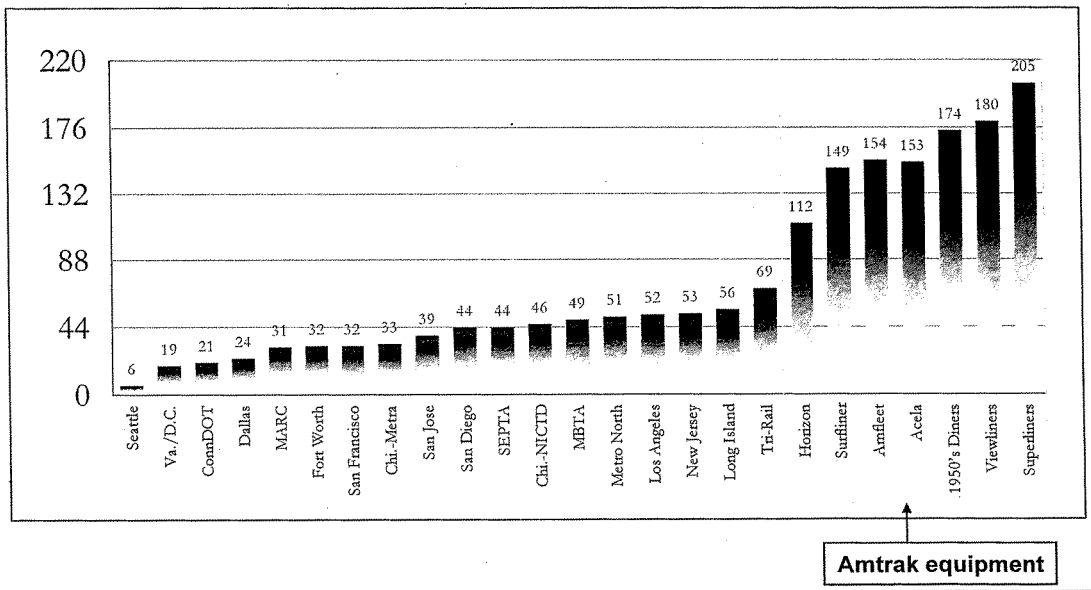
Amtrak's Average Annual Car Miles – Highest in US Passenger Rail

Commuters:

Maintained nights, weekends, off-peak

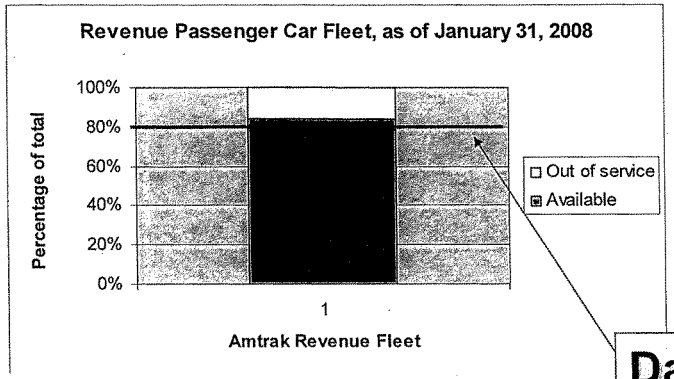
Amtrak:

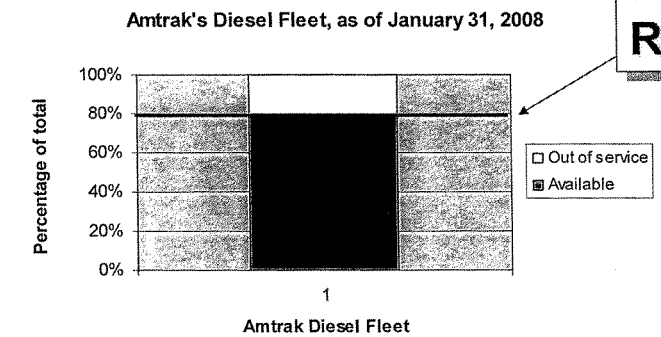
Operate 24x7, turnaround in 4 to 6 hours



Amtrak equipment

Fleet Availability Snapshot





Daily Requirements

- Amtrak uses well over ninety percent of its available fleet on a daily basis
- This chart shows usage on a typical day – normal operations required 95% of the available coaches and 103% of the available diesel engines

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials

"The Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies"

February 11, 2008

Testimony of E. Pat Santos Jr.
Assistant Deputy Director
Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita exposed significant flaws in Federal, State, and local preparedness and response capabilities to catastrophic events. Numerous after-action reviews were conducted in the months following the 2005 hurricanes involving stakeholders at every level of Government. Beginning in 2006 a concerted effort has been made by the State of Louisiana in a cooperative spirit with local governments, including non-governmental organizations, industry, and our Federal partners to formulate improved planning, coordination, and disaster management capabilities during future incidents.

One such lesson learned was the need to develop scalable and flexible plans with adequate resources to assist those citizens who desire to evacuate during an emergency, but lack the means to do so. The City of New Orleans has developed a "New Orleans City Assisted Evacuation Plan" that addresses this very issue. It is estimated that if an evacuation is called, approximately 25,000 citizens could potentially require emergency transportation out of the New Orleans area within a 54 hour window.

It is clearly evident that to evacuate that number of citizens in such a short time period every available means of transportation had to be considered. The State Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), who has the primary responsibility for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 1 – Transportation, has secured a commercial bus contract for 700 coach buses. These commercial buses in addition to State school buses will provide a large percentage of the critical transportation needs for citizens that require both transportation and sheltering across all of the at-risk parishes in Louisiana. We are aware and do currently have concerns that the contracted bus vendors, depending on the situation, may not be able to provide the total number of buses when and where needed in Louisiana. Those citizens considered "general population" evacuees that do avail themselves of this means of transportation can expect a rather long trip (approximately 5 to 10 hours) to the shelters located in North Louisiana or to neighboring States such as Arkansas or Alabama.

New Orleans emergency management officials suggested in 2006 that we consider Amtrak as a transportation asset that could be used for senior citizens and individuals that may require some special assistance. The emphasis is to place these citizens in a low stress environment to minimize the psychological and physical impact that occurs during a high tension event. The concept was discussed and refined and a request was made from the State to FEMA to formally ask for the use of this asset. Negotiations between FEMA and Amtrak produced a signed contract to be triggered in the event a Category 3 storm or higher threatens the City of New Orleans. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed between Louisiana and the State of Mississippi to allow the trains to use the Jackson train station as a trans-load site. At that point evacuees from the train would transfer to commercial buses which would take the evacuees to shelters located back in North Louisiana.

In 2007 the plan was modified to transport ambulatory senior citizen evacuees to Memphis where the State of Tennessee has agreed to shelter up to 6,000 Louisiana citizens arriving by train. Two Amtrak trains (each train consisting of 24 rail cars) carrying 1500 citizens with limited wheelchair capability would make 2 trips each from New Orleans to Memphis starting at 48 hours prior to the projected onset of tropical force winds (referred to as H-48).

During hurricane season, the speed at which some storms develop may not allow State and Federal entities to activate their transportation support plans in time to be effective. Air and bus assets must be activated as early as H-100 hours in order to maximize their potential effectiveness. Amtrak, with its pre-staged transportation resources in the vicinity, could make an immediate impact in this type of environment.

The use of rail is an integral part of the overall transportation evacuation plan in Louisiana. It was identified early in the planning process for an evacuation of Critical Transportation Needs (CTN) citizens within the Southeastern parishes of Louisiana which includes New Orleans, as the use of bus and rail alone will not provide the necessary transportation resources required. As a result of this potential shortfall a plan was developed by FEMA for the use of air assets to supplement bus and rail to transport as many as 15-20,000 evacuees out of the State.

All of the planning for the 2007 Gulf Coast Hurricane Season was focused on New Orleans as the origin rail station and Memphis as the destination rail station. During one of the hurricanes this past season as both Louisiana and Texas at one point were being threatened simultaneously, Texas inquired about the potential use of emergency rail transportation services for their general population. Due to the lack of prior planning this option was not pursued. There is a need for a coordinated national emergency transportation plan.

Our recommendation is that FEMA pursue a regional rail evacuation concept with a flexible multiple origins and destinations contract with Amtrak that is in line with FEMA Regions responsibilities and Amtrak's capabilities. There are other variables that could impact having only one origin or destination and without prior pre-planning for other options it could reduce Amtrak's capabilities. By planning different scenarios, FEMA and the States will be better prepared for any unusual situation that could disrupt operations. We see this as giving FEMA and the States a broad scope of coverage for emergency rail evacuation to compliment their multi – state responsibilities. As we continue preparations for the upcoming 2008 Hurricane Season, Louisiana will once again be requesting through FEMA an Amtrak contract.

Statement of Wayne C. Thomas
Vice President, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, IEM
8550 United Plaza, Suite 501, Baton Rouge, LA 70809
www.iem.com

On the Role of Intercity Passenger Rail During National Emergencies

Before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials
U.S. House of Representatives

February 11, 2008

New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal

Chairwoman Brown, Representative Shuster, and members of the committee, it is an honor to testify today on the use of intercity rail to improve disaster response.

There are at least 70 million people in the US today with limited or no access to personal vehicles. These include elderly, low-income, and disabled persons. In cities with populations greater than 250,000, the number of people that do not own a vehicle can be significant. For example, in New York City, 56% of households do not own vehicles. In pre-Katrina New Orleans, an estimated 27% of households did not own a vehicle. Hurricane Katrina, as well as the events of 9/11, highlighted the importance of identifying these transportation-disadvantaged populations and bringing them to safety.

Our company, Innovative Emergency Management (IEM), has a unique perspective on this topic. We have 22 years of experience in disaster preparedness, and have worked in over 40 states developing, reviewing, exercising, and improving response plans. We supported FEMA in developing the initial 2007 Federal Support Plan for Louisiana Hurricane Evacuation, which involved the use of Amtrak, and we helped create the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's plans for providing evacuation assistance to the state's transportation-disadvantaged and special needs populations. Through ongoing contracts with FEMA, IEM is supporting historic catastrophic planning initiatives in the eight-state New Madrid Seismic Zone and in Florida. This includes mass evacuation planning and a companion project that is developing plans to support evacuee reception and care in host cities in the states of Arkansas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. In addition, IEM has more than 15 years of experience supporting emergency preparedness and response planning—including evacuation—for the eight chemical weapons stockpile sites in the U.S.

Guided by these and other experiences, my testimony focuses on some of the key factors that must be considered in developing workable, effective plans for using passenger rail to improve mass evacuation during a national emergency.

Employ a Comprehensive Planning Approach

Clearly, rail is an attractive option for evacuating the transportation-disadvantaged and other populations during an emergency, because of its capacity levels as well as its ability to reduce traffic on roadways.

Roadways can quickly become gridlocked when large numbers of people are trying to evacuate. In 1999, the evacuation of Charleston, South Carolina, from Hurricane Floyd created a traffic jam extending more than 100 miles. A similar situation occurred in Texas as 2.5 million people evacuated by car from the threat of Hurricane Rita. Reports showed that in some instances it took 15 hours to travel 90 miles. In Hurricane Katrina, evacuees reported that the trip from New Orleans to Baton Rouge took as long as 12 hours, when it normally takes one hour.

During times of emergency, passenger trains, such as Amtrak, and light rail trains can transport up to 200 people per car. An eight-car train would be able to evacuate 1,600 people per trip. Prior to Hurricane Rita, Galveston evacuated approximately 3,200 people on 100 buses. Had eight-car passenger trains been employed, this same number of people could have been

evacuated in only two trips, freeing up 100 buses that could be used to help transport supplies or additional evacuees.

However, simply having the capacity to evacuate thousands of transportation-disadvantaged people from a city via rail does not equal a successful evacuation. There are a significant number of considerations that all must be addressed in order to develop a workable plan for transporting people out of a city via railways. Some of these issues are listed below, and will be discussed in more detail later in the testimony.

- To ensure that plans are fully integrated and coordinated, and that roles and responsibilities are clear, understood, and accepted, all key decision-makers from each level of government and relevant non-governmental agencies must be involved in the planning process.
- The plan must identify personnel and resources for registering evacuees at the rail station, for operating and staffing the trains, and for providing security for evacuees on the train (if personnel will be different from daily staff on duty). Because rail systems typically operate with limited personnel, we cannot expect that there will be a supply of people ready and available to run the trains during an emergency. The response to Hurricane Katrina showed how difficult it can be to acquire personnel resources during a disaster, both because of difficulty locating people during a disaster and because of the role conflicts that many will experience when their families are in danger and they also have a professional responsibility to perform.
- The plan must include procuring resources for care and feeding of evacuees on the train.
- The plan must account for the re-allocation and prioritization of commuter rail tracks during a disaster to support both freight and passengers. Likewise, if tracks are used by multiple agencies, there must be an understanding of prioritization of use before the disaster strikes. If old tracks are to be used, the plan must ensure that they are inspected prior to use.
- The Federal Transit Administration and Federal Rail Administration recommend restricting train usage when winds exceed established safety levels. As a result, hurricane-related plans must ensure that evacuations are completed before winds reach this level. This will likely require a phased evacuation.
- In some areas, there may be only one track going in one direction, so a single train breakdown can bring the whole system to a halt. Additionally, a freight train may travel into the evacuation route and impede the evacuation. There must be contingency plans in place to address these scenarios. Where possible, planning should include routes with multiple tracks.
- Many rail agencies are concerned about transporting special needs populations, and their policies may prohibit transport of pets other than service animals. These concerns must be discussed and resolved during the planning process.
- Plans must contain procedures for dealing with "unique populations" such as registered offenders who may require transport.

- The plan must address means of getting the transportation-disadvantaged to the train station for evacuation, as well as sources of transport for evacuees once they reach the host city's train station. Specific means of transport, as well as drivers, must be identified and ready. Pick-up points must be established and communicated, and routes and timelines must be planned and coordinated to avoid roadways clogged with self-evacuees driving personal vehicles.

Integrate Evacuation and Sheltering

If evacuees transported by rail are left stranded in an unfamiliar host city, even though they are out of harm's way, the goal of protecting them has not been accomplished. In most response planning, the Emergency Support Functions for Transportation and Sheltering are addressed separately. But when accomplishing a mass evacuation of people using public transportation, these two functions and their associated plans must be closely integrated to ensure that evacuees are cared for when they reach their destination. One example of a group that is focused on this type of coordination is the National Sheltering System.

Based on disaster case studies, planners assume that only 10% of evacuees driving personal vehicles will require public sheltering. Most people will stay with relatives or friends. However, it is safe to assume that 100% of transportation-disadvantaged individuals will require sheltering. Planners must coordinate with local, state, and federal personnel in the host city to ensure sufficient shelter capacity and that transport will be available to take evacuees to shelter locations from the rail station once they arrive. It is especially critical to communicate with local officials in the host cities as they are the ones responsible for taking in and caring for the evacuees. It is possible that evacuees may need to be transported to multiple host cities along the rail route to accommodate the large volume of people.

Developing a single, integrated plan for mass evacuation via rail that contains clear roles and responsibilities for each jurisdiction, the agencies within those jurisdictions, and all rail operators involved can address these concerns. In addition to ensuring that evacuees are received and brought to shelters, this integration ensures that a state can track the location of evacuees, so they can be provided with key information about reunification with family members and about when and how they can return home.

Develop and Implement a Strong Outreach Plan

Once a transportation plan using rail has been developed, a strong public outreach campaign is necessary to link the plan to the transportation-disadvantaged population. People can only be part of the solution if they know what is required of them and are ready to take the appropriate actions to be transported to safety.

Through the outreach campaign, specific, meaningful messages must be created and communicated to the target audience so that they are armed with basic information about what to do when an evacuation is required. This information should include:

- How they will be evacuated

- Where they should go to be picked up for transport to the rail station, and how they will be alerted when it is time to do so
- Where the train will take them
- How they will be returned home once it is deemed safe
- What can and cannot be brought aboard the train

The transportation-disadvantaged population within any community will be made up of different types of people and groups, including elderly, low-income, and disabled individuals. Messages must be created specifically for each group and distributed through channels unique to each group. Grass roots campaigns utilizing multiple languages can be an effective means of reaching these groups. Additionally, due to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, public transit systems have established multiple methods for communicating information to their public customers. Officials can take advantage of these existing channels to distribute evacuation information to the transportation-disadvantaged population—one of the largest users of public transportation. Other mechanisms could include public service announcements, integration with the 2-1-1 telephone system, and participation in community meetings. It is important that these messages be integrated with those being promulgated by area cities, states, and regional governments to ensure consistency and avoid confusion.

To ensure that the outreach campaign is achieving its intended goals, focused, science-based surveys should be developed and conducted to capture the perceptions, attitudes, and level of understanding of the target audience. As an example, FEMA's Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program has been conducting public outreach to communities surrounding chemical weapon stockpile sites for more than a decade. These communities include a large contingent of low-income, minority individuals, similar to those who make up the transportation-disadvantaged population. The outreach is designed to educate the population about what they must do to protect themselves when they hear a siren that indicates a chemical emergency. Targeted outreach has been conducted for the last decade, with professional surveys conducted on a consistent basis to measure the effectiveness of the campaign.

Through this program, FEMA has found that it takes five to six years and millions of dollars to sufficiently educate the audience so that they know what actions to take during an emergency and are prepared to do so. For a mass evacuation using rail to be successful, this same level of sustained outreach to the transportation-disadvantaged population will be crucial.

Apply a Scenario-Based Planning Process

Comprehensive planning for catastrophic response is daunting, but not impossible. What is needed is a method that facilitates collaborative planning and relationship-building among responders and officials at all levels of government, all stakeholder agencies, and among personnel from neighboring states who will receive and shelter evacuees.

A scenario-based planning approach, such as the one employed by FEMA's catastrophic planning process, represents one solution to this challenge. This method is being used to develop catastrophic plans for the eight-state New Madrid Seismic Zone and the State of Florida. For each of these projects, hundreds of federal, state, and local personnel—both planners and

operational personnel—are presented with the consequences of a catastrophic disaster within a scenario-based workshop environment. Personnel from different jurisdictions are divided into groups to begin tackling the operational complexities involved in addressing key response and recovery results. The focus is on operational concerns, interagency coordination, and initiating dialogue between the many different stakeholders involved.

Recognizing that evacuee support is integral to the success of catastrophic planning, FEMA also launched a separate project to address this topic. Scenario-based planning workshops are being conducted with the states of Arkansas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas, to develop plans for transporting, receiving, and sheltering evacuees from potential disasters in states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Based on this model, they are also developing planning guidance for producing evacuee support plans in the rest of the nation.

This project is tackling many of the specific challenges to rail transport described in this testimony. In addition, it is addressing medical transport, special needs transport, evacuation of pets, and reunification. Interagency agreements are being developed between states, federal agencies, rail companies, and bus companies in advance of a disaster, and stakeholders from federal, state, local, the National Sheltering System, and other non-governmental organizations are closely involved.

Other state and regional projects have also used this method. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, the Warm Cell at the Louisiana Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge used it to develop and refine the 2007 Federal Support Plan for Louisiana Hurricane Evacuation, which integrated the New Orleans city plan with Louisiana's state plan and the Jefferson parish plan. Based on IEM's experience with this effort, bringing all participants together to discuss and resolve planning issues brought creative resolutions to problems and produced greater results than previous efforts that relied on other planning methods.

The scenario-based workshop methodology encourages collaboration and focus on developing plans that address the catastrophic consequences presented. Working together, participants identify response actions to be taken as well as available resources needed to support these actions. In the case of a rail transportation plan, officials can work together to determine, for example, whether there are enough trains and enough track to evacuate the target population, where they will find the drivers, whether there are enough shelters in the host cities, and how much food and water will be needed for evacuees on the train.

In scenario-based workshops, participants have shown that they are committed to producing results. The disaster becomes real for participants at all levels and encourages them to cut through conflicting priorities, turf issues, and resource concerns and focus on meaningful results.

In concert with the scenario-based planning process, modeling and simulation technology can be a sophisticated option for measuring the effectiveness of plans developed in the workshops, as well as any proposed improvements. It can be especially useful in studying social and traffic patterns after an evacuation order has been issued to see how quickly the transportation disadvantaged can get to the train station and be evacuated. This can play a key role in ensuring that the rail transportation plan developed accomplishes the necessary results.

Conclusion

Intercity passenger rail can be an effective solution to mass evacuation, in conjunction with other transportation systems, such as bus systems, barges, ferries, and airlines. As such, it must be considered as a component of large-scale disaster plans. In some disasters, if roads and airport runways are unusable, rail may be the only option for transportation of people and supplies.

However, for this planning to be effective, it is critical that all stakeholders be involved in the plan development and evaluation process and that all challenges to successful rail evacuation be carefully considered and addressed. A consistent, long-term public outreach campaign must be implemented to ensure that transportation-disadvantaged individuals know what to do when a disaster occurs, and evacuation and sheltering must be integrated to ensure that evacuees are cared for upon arrival in host cities. Scenario-based planning is a proven method for developing collaborative plans that address these and other concerns.

Finally, evacuation is more than just a standard logistics challenge or commodity-distribution problem. It's about people, our most precious national commodity, and we cannot forget that. Through proper planning that addresses the full spectrum of human needs, we can ensure that those being evacuated will be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve during a time of uncertainty and chaos.

RESOLUTION

R-06-301

CITY HALL: July 20, 2006

AF

BY: COUNCILMEMBER FIELKOW
SECONDED BY: COUNCILMEMBER CARTER

WHEREAS, prior to Hurricane Katrina, AMTRAK operated the Sunset Limited between Los Angeles, California and Orlando, Florida, providing passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast of the United States, specifically between New Orleans and Orlando; and

WHEREAS, that portion of the Sunset Limited route between New Orleans and Orlando generated ridership involving a substantial number of passengers per day; and

WHEREAS, since Hurricane Katrina, AMTRAK has not restored Sunset Limited service along the Gulf Coast portion of the route; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the economic benefits realized along the Gulf Coast portion of the Sunset Limited route, there is a increased need for this service as a vital transportation link for New Orleans area evacuees returning to rebuild their homes and businesses; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission, housed in the offices of the Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, St. Bernard and St. Tammany Parishes is seeking an evaluation from AMTRAK concerning resumption of service east of New Orleans, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, that AMTRAK is strongly urged to do all in its power to restore the Gulf Coast portion of Sunset Limited passenger rail services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission is requested to submit to the Clerk of Council, a report on the status of the restoration of the Sunset Limited passenger service east of New Orleans and that the Clerk submit a copy of said report to the Chair of the City Council Ground Transportation Committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded to the Chairman of AMTRAK, and the Executive Director of The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION WAS READ IN FULL, THE ROLL WAS CALLED ON THE ADOPTION THEREOF AND RESULTED AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Carter, Fielkow, Midura, Thomas, Willard-Lewis - 5

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: Head, Hedge-Morrell - 2

AND THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED

CCRSRCH/RESOLUTS/06-130