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John Bel Edwards, Governor  
Shawn D. Wilson, Ph.D., Secretary

September 17, 2021

Mr. Amit Bose  
Acting Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey SE  
Washington DC 20590

Subject: Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program,  
Document Number: 2021-18737

Acting Administrator Bose:

This letter represents a commitment by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) to provide \$1.41 million in matching support for the CRISI FY21 project entitled “**The Rural Louisiana Short Line Rail Modernization Initiative**”, filed by the Louisiana Southern Railroad, Watco, Kansas City Southern (KCS) and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development as project partners.

The LADOTD funds will be the Department’s match for the agency’s first joint CRISI application with a short line railroad in the state and the inaugural project for the new Short Line Railroad Infrastructure Improvement Program created by the Louisiana Legislature.

Frequent hurricanes and tropical storms along the Gulf Coast have damaged much of Louisiana’s transportation infrastructure. Railroads are specifically susceptible to heavy rains and flooding. The Louisiana Southern Railroad is repeatedly impacted by these severe storms. Supporting a safe and efficient rail network throughout the state is of utmost importance. Additionally, upgrading the state’s short line railroads to handle the modern standard rail cars, loaded to 286k lb, is a priority for the Department, as noted in the state’s rail plan. Many surrounding states have a rail network that is able to accommodate 286k lb rail cars on both the Short Line and larger Class 1 rail networks. This puts Louisiana at a disadvantage regionally and nationally.

The Louisiana Southern Railroad provides customers in central rural Louisiana vital rail services that connects them to the region and the country. That service, however, is currently provided at 10 mph (or less) speed and at a lower weight of rail car than the modern standard (263k lb). This project, which would upgrade 40 miles of track to 286k lb capacity, would allow customers to fully utilize a modern rail network and attract new business along the line, while keeping additional rail traffic off Louisiana’s roads. With LADOTD and FRA CRISI funding, the LAS can be upgraded to modern standards and keep Louisiana competitive with neighboring states’ freight networks.

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This project is the first step in realizing the goal of 286k lb rail across Louisiana's short line rail network. We are pleased to offer our support for this critically important project and appreciate your serious consideration.

Should you have any questions, please contact our Office of Multimodal Commerce, Dean Goodell, [dean.goodell@la.gov](mailto:dean.goodell@la.gov), (225) 379-3031. Any further information, supplemental to this application package, can be provided upon request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shawn D. Wilson". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the beginning and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Shawn D. Wilson, PhD.  
Secretary

SDW:JDG:jdg