

~~Strikethrough print~~ represents text which has been deleted.

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RESOLUTION

DELTA RAIL SERVICE

The future of industrial development and competitive freight rates for existing business is closely tied to the availability of rail service. Although inventory controls and "just-in-time" delivery of raw materials and finished goods has challenged our U.S railroad system, especially in rural areas, the majority of new investments made by manufacturers are made at industrial sites upon the condition that rail siding is available. Oftentimes, the existence of rail service alone generates competitive freight rates for other intermodal transportation alternatives. Delta Council also continues to support the re-evaluation of a rail bridge to be included as part of the I-69-Mississippi River crossing.

In order to maintain rail service in the Mississippi Delta, Delta Council urgently requests that the Mississippi Development Authority, the Office of the Governor and the Mississippi Legislature take steps to extend incentives to railroads to enhance railroad service as an option in the transportation of raw materials and finished goods. Delta Council pledges to work with the State of Mississippi, including the Executive Branch and Legislative Branch to support a package of economic development incentives for railroad improvements.

The long term outlook for maintaining rail service in the Northwest Mississippi area must also be focused on the attraction of new investments by industries which have historically been heavy rail users. Specifically, the East-West rail line from Columbus to Greenville is currently inoperable from Greenwood to West Point. Delta Council urges Mississippi Department of Transportation officials, the Mississippi Development Authority, Legislators, and the Office of the Governor to take the necessary actions to encourage the Genesee and Wyoming Railroad and the major shipper on this line in Columbus to work together with the Office of the Governor to examine the intermodal opportunities of rail access to Mississippi River ports for the shipment of raw materials and finished goods. Provided that officials with the Genesee and Wyoming Railroad provide an expressed financial interest in re-opening the 92-mile rail line between Greenwood and West Point, Delta Council views that this initiative should become a top priority for our region and the State of Mississippi. Available industrial sites which are located on the railroad should be given high priority by the Mississippi Development Authority in the marketing of the region, also.

We pledge to work with the railroad company, ~~the North Central MS Rail Authority~~, MDOT, existing industries, ***our Mississippi River ports***, and all federal and state elected officials to pursue opportunities to reopen this freight corridor. Delta Council especially appreciates the efforts of Governor Bryant, and Mississippi Department of Transportation Commissioners aimed at facilitating a cooperative initiative among the railroad, the primary prospective rail users, and local officials to enhance the feasibility of re-opening the rail line. We encourage the Governor to engage these parties in a project analysis to determine whether re-opening the line is a viable economic development project for the prospective rail user(s) and the private rail company.

Delta Council also urges that all Board of Supervisors, City and Town Councils, Legislators, and economic development agencies throughout the footprint of the East-West rail line pledge their support for this effort. Specifically, Delta Council encourages the Office of the Governor, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, Mississippi Development Authority, and the business leadership throughout the counties along the alignment, to meet with ports, existing and potential major rail users to determine the viability of the rail line. Special appreciation should be extended to Transportation Commissioners Dick Hall and Mike Tagert for their unwavering support and leadership in support of rail service for Northwest Mississippi and for our 3 inland waterway ports.

Delta Council has always been a strong advocate of the entire intermodal transportation concept for the Delta and the State of Mississippi. We continue to support the view that Mississippi ports, commercial aviation, highways and railroad service must be maintained and expanded in order for our region to become nationally competitive.

Adopted by: Delta Council Board of Directors
June 7, 2019

