

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 135

BY SENATOR HEITMEIER

A RESOLUTION

To express support for the relocation of the existing railroad lines in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes of the New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway Company, a subsidiary of the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, and the Union Pacific Railroad in order to improve the public safety of citizens, to reduce vehicular and rail interfaces, to improve air quality and mitigate congestion, and to enhance economic development in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes.

WHEREAS, the New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway Company, a subsidiary of the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, and the Union Pacific Railroad are pursuing efforts to relocate and remove the present active, railroad main line tracks from just north of the Belle Chasse Rail Classification Yard along Louisiana State Highway 23 and the Mississippi River in a northerly direction to its Goulsboro Rail Classification Yard in Gretna, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project will include the removal of the Union Pacific Railroad trackage operated by the New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway Company between its Goulsboro Rail Classification Yard in Gretna, Louisiana, in a westerly direction to the Harvey Canal; and

WHEREAS, the tracks being proposed are to be rerouted to coincide with the Walker Road/Peters Road highway expansion; and

WHEREAS, due to the number of rail crossings along these existing rail routes and the increased traffic expected due to population changes and development, along with the anticipated increase of activity due to Naval Air Station, Joint Reserve Base, New Orleans, Louisiana, expansion, the safety issues become more of a concern and liability; and

WHEREAS, this newly proposed route will result in increased safety to the public by eliminating the crossings through these populated areas, and would yield significant enhancements to the public safety of citizens in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of these railroad lines would result in the elimination of about one hundred thirteen vehicular railroad crossings, including sixty three public and fifty private railroad crossings in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of these railroad lines would result in the elimination of approximately one-half of the miles of active track through Fourth Street in the central business district and approximately one mile of active track through the middle of Madison Street in a residential neighborhood of Gretna, Louisiana, in Jefferson Parish; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of these railroad lines would result in the removal of lines which could be made available for enhanced hurricane evacuation and expansion of highway infrastructures along Louisiana State Highway 23 in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of these railroad lines would result in the removal of lines, which could be made available to improve ingress and egress to existing businesses and residences along Louisiana State Highway 23 in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of these railroad lines would result in the elimination of the present Gouldsboro Rail Classification Yard, thus releasing some 80 acres for urban redevelopment in an economically depressed area of Jefferson Parish; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of these railroad lines would facilitate improved economic development and movement of goods from and along the new route on the west side of the Harvey Canal in a southerly direction; and

WHEREAS, this route could be used to stimulate and increase potential rail traffic from existing Plaquemines Parish shippers, including Chevron, Oronite, Conoco Phillips, Harvest States Grain Terminal, and International Marine Terminal, as well as potential new rail shippers which might be developed along the Mississippi River in lower Plaquemines Parish; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of these railroad lines would provide immeasurable public benefit in the form of reduced driving congestion, delay and frustration, reduced air pollution and improved air quality, increased mental health, improved police, fire, and ambulance response times, improved rail traffic potential with accompanying economic development stimulators, and a general improvement to the peace and tranquility of Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes; and

WHEREAS, the relocation construction project is currently estimated to cost

approximately three hundred fifty million dollars in 2010 and would have direct and indirect economic benefit approaching two billion five hundred million dollars for businesses, residents, and increased employment in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana hereby wholeheartedly expresses its support for the proposed relocation and removal of existing railroad lines in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes of the New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway Company, a subsidiary of the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, and the Union Pacific Railroad in order to improve the public safety of the citizens of each parish, to reduce vehicular and rail interfaces, and to improve air quality and congestion mitigation and to enhance economic development in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes, Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of Plaquemines Parish, the President of Jefferson Parish, the secretary of the Department of Economic Development, the secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development, the chief executive officer of the New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway Company, the chief executive officer of the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, and the chief executive officer of the Union Pacific Railroad.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE