

Amtrak Bill Passes House, Instructs Panel to Study Restoring the Sunset Limited Route

WASHINGTON - Rep. Gene Taylor announced that a bill instructing Amtrak to report its plan to restore passenger rail service between New Orleans and Sanford, Fla. overwhelmingly passed the U.S. House of Representatives today by a vote of 311 to 104. H.R. 6003, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, is a five-year authorization of Amtrak.

"This bill would give Amtrak the funds to allow them to look into restoring the Sunset Limited, which has always been a big part of communities along the Gulf Coast," Rep. Taylor said. "I am thankful to Committee Chairman Oberstar and Subcommittee Chairwoman Brown for including this study in the bill, and for continuing their commitment to hurricane recovery."

One provision includes \$1 million for Amtrak to conduct the study of the Sunset Limited route that was disrupted by Hurricane Katrina. Amtrak would have to submit its report within nine months of the President signing the bill into law.

H.R. 6003 is a bipartisan bill to rebuild Amtrak and construct high-speed rail on high-density corridors across the nation. It has been more than a decade since the House has considered legislation to reauthorize Amtrak, and six years since Amtrak's authorization expired.

Here is the section of H.R. 6003 that would instruct Amtrak to report the Sunset Limited plan:

SEC. 218. PLAN FOR RESTORATION OF SERVICE.

(a) In General- Not later than 9 months after the date of enactment of this Act, Amtrak shall transmit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a plan for restoring passenger rail service between New Orleans, Louisiana, and Sanford, Florida. The plan shall include a projected timeline for restoring such service, the costs associated with restoring such service, and any proposals for legislation necessary to support such restoration of service. In developing the plan, Amtrak shall consult with representatives from the States of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, railroad carriers whose tracks may be used for such service, rail passengers, rail labor, and other entities as appropriate.

(b) Authorization of Appropriations- There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Transportation to enable Amtrak to conduct the study under this subsection \$1,000,000.

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