



Mr. Cuellar,

I am writing to you today as the co-chair of the Board of Directors of San Antonians for Rail Transit (SART), a democratic, grassroots 501(c)4 organization with a membership based entirely within the San Antonio metropolitan statistical area (www.railforsanantonio.com). We know that you have long had an interest in advocating for rail, especially connections between San Antonio and Laredo. We are writing to you because we are concerned with the implications of the recently-released Federal Railroad Administration's [plans to revitalize long distance passenger rail](#) and hope that you, as representative for many of our members, can take action.

In general, we are excited about this bold proposal to double our nation's long-distance Amtrak routes and appreciate the crucial role that Congress took in mandating this action in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act.

However, we believe that the plan's exclusion of South Texas is a serious concern. Our preliminary analysis indicates that it is likely that this region from Laredo to Brownsville is the largest population concentration in the country that will be excluded from rail service if the FRA plans move forward.

For instance, in a list of the 100 largest cities in America (see attached), only five cities will be more than 25 miles from an intercity rail station. Excluding Honolulu, three of the four are in Texas – Corpus Christi, Laredo and Lubbock make the list along with Lexington KY. However, when we consider the RGV as a [transnational border region without a single defined metropolitan center](#), the millions of Texans and their neighbors along the border we believe greatly surpass any other excluded group.

We do not need to explain to you the ways that this omission will reinforce generations of racialized poverty and the symbolic exclusion of Mexican-Americans from the imagination of

“America.” A plan to reunite our nation through infrastructure should not work to undo, not reinforce, the mistakes of the past.

What’s more, these plans ignore the possibility that our neighbors in Mexico may wish to travel to the USA and vice versa – a possibility that has never been overlooked when we talk about rail service to Canada. If we treat Brownsville-Matamoros as a single city with 1,137,000 residents it would be easily the largest excluded city. Even Laredo-Nuevo Laredo with 675,000 residents is larger than rail hubs like Boston, Washington DC, Kansas City, New Orleans and Detroit.

The Mexican government is currently undergoing a massive restoration of passenger rail throughout their nation. One exciting route is the historic *Aguilla Azteca*, which linked Mexico City with Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo which they [hope to restore in the near future](#). Our own Texas Eagle train was once her sister and the two met and exchanged passengers for much of the mid-20th century. Imagine taking the rail not only from San Antonio to Monterrey, but Chicago to Mexico City with only one train change at the border. The current FRA plans view the Border as the 'end of the world', where we envision bridges to the south.

Unfortunately, the FRA will close comments on their plans on March 8th and while we are organizing to call attention to this issue, we fear that the window will close before our voice can be heard. As an organization representing your constituents and as allies in the pursuit of a truly national passenger rail system, we ask that you raise these concerns publicly. We would like to see an extension of either the existing Texas Eagle or the proposed #9 route (San Antonio to Minneapolis) to Laredo, if not Brownsville or Corpus and an explicit commitment to connect to the new *Aguilla Azteca*.

We are available to answer any questions you may have or to help on this issue in any way we can. We can be reached at this email address: railforsanantonio@gmail.com. Thank you so much for your time.

On behalf of SART,

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