

I-95 Corridor Coalition

Southeast Rail Operations Study, Phase II

Tasks 1 and 2: Strategic Corridor Identification and Mapping

FINAL REPORT



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June 2011

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Prepared for:

I-95 Corridor Coalition

Sponsored by:

I-95 Corridor Coalition

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This report was produced by the I-95 Corridor Coalition. The I-95 Corridor Coalition is a partnership of state departments of transportation, regional and local transportation agencies, toll authorities, and related organizations, including law enforcement, port, and transit and rail organizations, from Maine to Florida, with affiliate members in Canada. Additional information on the Coalition, including other project reports, can be found on the Coalition's web site at <http://www.i95coalition.org>.

Executive Summary

The Southeastern Rail Operations Study (SEROps) Phase IIA report identifies nationally and regionally significant passenger and freight-rail corridors and major terminal initiatives in the Southeastern United States. This report, the second in a series, builds on initial (Phase I) demographic and economic findings by describing the rail initiatives that might help the region accommodate future freight and passenger transportation demand.¹ Study participants include the five southernmost states of the I-95 Corridor Coalition – Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida – and five neighboring states – Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Together, the 10-state study coalition is developing the vision, supporting data, and consensus on important regional projects to advance toward implementation. This project helps satisfy growing public interest in rail transportation and positions the Southeast to receive Federal funding for rail projects.

The freight and passenger rail initiatives presented in this report represent programs that are underway, programmed, planned, or are part of a collaborative long-term “vision,” and have been identified in planning documents and by Department of Transportation (DOT) and/or other agencies’ staff in each of the Southeast states, and by Amtrak, CSX Transportation (CSXT), and Norfolk Southern (NS) railroads. These projects represent investments in the region’s rail infrastructure which will preserve or expand freight and passenger service and contribute to economic (re)development throughout the region and beyond. In order to identify important initiatives, the study team canvassed state planning documents, consulted with staff, and collaborated with the region’s major rail carriers. Through this research activity, the 10-state coalition and study team developed consolidated lists and descriptions of major passenger and freight rail initiatives in the region that will serve as the focus of multistate collaborative planning efforts.

PASSENGER RAIL INITIATIVES

What is the state of passenger rail in the Southeast?

The current Amtrak network links many of the major population centers of the Southeast, moving nearly four million annual riders. Some of the routes, including the Carolinian, are supported by state funding. The most recent addi-

¹ <http://www.i95coalition.org/i95/Projects/ProjectDatabase/tabid/120/agentType/View/PropertyID/183/Default.aspx>.

tion to the state-sponsored service is a new extension of the Northeast Corridor between Washington, D.C. and Lynchburg, Virginia on Norfolk Southern's Piedmont line. Despite progress by the states and Amtrak in connecting more cities and providing greater frequency of service, there are some notable service gaps - including the lack of service to Nashville, Tennessee and Louisville, Kentucky. Also, since 2005, the Sunset Limited, which previously connected Jacksonville with New Orleans, has been out of service due to damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. Several rail initiatives seek to address these gaps in the future.

Which initiatives will help meet future passenger demand in the Southeast?

The Southeastern states are actively engaged in at least a dozen major passenger rail corridor development initiatives, several of which coincide with the U.S. DOT high-speed rail designations. Sponsored by individual states and/or multistate consortia, these initiatives range from nascent efforts to mature multistate coalitions moving through the Tiered Environmental Impact Statement EIS process toward implementation. The initiatives include track upgrades to enable higher speed intercity passenger service (90 miles per hour); acquisition of rail rolling stock; and intermodal station infrastructure improvements. Many of these projects would benefit both Amtrak passenger and freight railroad operations. State passenger rail programs, including sponsorship of Amtrak service, have been an important driving force for implementing service in the Southeast.

A map of passenger rail initiatives on existing and proposed passenger rail corridors is presented as Figure ES.1 and corresponds to Table ES.1. In addition to existing Amtrak corridors, other rail corridors have been identified as opportunities to develop new intercity passenger rail corridors connecting major cities throughout the region. The full report contains detailed descriptions of each initiative.

Figure ES.1 Intercity Passenger Priority Corridors and Initiatives

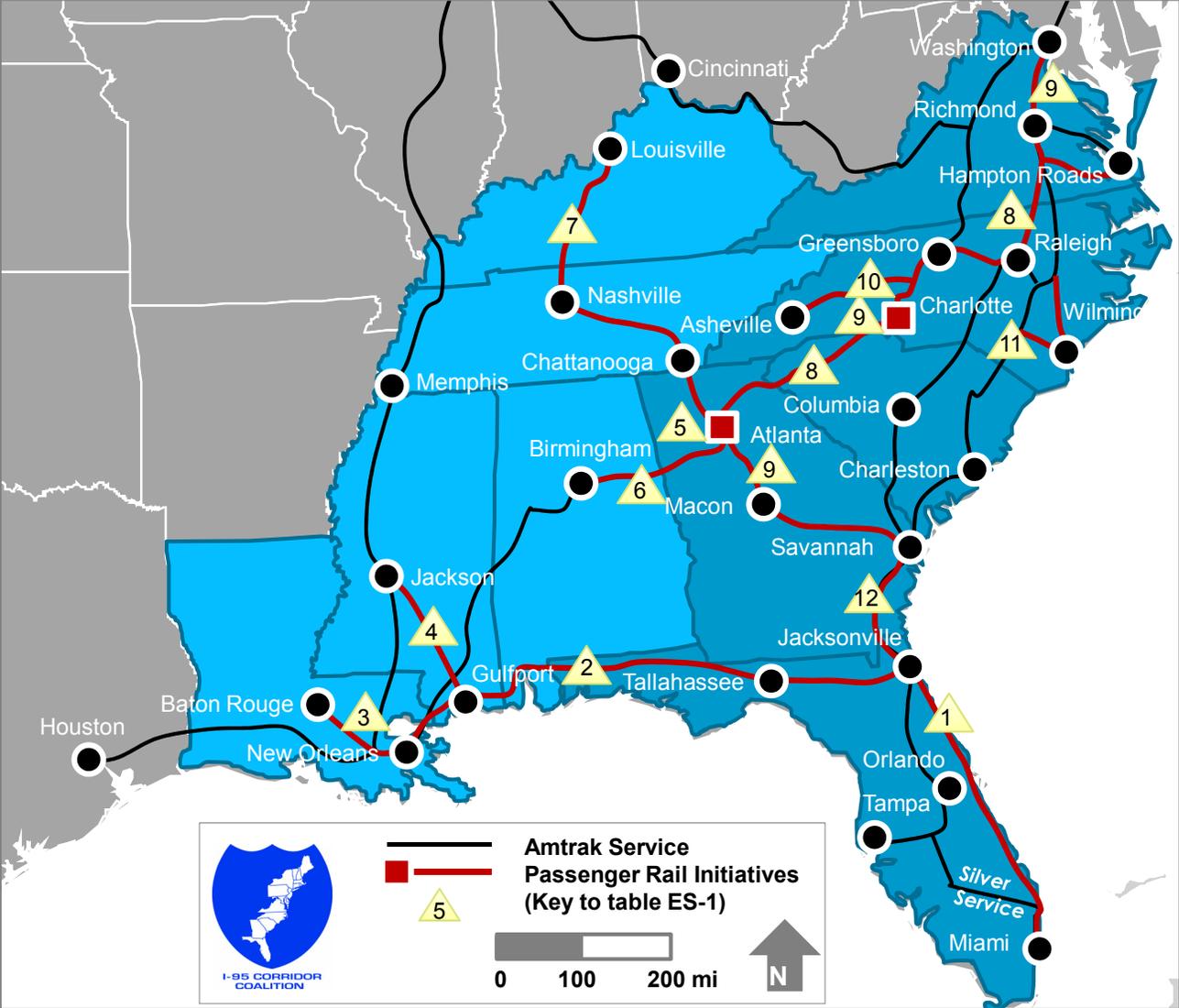


Table ES.1 Intercity Passenger Corridor Initiatives^a

Map Num.	Initiative or Project	Segment	Project Description	States Affected											
				FL	GA	SC	NC	VA	AL	MS	LA	TN	KY		
1	Florida East Coast Passenger Service	Jacksonville to Miami	Restoration of passenger service between Jacksonville and Miami; includes Jacksonville Transit Center	●											
2	Sunset Limited Restoration/HSR	Jacksonville to New Orleans (multisegment corridor)	Restoration/HSR upgrade of passenger service between Jacksonville and Miami.	●						●	●	●			
3	New Orleans-Baton Rouge HSR	New Orleans to Baton Rouge	Development of HSR corridor									●			
4	Gulfport-Jackson HSR	Gulfport to Jackson	Development of HSR corridor								●				
5	Atlanta Multimodal Passenger Complex	Atlanta	Anchor to multiple HSR corridors		●										
6	Atlanta-Birmingham HSR	Atlanta to Birmingham	Development of HSR corridor		●					●					
7	Atlanta-Louisville HSR	Atlanta to Louisville	Development of HSR corridor		●								●	●	
8	Southeast HSR Corridor	Washington to Atlanta (core route) with multiple extensions	Development of HSR corridor	●	●	●	●	●							
9	CRISP	Charlotte Region	Improved passenger and intermodal access and connectivity				●								
10	Western North Carolina Passenger Rail	Charlotte to Asheville	New passenger rail service				●								
11	Southeast North Carolina Passenger Rail	Wilmington, NC to I-95 Corridor	New passenger rail service				●								
12	Atlanta, Macon, Jacksonville HSR Feasibility Study	Atlanta to Jacksonville	Development of HSR corridor	●	●										

● = Project State

^a **Note on High-Speed Rail:** HSR is the abbreviation for high-speed rail, which in the case of some of the initiatives is true high-speed rail at speeds reaching 110 miles per hour or faster (49 USC §26405 (b)(4)). For most initiatives, HSR represents “higher” speed rail with speeds in the range of 90 miles per hour.

FREIGHT RAIL INITIATIVES

What is the state of the freight rail network in the Southeast?

The Southeast regional rail network is comprised of a set of primary Class I freight railroad corridors, secondary freight rail corridors, major intercity passenger corridors, and short-line freight and commuter/local passenger service corridors. NS and CSXT are the two Class I railroads with the greatest presence in the Southeast region, operating over 65 percent of the track mileage in the 10-state study area. The “western” Class I railroads such as Union Pacific (UP), Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), and Kansas City Southern (KCS), and Canadian National (CN) have significant presence in the states located along the Mississippi River (Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky). Collectively, the freight railroads of the Southeast moved nearly 12 million carloads in 2008 and employed nearly 50,000.

Like the passenger rail network in the Southeast, the current freight rail network connects major population centers and other important rail demand centers – including the maritime Ports of Virginia, Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, Jacksonville, Everglades, Miami, Tampa, Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans. Rail traffic in the Southeast and across the United States is beginning to rebound from the severe recessionary period. During this period of lower traffic, the freight railroads have made significant capital investments to prepare for the region’s long-term growth. As outlined in the first phase of the SEROps project, the Southeast will experience high population and employment growth in the coming decades. Another important dynamic affecting the freight rail industry in the Southeastern states is the enlarged Panama Canal, which has the potential to substantially increase shipments through East and Gulf Coast ports upon its completion in 2015. To prepare for these growth trends, the freight railroads and state partners are sponsoring several freight rail initiatives.

Which initiatives will help meet future freight demand in the Southeast?

The Southeastern states are actively engaged in at least 11 regionally significant freight rail corridor and terminal improvement initiatives, some with multiple major projects en route. In most cases, the initiatives are jointly supported by the railroads and state partners. Several of the major initiatives have recently received Federal funds appropriated by Congress or through the recent American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) rounds of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) funding.

These projects range in maturity from early planning to partial implementation. Some projects, including NS’ Crescent Corridor and CSXT’s National Gateway have received Federal funding through the TIGER program. Other projects,

including CSXT improvements in Florida have received state funding. Projects include capacity improvements (e.g., sidings, double-stack clearances, terminals) and improvements to speed and operations. In the future, the successful implementation of projects will continue to depend on collaboration between public and private partners, including freight railroads, shippers, local agencies, states, and the Federal government.

The initiatives are illustrated on a map in Figure ES.2. Table ES.2 lists freight corridor and terminal initiatives identified in the planning documents and by interviewees. The full report contains detailed descriptions of each initiative.

Figure ES.2 Freight Rail Priority Corridors and Initiatives

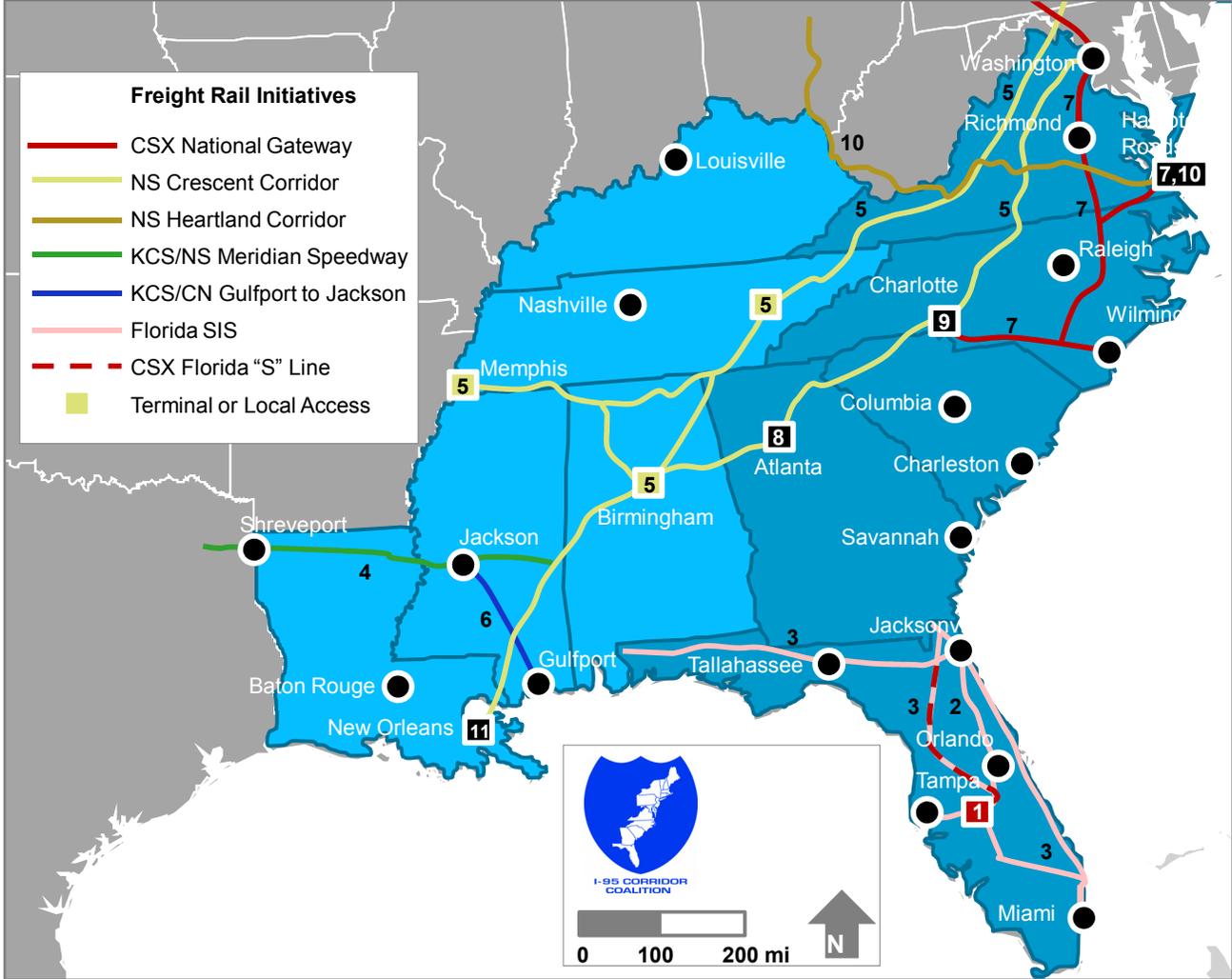


Table ES.2 Freight Rail Corridor Initiatives

Map Reference	Initiative or Project	Segment	Project Description	States Affected											
				FL	GA	SC	NC	VA	AL	MS	LA	TN	KY		
1	Integrated Logistics Center Winter Haven	Winter Haven, FL	Consolidated logistics and intermodal center to serve Tampa and Orlando markets	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2	CSXT “S” Line Improvements	Jacksonville, FL to Winter Haven, FL	Capacity, speed improvements	●	○	○	○	○							
3	Florida Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Improvements	Statewide	Improvements to enhance connectivity to ports and terminals	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4	KCS/NS Meridian Speedway	Shreveport to Meridian, MS	Capacity, speed improvements		○	○	○	○	○	●	●	○			
5	NS Crescent Corridor	New Orleans, LA and Memphis, TN to NJ	Corridor capacity and speed improvements and several terminal improvements		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
6	KCS/CN Gulfport to Jackson	Gulfport to Jackson	Capacity, speed improvements		○	●	○	○	○	●		○	○		
7	CSX National Gateway	Wilmington, NC and Charlotte, NC to Ohio	Double-stack, yard, and terminal improvements linking Mid-Atlantic to Ohio		○	●	●	●							
8	Atlanta Regional Improvements	Atlanta, Georgia	Alleviate freight and passenger bottleneck at Howell Junction; expand Austell Intermodal Yard		●	○	○		○						
9	Charlotte Intermodal Terminals and CRISP	Charlotte region	CSXT and NS Intermodal Terminals; CRISP grade separation and wye improvements		○	○	●	○							
10	NS Heartland Corridor	Hampton Roads, VA to Columbus, OH	Double-stack corridor improvements complete but two intermodal terminals needed					●							
11	New Orleans Gateway	New Orleans region	Improve traffic flow at convergence of six railroads at New Orleans		○				○	○	●				

● = Project State; ○ = Interstate network/connectivity effects

NEXT STEPS

The information on passenger and freight rail initiatives in the SEROps IIA report provides the foundation for future SEROps efforts. SEROps Phase IIB will advance the study on the following fronts:

- **Development of a more detailed rail program** - To provide more granular information for decision-making and prioritization, the I-95 Corridor Coalition will engage the states and railroads to more fully describe and document the characteristics of the current infrastructure - including maps depicting speed, capacity, technologies (e.g., signaling), freight and passenger flows.
- **Identification of benefits** - Using the successful template of the Mid-Atlantic Rail Operations Study (MAROps), the I-95 Corridor Coalition will apply the organizing principles of SEROps to quantify benefits of the initiatives - including reductions in traffic congestion, enhancements to safety and air quality, and other important factors.
- **Develop List of Pilot Projects** - Based on the benefits analysis or another mutually agreeable prioritization process, the SEROps states will cooperatively identify a set of “pilot” projects that might have the highest likelihood to qualify for Federal funding.
- **Application of lessons learned** - The I-95 Corridor Coalition will examine the success of other multistate rail initiatives, most notably the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRRI) which has been successful in focusing the resources of its member states to advance the highest priority projects.

Through these efforts, the Southeastern states can emerge as a more unified and organized region to cooperatively advance mutually beneficial passenger and freight rail initiatives across all 10 states.