



Interim Report Task 05  
**Existing Conditions of Rail**

**April 2025**

Prepared by:





## Mississippi Department of Transportation **MULTIPLAN 2050**

This Plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), and local governments in partial fulfillment of requirements in Title 23 USC 134 and 135, amended by the IIJA, Sections 11201 and 11525, October 1, 2021. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT.

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### 1.0 Introduction

This interim report documents existing facilities and conditions for freight and passenger rail in Mississippi. This document forms part of the Mississippi Department of Transportation's (MDOT) 2050 MULTIPLAN.

The Existing Conditions report aids in gauging the current effectiveness and state of the transportation network, which will assist in identifying present gaps when setting the state's transportation objectives. Mississippi's rail system plays a crucial role in supporting the state's economy and connecting its communities. This report looks at Mississippi's current state of passenger and freight rail services, including their successes, challenges, and potential. It outlines the length of tracks, what is transported, and important routes for the economy. The report also looks at the different types of rail services (such as Amtrak) and their capabilities. It evaluates the efficiency of the rail system in meeting current needs, including on-time arrival for passengers and the transportation of a variety of goods.

### 2.0 Agency Involvement

The institutional structure for implementing state and federal rail programs in Mississippi involves several key roles and responsibilities:

1. **State Rail Plan Authority:** In Mississippi, MDOT is the designated State Rail Transportation Authority, tasked with preparing and coordinating the rail plan. Under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) 2008, states must prepare rail plans to qualify for certain funding. The Transportation Commission approves the plan and the investment of public funds.
2. **Coordination with Planning Activities:** MDOT's rail planning is integrated with statewide and regional planning activities, linking rail plan findings to the Statewide Freight Plan through the MULTIPLAN process.
3. **Public and Stakeholder Involvement:** The rail plan involves consultation with the statewide Rail Advisory Council (RAC), which includes representatives from state agencies, the rail industry, and other stakeholders.
4. **Interstate Coordination:** MDOT collaborates with neighboring states' transportation departments to identify opportunities for coordinated efforts, especially for multi-state corridors.

Agencies involved in these programs include:

- **MDOT:** Lead agency for rail planning and safety.
- **Mississippi Development Authority (MDA):** Provides grant funding for rail projects supporting economic development.
- **Southern Rail Commission (SRC):** Promotes improved passenger rail services across Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.
- **Local and Regional Rail Authorities:** Manage regional or local rail operations.

### 2.1 Responsibilities, Involvement, Divisions/Dept

MDOT serves as Mississippi's primary agency for rail planning and managing rail safety and improvement programs. The Aeronautics Division oversees the preparation of the State Rail Plan and manages the highway-rail grade crossing program. Rail safety programs are managed together with the FRA by Mississippi Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (MSOL), the Mississippi branch of an international non-profit that runs an education and awareness program dedicated to ending collisions, fatalities and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and on railroad rights of way. The Aeronautics Division also handles the railroad improvement segment of the State's Multimodal Transportation Improvement Fund. No changes to the organization or policies are planned.

## 2.2 Funding

In Mississippi, public rail funding is provided through state-legislated programs run by MDOT, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), and regional authorities (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Public Funding Sources for Rail in Mississippi**

Program	Function
<b>Port Infrastructure Development Program</b>	Managed by the Maritime Administration of USDOT using Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds. Funds are awarded to projects that improve port and related freight infrastructure.
<b>Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Program</b>	Managed by MDOT using FHWA Section 130 funds, and state funds to enhance grade crossing safety on public roads.
<b>Railroad Revitalization Fund</b>	Managed by MDOT. Offers no-interest loans for up to 75% of costs for rail line rehab or facility improvements, and highway-railroad crossing safety
<b>MDOT Multimodal Transportation Improvement Program</b>	Established in 2001 to improve state, county, or municipal public transport infrastructure, including rail, airports, transit, and ports.
<b>MDOT Capital Assistance Stimulus for Rail Projects Fund</b>	Provides matching funds for federal grants aimed at conventional or high-speed intercity passenger rail services.
<b>MDA Freight Rail Service Revolving Loan Program</b>	Offers loans to municipalities and counties for freight rail service projects to boost rail use and productivity.
<b>Local Government Rail Assistance</b>	Grant funds or local matching funds from local/regional governments support facility-specific rail construction or improvement projects.

Source: MDOT State Rail Plan Update, 2022

### 2.3 Planning Highlights - Recent State Plans, Studies, and Reports

#### Mississippi Statewide Freight Plan (2022)

The Mississippi Statewide Freight Plan of 2022 was developed by MDOT along with Cambridge Systematics, Inc.'s assistance and aimed at improving Mississippi's freight transportation system<sup>1</sup>. The document outlined strategies to address economic trends and transportation needs influencing goods movement across Mississippi. Key highlights include:

- **Railroad Infrastructure:** Mississippi's railroad network, featuring major Class I railroads including BNSF, CSX, Canadian National, CPKC, and Norfolk Southern, serves as a structural backbone for freight transport, enhancing connectivity and supporting various industries.
- **Rail Network Utilization and Needs:** The plan identifies challenges like weight-limited tracks and bridges, which could impact freight flow efficiency. Railways are integral to the supply chains of significant sectors like automotive manufacturing, highlighting their role in connecting supply points across the state.
- **Strategic Recommendations:** To bolster freight movement, recommendations include improving access to and enhancing the capacity of regional rail facilities and short-line railroads. This approach aims to support industry supply chains and enhance freight movement reliability and efficiency.
- **Multimodal Coordination:** Rail's pivotal role in multimodal coordination is stressed, especially in its integration with marine ports, which facilitates comprehensive freight movement across different modes.
- **Economic and Environmental Impacts:** The rail network's contribution to Mississippi's economy through support to freight-intensive industries is crucial, with potential environmental benefits due to efficient freight movements aligning with broader goals of economic efficiency and environmental stewardship.

The plan aligned with federal laws like the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) by setting goals for a safe, efficient, multimodal freight network, enhancing economic competitiveness, and

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Systematics, Inc., & Neel Schaffer. (2022). (rep.). *Mississippi Statewide Freight Plan*. MDOT. Retrieved September 2024, from [https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2023-12/MS\\_Statewide\\_Freight\\_Plan\\_2022\\_%28Amended%29.pdf](https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2023-12/MS_Statewide_Freight_Plan_2022_%28Amended%29.pdf).

fostering partnerships for investment maximization. It assessed multi-faceted components including highways, railroads, ports, aviation, and pipelines, identifying key industry supply chains and system resilience factors. To address needs, the plan introduced strategies across infrastructure, operations, and policies, integrating performance measures for progress tracking toward enhancing Mississippi's freight transportation network.

### Mississippi State Rail Plan Update (2022)

The Mississippi State Rail Plan Update, also developed by MDOT and Cambridge Systematics in September 2022, outlined strategic enhancements for the state's rail system to bolster freight and passenger services<sup>2</sup>. It articulated a vision for the rail's significant role in economic development and environmental benefits, backed by MDOT and several other entities.

Passenger rail improvement strategies included enhancing service reliability to foster ridership, undertaking station upgrades for better accessibility, and revisiting the Gulf Coast Corridor service to expand regional connectivity. Freight rail improvements focused on infrastructure maintenance, capacity boosts on crucial lines, and targeted short-line rail projects to bolster operation efficiency and local economic support.

The plan proposed a future where efficient, safe, and eco-friendly rail services played a central role in Mississippi's transportation infrastructure, advocating for strategic enhancements to meet current inadequacies and future demands for passenger and freight rail transport. The plan aimed to alleviate road congestion by shifting freight to rail, facilitating smoother and less costly highway maintenance. There was also a focus on safety and environmental gains – rail transport has safety advantages and a lesser environmental footprint than road transport. In addition, future projections suggest that population and employment growth in Mississippi will lead to greater reliance on rail services for both mobility and freight transportation needs. There is also a projected 40% surge in rail freight tonnage by 2045 which highlighted the critical need for sustained infrastructure investment to accommodate economic growth.

### Study: Return of Passenger Rail Service to Southern MS 2021 - Ongoing

A University of Southern Mississippi (USM) study predicted the return of passenger rail to the Mississippi coast (in 2022) could boost the state economy by nearly \$500

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<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Systematics, Inc. (2022). (rep.). *Mississippi State Rail Plan Update*. Retrieved September 2024, from <https://mdot.ms.gov/documents/Planning/Plan/MS%20State%20Rail%20Plan.pdf>.

million (M)<sup>3</sup>. Amtrak planned to resume service from New Orleans to Mobile, with stops in Pascagoula, Biloxi, Gulfport, and Bay St. Louis, by early 2022. Service was last offered in 2005, and Amtrak started re-assessing the route's infrastructure and economic prospects in 2016. The USM report estimated \$485.9 M in economic impact statewide, with \$441.5 M affecting the coast, driven by tourism spending. Additionally, the return of passenger rail service was expected to potentially create over 7,000 new jobs in the coastal tourism industry.

In an update from August 2024, it was announced that an agreement had been reached<sup>4</sup>. Under this agreement, two roundtrip trains will operate from New Orleans to Mobile, with stops in the four key Gulf Coast cities mentioned above. The Mobile City Council unanimously passed three items related to the return of Amtrak's passenger rail service, though introduced an amendment that states the lease would be terminated if Amtrak increases traffic beyond proposed levels or extends service north or east of Mobile's city limits<sup>5</sup>.

On October 22, 2024, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg and other officials attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the Amtrak layover track and platform as part of the Gulf Coast Corridor Improvement project<sup>6</sup>.

### Study: Amtrak to Study Mississippi-to-Texas I-20 Train Route (2023) - Ongoing

Amtrak and the Southern Rail Commission applied to secure federal funding to study

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<sup>3</sup> Kulo, W. (2021, March 19). *Study: Return of passenger rail service could have economic impact of nearly half a billion for Mississippi*. gulflive. <https://www.gulflive.com/news/2021/03/study-return-of-passenger-rail-service-could-have-economic-impact-of-nearly-half-a-billion-for-mississippi.html>

<sup>4</sup> *A remaining hurdle cleared to return Amtrak services to the Mississippi Gulf Coast*. U.S. Senator Roger Wicker: Press Releases. (2024, August 6). <https://www.wicker.senate.gov/2024/8/a-remaining-hurdle-cleared-to-return-amtrak-services-to-the-mississippi-gulf-coast/92c49870-f018-4f19-b2dd-a49af5d4f7f7#:~:text=MISSISSIPPI%20E2%80%93%20An%20agreement%20has%20finally%20been%20reached,Senator%20Roger%20Wicker%2C%20R-Miss.%2C%20released%20the%20following%20statement%3A>

<sup>5</sup> Gunther, B. (2024, August 6). *Unanimous vote by Mobile City Council paves the way for Amtrak's return*. NBC15 News. <https://myNBC15.com/news/local/unanimous-vote-by-mobile-city-council-paves-the-way-for-amtraks-return>

<sup>6</sup> Singleton, D. (2024, October 18). *Secretary Buttigieg takes part in groundbreaking for Amtrak's return to Mobile*. NBC15 News. <https://myNBC15.com/news/local/sec-buttigieg-to-attend-gulf-coast-corridor-improvement-project-groundbreaking-in-mobile>

a passenger rail service from Meridian, Mississippi, to Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas.<sup>7</sup>

The proposed route, along Interstate 20, would stop in Jackson, Mississippi, and Monroe and Shreveport, Louisiana, as part of a new section of Amtrak's Crescent train. This would extend travel options to cities like Atlanta, Georgia, Washington, D.C., and New York City, New York. Funding for this study is planned to come from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The newly merged Canadian Pacific Railway and Kansas City Southern Railway (CPKC, 2023) and Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) agreed to the study with Amtrak.<sup>8</sup> If viable, Amtrak will seek additional funds for startup costs. The agreement also includes potential services between New Orleans and Baton Rouge and plans for a route from New Orleans to Mobile, Alabama.

### The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (2021)

Regarding the impact of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law on Mississippi's rail infrastructure, the law includes substantial investments to modernize and expand passenger rail services and enhance freight rail efficiency and safety. Specifically, it allocates a significant budget for improvements in these areas:

1. \$66 billion (B) above baseline funding is designated to eliminate Amtrak's maintenance backlog, modernize the Northeast Corridor, and bring high-standard rail service to areas outside the Northeast and mid-Atlantic. This is a notable increase aimed at revitalizing the country's passenger rail system.
2. Of this budget, \$22 B is allocated as grants to Amtrak for upgrades and maintenance efforts, ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of passenger rail services.
3. \$24 B is set as federal-state partnership grants dedicated to Northeast Corridor modernization, focusing on improving the most crucial passenger rail line in the country.
4. An additional \$12 B is reserved for partnership grants for intercity rail service, which includes funding for high-speed rail projects. This investment aims to enhance connectivity and speed between key cities and regions across the United States.
5. Mississippi is poised to benefit from the opportunity to compete for \$5 B

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<sup>7</sup> Associated Press. (2023, March 13). *Amtrak wants to study Mississippi-to-texas I-20 train route*. Clarion Ledger. <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2023/03/13/amtrak-wants-to-study-mississippi-to-texas-i-20-train-route/70004067007/>

<sup>8</sup> Special to the News-Star. (2023, March 13). *Amtrak seek federal study for new long distance service across I-20 Route*. News Star. <https://www.thenewsstar.com/story/news/local/2023/03/13/amtrak-seek-federal-study-for-new-long-distance-service-across-i-20-route/70001573007/>

allocated for rail improvement and safety grants. This fund is aimed at supporting projects that enhance rail safety and infrastructure, ensuring a safer and more reliable rail system.

6. Additionally, \$3 B is available for grade crossing safety improvements. This funding will help address safety concerns at rail crossings, reducing the risk of accidents and improving the overall safety of the rail network.

This \$66 B investment underscores a concentrated effort to reinvigorate rail infrastructure across Mississippi and the entire United States, focusing on safety, efficiency, and modernization.

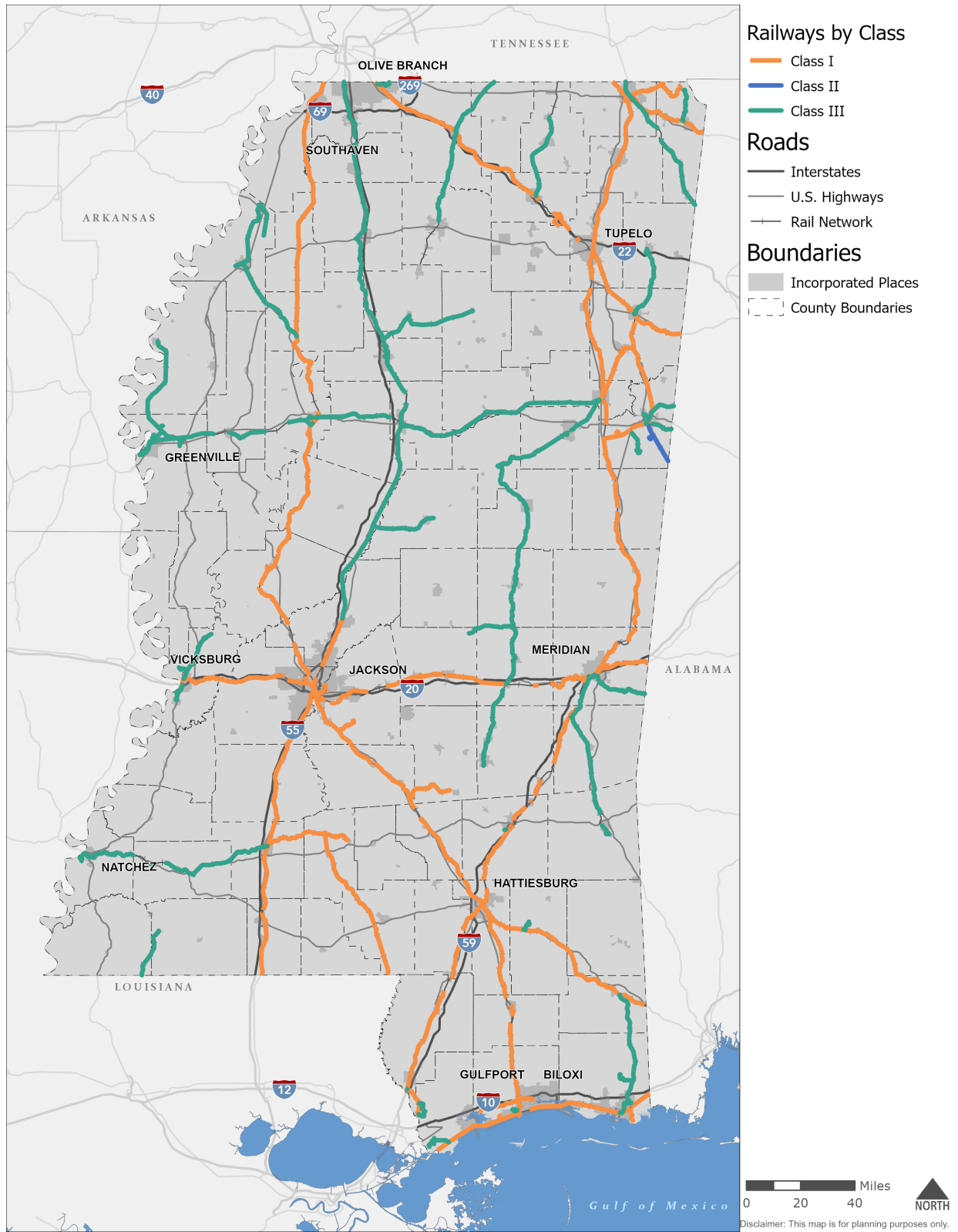
### 3.0 Statewide Significance

Passenger and freight rail are vital for providing transportation choices, enhancing economic competitiveness, supporting communities, and improving access in Mississippi. Passenger rail enhances the multimodal transportation system, while freight rail ensures the efficient movement of goods, essential for the state's economy. Railroads in Mississippi are historically significant and support freight-intensive industries, handling substantial volumes that benefit the state's market competitiveness.

Despite challenges from highway and air travel, increased rail demand can alleviate road congestion and have environmental benefits. Passenger rail, like Amtrak's Crescent and City of New Orleans, offers significant travel options, though there is room for performance improvement. Freight volumes are expected to grow, but this depends on railroads adapting to changing markets, expanding networks, and overcoming infrastructure deficiencies, particularly on short lines. Filling these gaps will maintain economic competitiveness and allow Mississippi to capitalize on emerging market opportunities.

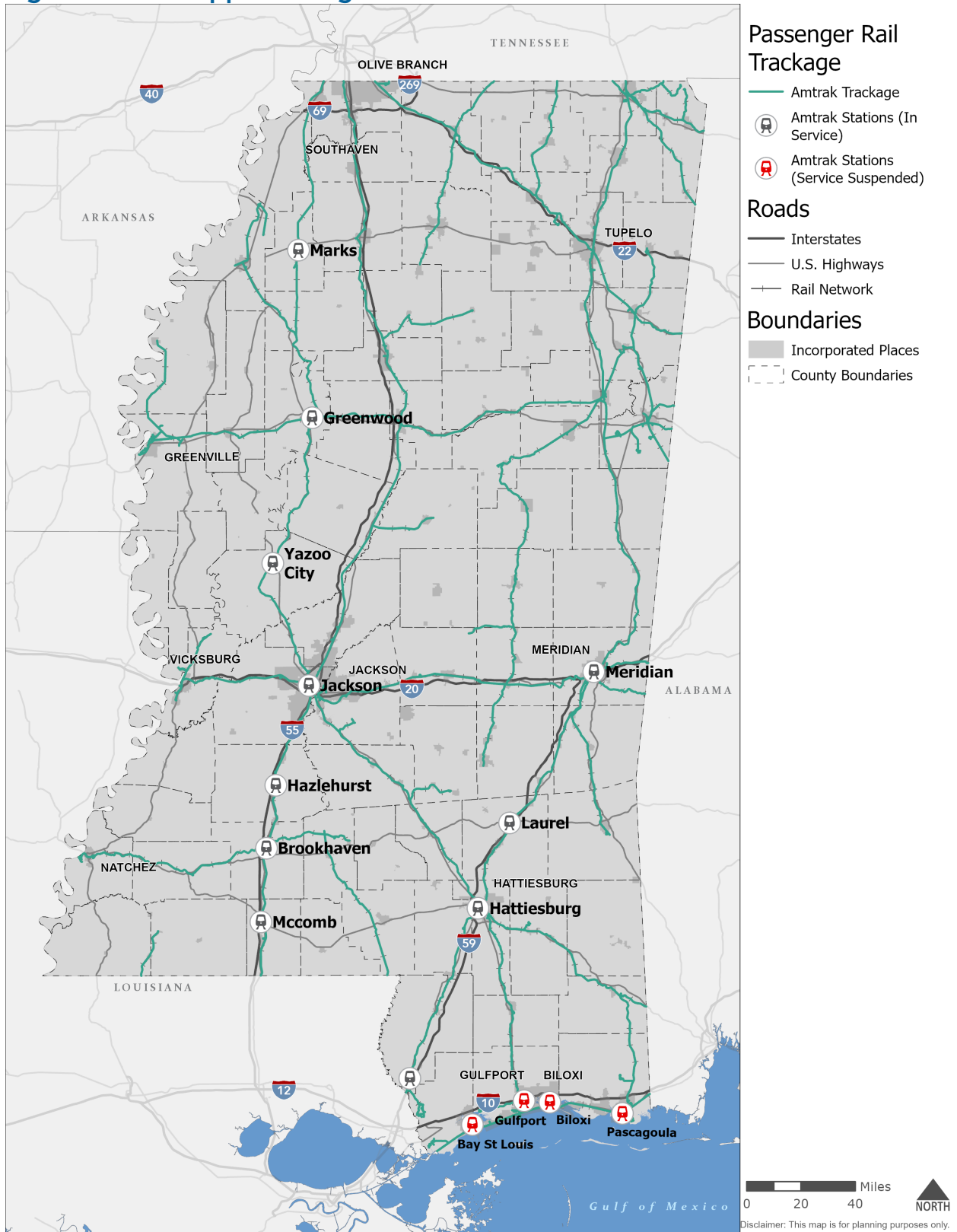
Figure 1 shows the full rail network of Mississippi and Figure 2 shows the passenger rail routes specifically.

Figure 1. Mississippi Rail Network



Source: MDOT State Rail Plan Update, 2022

Figure 2. Mississippi Passenger Rail Network



Source: Amtrak Fiscal Year 2023 Fact Sheet

In FY 2023, Amtrak experienced growth and development in Mississippi, operating four daily trains across various stations. Jackson was the busiest station with 37,057 riders among a total of 86,775 statewide. Under Canadian National, the City of New Orleans achieved a 75% on-time performance, while the Crescent, hosted by Norfolk Southern, recorded a 57% on-time performance.<sup>9</sup>

Amtrak's community engagement in Mississippi included 43,714 Amtrak Guest Rewards members and local procurement spending of \$156,690<sup>9</sup>. It employed 71 Mississippi residents, contributing \$6,508,971 in wages as part of its broader employment impact. Future expansions involve a new route between New Orleans and Mobile, with developments at Mississippi stations in Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Gulfport, and Pascagoula. Station improvements across the state aim at enhancing ADA compliance with upgrades like new platforms and ramps.

### 3.1 National Comparison

Mississippi plays an essential role in the U.S. freight rail system – with approximately 2,500 active miles of rail it is ranked 11th nationally for the number of operating freight railroads, and 28th for active track mileage.<sup>10</sup>

Mississippi's rail connectivity is crucial nationally due to its strategic position linking Gulf Coast ports with inland markets, thus streamlining national supply chains for import and export-dependent industries. The state's rail infrastructure aids the national economy by ensuring reliable transport of raw materials and products which supports key sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and energy. Mississippi's rail lines connect the Southeast with the Midwest, reducing transport costs and improving interstate commerce. They also enhance national disaster resilience, providing crucial support during emergencies. Environmentally, by favoring rail over road transport, Mississippi helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and supports national sustainability goals.

## 4.0 Existing Conditions Inventory

Inventory and infrastructure information from Mississippi's Rail Network comes from the Mississippi Multiplan 2045, Mississippi Statewide Freight Plan (2022), the Mississippi State Rail Plan Update (2022), stakeholder outreach, and miscellaneous

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<sup>9</sup> Amtrak. (2024). (rep.). *Amtrak Fact Sheet Fiscal Year 2023 State of Mississippi*. Retrieved September 10, 2024, from <https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/corporate/statefactsheets/MISSISSIPPI23.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Cambridge Systematics, Inc. (2022). (rep.). *Mississippi State Rail Plan Update*. Retrieved September 2024, from <https://mdot.ms.gov/documents/Planning/Plan/MS%20State%20Rail%20Plan.pdf>.

documentation.

### 4.1 Rail Classifications

According to the definition provided by the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB), based on the Association of American Railroads (AAR) Classifications, railroads can be categorized in two distinct manners<sup>11</sup>. The STB definition states that railways in the United States are designated as Class I, Class II, or Class III. The STB set revenue thresholds for these classes in 1992; as of January 2024, the most recent adjustment increased these revenue thresholds to:

- **Class I** - Revenue greater than \$1.1B per year
- **Class II** - Revenue between \$1.1B and \$47M per year
- **Class III** - Revenue less than \$47M per year

In contrast, the AAR Classifications are as follows:

**Class I Railroads** are determined by the same revenue standards set by the STB.

**Regional Railroads** are those that, while not meeting the Class I revenue benchmarks, operate extensive track lengths of at least 350 miles and/or generate annual revenues exceeding \$20 M but not reaching the Class I level, with the upper limit set at just below the Class I threshold regardless of their track mileage.

**Local Railroads** refer to those that do not qualify as either Class I or Regional. It is further divided into two subcategories: local line-haul carriers that transport freight over short distances and Switching & Terminal (S&T) carriers. S&T carriers focus on providing switching and terminal services to other rail companies, typically characterized by a high employee-to-track-mile ratio.

### 4.2 Inventory and Activity

#### Class I Railroads

About two-thirds of Mississippi's rail system is operated by five (5) Class I railroads which focus primarily on transporting freight and cargo:

- Burlington Northern, Inc. and Santa Fe Pacific Corporation (BNSF) Railway
- CSX Transportation (CSXT)
- Canadian National (CN) Railway
- Norfolk Southern (NS) Railway

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<sup>11</sup> ASLRRRA. (2024). *Railroad definitions*. American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. <https://www.aslrra.org/about-us/about-aslrra/history/railroad-definitions/>

- The merged Canadian Pacific Railway and Kansas City Southern Railway (CPKC)

BNSF Railway is the largest Class I railroad by revenue and miles of track coverage (see Table 2. Class I Railway Ranking). The full network of Class I railways can be seen in Figure 3.

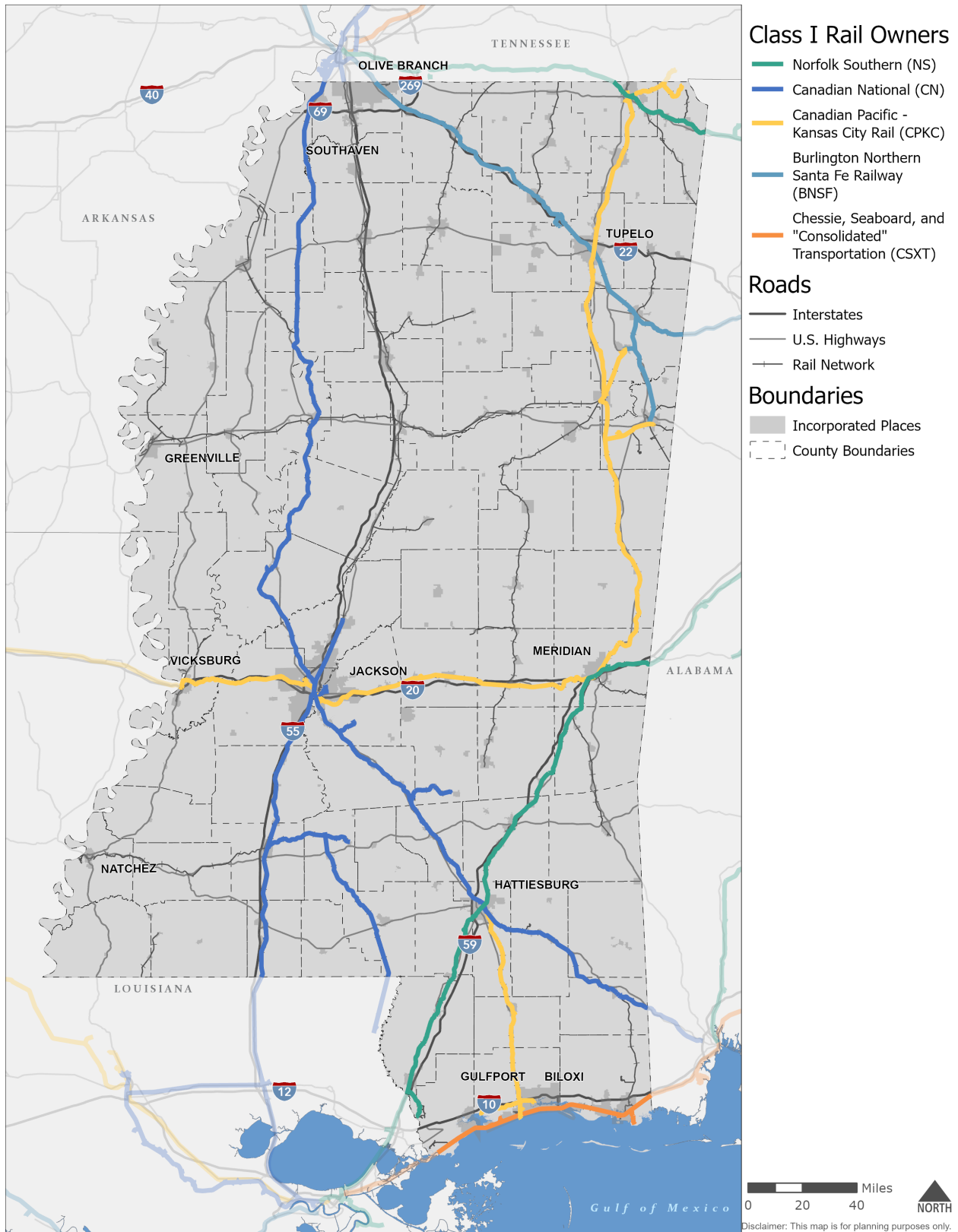
**Table 2. Class I Railway Ranking**

<b>Class I Railway</b>	<b>Revenue (Billions)</b>	<b>Miles of Track Coverage (nationally)</b>
<b>BNSF Railway</b>	\$23.9	32,500
<b>CSX Transportation</b>	\$14.7	20,000
<b>Canadian National Railway</b>	\$12.5	20,000
<b>Norfolk Southern Railway</b>	\$12.2	21,200
<b>CPKC</b>	\$9.0	20,000

Source: MDOT Rail Plan Update, 2022

With the merger of Canada Pacific Railway and Kansas City Southern Railway (approved December 2021, enacted April 2023), the Class I railroad companies operating in Mississippi are much closer in operational scale. Canada Pacific Railway was operating at a capacity about half that of Canadian National, until the merger, and Kansas City Southern was the smallest Class I with revenues of \$2.75B and 4,000 route miles.

Figure 3. Mississippi Class I Railway Network



Source: MDOT State Rail Plan Update, 2022

### **Class II (“Regional”) Railroads**

The only Class II railroad operating in Mississippi is the Alabama and Gulf Coast Railway (AGR). The AGR operates within Mississippi as part of Genesee & Wyoming Inc. (G&W)'s global network of 119 freight railroads. AGR spans 339 route miles through ownership or leases, including trackage rights from Amory, MS to Mobile, AL, and Pensacola, FL. AGR covers 52 miles in Mississippi, owning 15 miles from the Alabama - Mississippi border to Columbus and possessing 37 miles of trackage rights over BNSF from Columbus to Amory, where it primarily interchanges with BNSF. This regional line supports up to 286,000-pound railcars on specific segments.

### **Class III (“Shortline”) Railroads**

The extensive network of freight railroads in Mississippi is almost entirely privately owned, with the companies responsible for maintaining and paying for the upkeep of their infrastructure. Class III railroads, which link to Class I railroads, represent about 30% of the state's rail system by track ownership. These smaller railroads play a crucial role in the state's logistics network. Together, the state's Class II (regional) and Class III (local) railroads span 990 miles of track. Of these, 14 are managed by railroad holding companies which oversee 53% of the Class II and III tracks in Mississippi.

The total lengths and ownership of all the Class I, II, and III railroads can be found in Table 3. The network of Class II and Class III railways can be seen in Figure 4.

Table 3. Class I, Class II and Class III Railroad Miles and Ownership by Holding Company

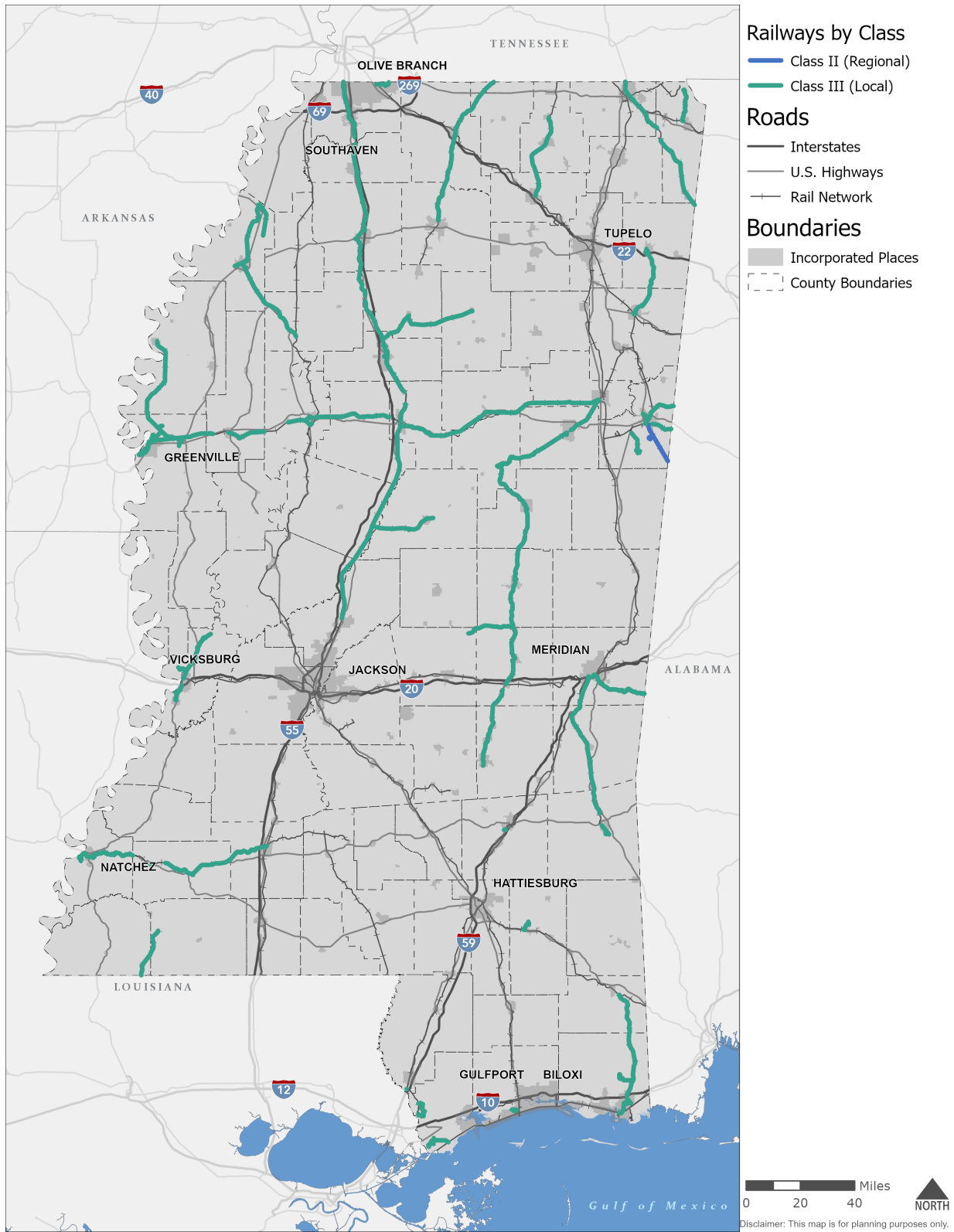
Railroad	Reporting Mark	Parent Company/Ownership	Mississippi Route Miles		
			Operated	Owned	Trackage Rights
<b>Class I Railroads</b>			<b>1,817</b>	<b>1,666</b>	<b>329</b>
BNSF Railway Company	BNSF	Berkshire Hathaway	179	166	13
CSXT Transportation	CSXT		94	74	20
Canadian National Railway	CN		757	575	182
Canadian Pacific -Kansas City Railway	CPKC		576	642	112
Norfolk Southern Railway	NS		211	209	2
<b>Class II (Regional) Railroads</b>			<b>52</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>37</b>
Alabama and Gulf Coast Railway	AGR	G&W	52	15	37
<b>Class III (Local) Railroads</b>			<b>903</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>59</b>
Alabama Southern Railroad	ABS	Watco	23		17
Columbus and Greenville Railway	CAGY	G&W	85	150	27
Golden Triangle Railroad	GTRA	Patriot Rail	25	10	15
Great River Railroad	GTR	Rosedale-Bolivar County Port Commission		32	
Grenada Railroad, LLC	GRYR	Pinsly	180	206	
Gulf and Ship Island Railroad	GSI	Harrison County Development Commission	6		
Luxapalila Valley Railroad	LXVR	G&W	12	12	
Meridian and Bigbee Railroad	MNBR	G&W	23	23	
Meridian Southern Railway	MDS		55	55	

## Existing Conditions

Railroad	Reporting Mark	Parent Company/Ownership	Mississippi Route Miles		
			Operated	Owned	Trackage Rights
Mississippi Central Railroad Company	MSCI	BRX Transportation, MARA, Patriot Rail, and Tishomingo County	108	56	
Mississippi Delta Railroad	MSDR	Coahoma County	60		
Mississippi Export Railroad	MSE		42	42	
Mississippi Southern Railroad	MSR	Watco	122		
Mississippi Railway Cooperative, Inc.	MSRW	Itawamba County Rail Authority	23	23	
Natchez Railway, LLC	NTZR	Affiliated Railroads	65	65	
Old Augusta Railroad	OAR	Georgia Pacific	3	3	
Port Bienville Railroad	PBVR	Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission	7	7	
R.J. Corman-Tennessee Terminal	RJCK	RJ Corman Railroad Group	4		
Ripley & New Albany Railroad Company	RNA	Patriot Rail	27	27	
Vicksburg Southern Railroad	VSOR	Watco	21		
West Tennessee Railroad	WTNN	West Tennessee Rail Group-	2	2	
Yellow Creek Port Railroad	YCRK		10	10	
<b>Total</b>			<b>2,772</b>	<b>2,404</b>	<b>425</b>

Source: 2022 MDOT Rail Plan Update

Figure 4. Mississippi Class II and Class III Railway Network



Source: MDOT State Rail Plan Update, 2022

The analysis of Mississippi's rail network utilized the most current National Geospatial Data Asset (NGDA) data from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), featured in Esri's Living Atlas database, updated last in March 2024. The study identified 24 named and one unnamed active railway in Mississippi through this dataset, with three ownerships unidentified. The data, organized into Excel for detailed examination, was categorized into Class I, Class II, and Class III railways. By aggregating the miles from each class, a comprehensive state mileage was calculated, exceeding previously reported rail miles, which can be attributed to various factors such as improved tracking methods, changes in ownership, and updates to the dataset.

### Current Passenger Rail Services

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation, known as Amtrak, operates under a congressional charter, primarily under the ownership of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and functions as a quasi-nonprofit.<sup>12</sup> Amtrak facilitates passenger rail transportation in Mississippi through two long-haul train services. Since its establishment in 1971, Amtrak took over most of the country's passenger rail services, a move prompted by the financial challenges freight railroads faced in maintaining profitable passenger operations. Currently, the state of Mississippi benefits from two of Amtrak's long-distance routes: the Crescent and the City of New Orleans.

- The Crescent operates a daily frequency between New York and New Orleans, a distance of 1,377 miles and a total trip length of 19 hours. The service consists of one daily roundtrip, stopping at Picayune, Hattiesburg, Laurel, and Meridian within Mississippi. Through Mississippi, the Crescent runs over 162 miles on track owned by Class I NS.
- The City of New Orleans operates daily between Chicago and New Orleans, a distance of 962 miles and a total trip length of 30 hours. The service consists of one daily round-trip, stopping at Greenwood, Yazoo City, Jackson, Hazlehurst, Brookhaven, and McComb within Mississippi. The City of New Orleans runs on Class I CN trackage through Mississippi for approximately 300 miles.

The total mileage of passenger rail in Mississippi is found in Table 4.

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<sup>12</sup> Amtrak. (2024). (rep.). *Amtrak Fact Sheet Fiscal Year 2023 State of Mississippi*. Retrieved September 10, 2024, from <https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/corporate/statefactsheets/MISSISSIPPI23.pdf>.

Table 4. Passenger Railroad Mileage

Amtrak Passenger Rail Miles	Total Mileage
Operating on NS	162
Operating on CN	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>

Source: 2022 MDOT Rail Plan Update

According to data published in March 2024, Amtrak's fiscal year 2023 operations in Mississippi yielded the following highlights:

**Train Services:** Operation of four trains per day, including the City of New Orleans, providing daily service between Chicago and New Orleans, and the Crescent, offering daily service between New York and New Orleans.

**Stations and Ridership:** Amtrak served multiple stations in Mississippi, such as Jackson, Meridian, and Hattiesburg, with the Jackson station reporting the highest ridership at just over 37,000 passengers. Overall, Amtrak's stations in Mississippi welcomed a total of more than 86,000 passengers in FY 2023.<sup>13</sup>

**Economic Impact:** The railway also had a considerable economic impact in the state, spending just under \$157,000 on goods and services and employing 71 residents with a total of approximately \$6.5 M in wages.

**On-Time Performance:** In terms of performance, the City of New Orleans route had an on-time performance of 75%, while the Crescent route had a 57% on-time performance. These statistics further emphasize the importance and success of Amtrak's operations in Mississippi, providing essential transportation services and contributing to the state's economy.

The network of Amtrak’s passenger rail services can be found in Figure 5.

[ADA Compliance](#)

Amtrak has been actively working on enhancing the accessibility of its stations in Mississippi to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These efforts include a range of projects designed to improve station access for all passengers. In Brookhaven, for instance, a significant project was completed in April 2022 with a

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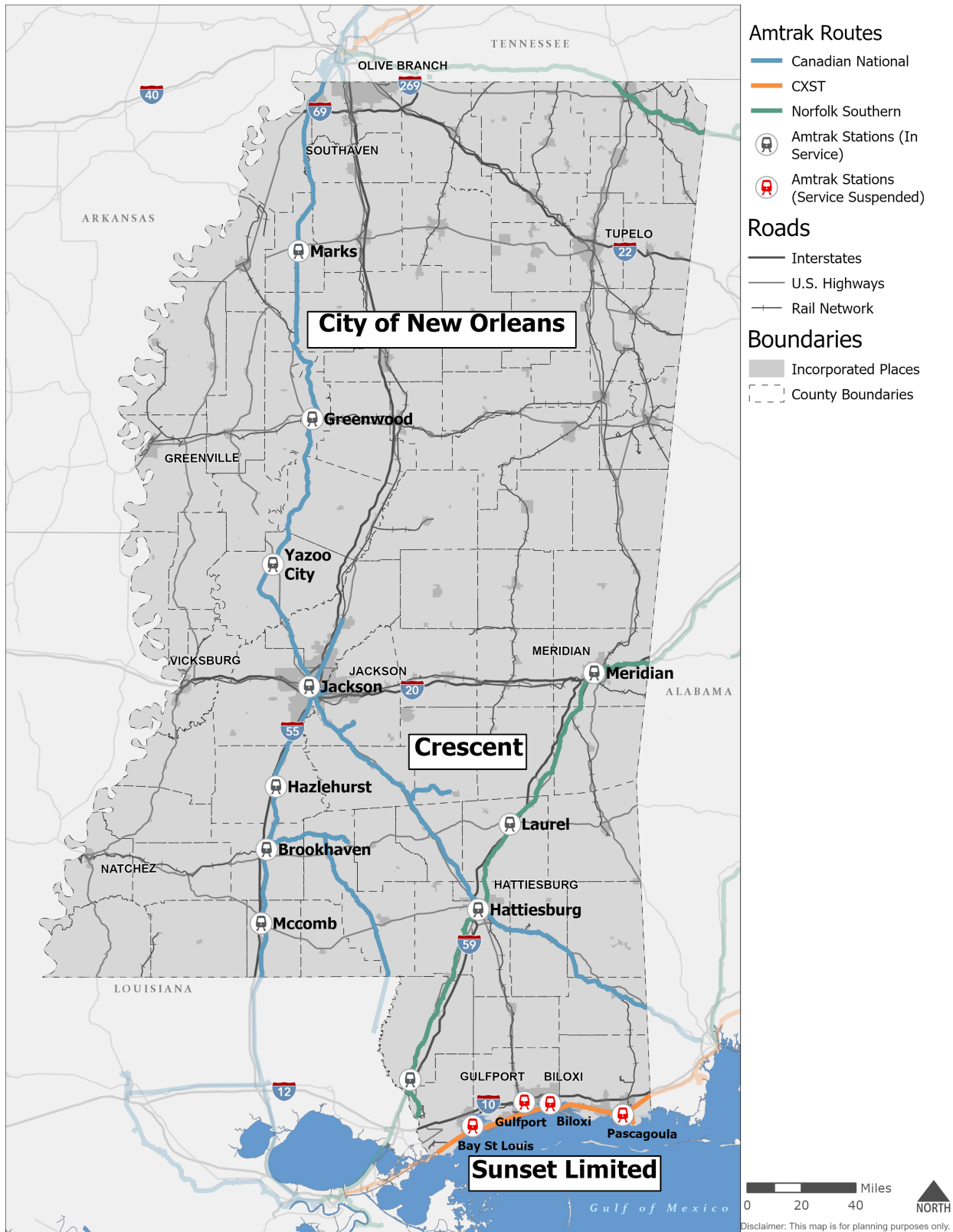
<sup>13</sup> Ashley, B. (2023). (rep.). *Fiscal Year 2022 Tourism Economic Contribution Report*. Mississippi Development Authority. Retrieved September 18, 2024, from <https://visitmississippi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/23-0025-Tourism-Economic-Report-FY22-FINAL-WEB.pdf>.

\$5.4 M investment, featuring upgrades to platform accessibility and waiting room access. Hattiesburg and Jackson are both in the design phase for modifications to their platforms to ensure ADA compliance, with expected completion by Fiscal Year 2026. Similarly, Meridian is undergoing design work for accessible platform enhancements, also aiming for completion in FY 2026.

In Hazlehurst, platform and depot improvements were finished in FY 2022, bringing those facilities into compliance. Laurel celebrated the dedication of a new, ADA-compliant platform and pathway on September 30, 2022. McComb has started construction on significant ADA improvements including a new 700-foot platform and improved access to the waiting room, with completion targeted for FY 2025. Picayune has already seen the replacement of its platform to meet ADA standards, a project finalized in FY 2020. Lastly, Yazoo City achieved a major milestone in 2023 with the completion of construction efforts to modify its platform for ADA compliance, incorporating new platforms, ramps, stairs, railings, signage, and accessible parking spaces.

These initiatives underscore Amtrak's dedication to enhancing the accessibility and convenience of its Mississippi stations, focusing on critical upgrades such as platform modifications, the introduction of ramps, stairs, railings, enhanced signage, and providing parking that complies with ADA guidelines. Each project reflects a commitment to serving all passengers more effectively, ensuring that train travel is a viable and accessible option for everyone.

Figure 5. Mississippi Amtrak Routes by Line



Source: Amtrak Fiscal Year 2023 Fact Sheet

### 4.3 Connectivity and Demand

Freight rail activity in Mississippi is significant, with the state serving as a vital corridor for transporting goods across the southeastern United States. The rail network supports various industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, and energy. However, there is a growing demand for both freight and passenger rail services in Mississippi; the 2022 Update to the State Rail Plan and 2022 Tourism Economic Contribution Report highlight the increased need for investments to meet current demands and ensure the rail system can handle increased volumes.

#### Freight Demand

**Industrial Growth:** Mississippi's industries, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and energy, heavily rely on railroads for transporting raw materials and finished products. The state's strategic location along the Gulf Coast makes it a key player in the movement of chemicals, petroleum, and other goods.

**Intermodal Transport:** There's a growing trend towards intermodal transport, where goods are moved using multiple modes of transportation (e.g., rail, truck, ship). This increases the demand for efficient rail services to connect ports and inland distribution centers.

As of 2022, Mississippi featured a rail network integral to the state's economy and infrastructure. With 27 freight railroads spanning a total of over 2,500 miles, this sector employs nearly 2,000 individuals in Mississippi alone. Additionally, it is worth noting that railroads are not only an essential means of transportation but also a sustainable one, serving as the most fuel-efficient way to move freight over land.

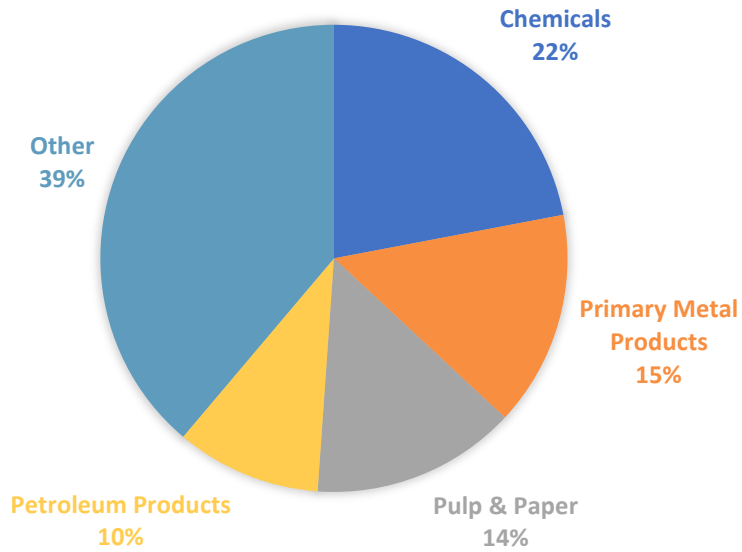
**It was estimated that without rail transportation, 9.0 million tons of freight would have required an additional 502,000 trucks in 2021.**

This highlights the railroad industry's significance as an economic driver, responsible for transporting one-third of all U.S. exports and serving a diverse range of sectors, including the transportation of vital resources such as food and chemicals. In 2021, Mississippi's freight rail system handled a significant volume of goods. The state shipped out 9.0 M tons of freight, which included a variety of commodities such as chemicals, metals, paper, petroleum products, and other goods. Mississippi also received 13.1 M tons of freight, consisting of chemicals, farm products, coal, waste and scrap, food products, and other miscellaneous items. This robust movement of

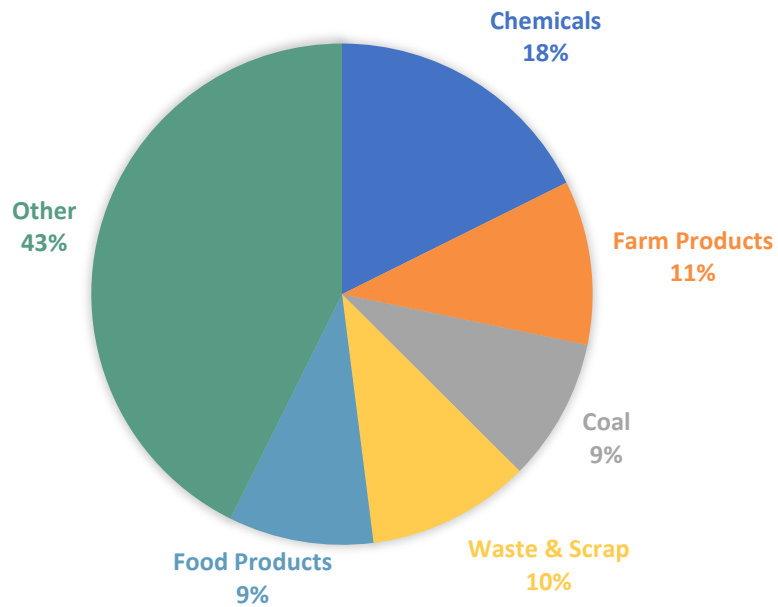
goods highlights the importance of rail transport in supporting the state's economy and facilitating trade (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Movement of Freight in Mississippi**

## Commodities Originating In MS



## COMMODITIES TERMINATING IN MS



Source: Association of American Railroads - Mississippi Fact Sheet (published 2023)

### Passenger Demand

Commuter Services: While freight dominates the rail activity, there's also a demand for passenger services, particularly in urban areas. Amtrak ridership in Mississippi increased significantly from an estimated 45,000 in fiscal year 2021 to over 73,000 in fiscal year 2022. Efforts are being made to improve and expand commuter rail services to meet the needs of daily travelers.

Tourism: Mississippi's rich history and cultural and recreational attractions drive demand for passenger rail services, especially for tourists looking for scenic and convenient travel options. In 2022, casinos/gaming revenue accounted for 26.1% of the \$7.07B of travel/tourism expenditure in the state. While the average age of casino visitors in the US is trending younger, a significant percentage of casino visitors continue to be older, and many are mobility impaired. Developing passenger rail further provides this subset of the tourists with more options for travel in the region.<sup>14</sup>

### 4.4 Capacity and Performance

Mississippi has 197 rail miles of abandoned tracks and 483 rail-miles of weight-limited tracks across Class I and III railroads - presently, the Alabama and Gulf Coast Railway (AGR) is the only Class II railroad operating in Mississippi, occupying 52 miles of non-weight-limited trackage. In total, 295 bridges cross over railroads and about 27% (80 bridges) do not meet the desired under-clearance level (note that this is based on unique bridge IDs; National Bridge Inventory 2021). Some of these bridges are located on the state's primary freight rail corridors between Hattiesburg/ Jackson and Hattiesburg/ Meridian.<sup>15</sup>

Mississippi's economic edge significantly depends on the capacity of its freight rail network to foster growth, requiring room to accommodate additional freight traffic.

Key factors dictating rail network capacity include:

- Limitations on the weight that rail lines can support
- Required clearances for various railcar setups

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<sup>14</sup> Ashley, B. (2023). (rep.). *Fiscal Year 2022 Tourism Economic Contribution Report*. Mississippi Development Authority. Retrieved September 18, 2024, from <https://visitmississippi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/23-0025-Tourism-Economic-Report-FY22-FINAL-WEB.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Weatherford, B. A., Willis, H. H., & Ortiz, D. S. (2008, August 4). *The state of U.S. railroads: A review of capacity and performance data*. RAND. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/TR603.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR603.html)

- Operational train speeds affecting delivery times

Non-functional rail lines or those with weight restrictions hinder shipment efficiencies and negatively affect local economies, especially if they can't support industry-standard 286,000-pound railcars. Standard rail configurations demand vertical clearances of 22 feet and 6 inches to efficiently accommodate both double-stacked intermodal containers and tri-level auto carriers.

Trains' operational speeds within corridors, influenced by control systems, grade-crossing conditions, and track quality, are crucial for timely freight delivery. For instance, parts of the CN, KCS, and CSXT lines allow up to 60 mph, though speeds generally drop below 39 mph on single-track lines outside mainlines.

Rail safety, vital for network assessment and performance, has seen a notable improvement with a 36% reduction in train incidents and a 12% decrease in highway-rail incidents from 2011 to 2020, demonstrating advances in safety protocols. However, Harrison County notably recorded the highest highway-rail incidents, highlighting areas for potential safety enhancements.

Mississippi has a high standard for its rail transportation system, aiming to achieve a performance target of 100% or better regarding continuing current investment levels, as established by MULTIPLAN 2045. To evaluate progress towards this target, the state has measured the percentage of current spending allocated for intermodal modes of transportation. This performance measure allows for an assessment of the state's investment in its rail system, considering both financial resources and the diversity of transportation options available to Mississippians.

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