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Grant would fund study of rail service expansion

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The Associated Press

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NEW ORLEANS — The Southern Rail Commission has applied for a \$1 million federal grant to study the feasibility of restoring passenger train service between New Orleans and Orlando, Florida.

Amtrak's Sunset Limited, which runs from New Orleans to Los Angeles, included a leg to Orlando until Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005.

New Orleans is served by two other long-distance trains: the Crescent, with daily service to Atlanta and on to New York, and the City of New Orleans, with daily service to Memphis and on to Chicago.

The Sunset Limited is a three-times-weekly route.

The New Orleans Advocate reported (<http://bit.ly/RqSvCr>) the commission has applied for funding from the federal Transportation Department to study the feasibility of restoring daily passenger rail service across the Gulf Coast.

The money would be used to determine where rail stations should be located and identify potential funding sources for improvements that might be needed if the service expands.



investment in transportation.

"Local leaders and businesses have come together under the leadership of the Southern Rail Commission to fight for the restoration of passenger rail service lost in the wake of Hurricane Katrina," said Beth Osborne, a former Transportation Department official who now works with Transportation for America.

"If funded, this project would bring that service back better and stronger than it was before to support the growing economy along the Gulf Coast," she said.

The Southern Rail Commission, formed by Congress in 1982, promotes economic development along rail corridors.

According to Amtrak officials, more than 212,400 passengers get on or off at New Orleans in 2013.

Information from: *The New Orleans Advocate*, <http://www.neworleansadvocate.com>

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