March 8, 2011

Judge Ed Emmett
Harris County
1001 Preston, Suite 911
Houston, TX 77002

Mayor Annise D. Parker
City of Houston
P.O. Box 1582
Houston, TX 77251

Dear Judge Emmett and Mayor Parker:

The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) and North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) together form the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 12-county Dallas-Fort Worth area. On behalf of the MPO, we are writing to establish a relationship between the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston metropolitan areas to coordinate high speed rail planning.

Transportation planners and elected officials in North Texas have been working with Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Rail Division and other metropolitan areas in Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana to coordinate high speed rail planning. It is our intent to include the Houston area in a coordinated planning effort.

The TxDOT Rail Division is facilitating plans between metropolitan areas, but it is imperative that metropolitan regions also work collaboratively on high speed rail planning. Establishing a partnership among metropolitan areas, state and federal transportation partners and private rail companies is important to developing high speed rail plans in Texas and securing federal funds for implementation.

Enclosed is a copy of this letter for each of you to sign and return to NCTCOG to document initial willingness of Harris County and the City of Houston to work cooperatively with NCTCOG, appropriate federal, state, local and regional governments, TxDOT and BNSF Railway to evaluate and plan for potential rail service between the Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan areas.

Upon receipt of the signed letters stating initial interest in working cooperatively, a jointly-developed memorandum of understanding accepted by the city, county and NCTCOG will formalize collaboration among the entities, TxDOT and BNSF Railway.
Should you have any questions regarding this request to coordinate high speed passenger rail planning between regions, please contact Michael Morris, P.E., Director of Transportation for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, at (817) 695-9241 or mmorris@nctcog.org.

Sincerely,

Ron Natinsky
Chair, Regional Transportation Council
Councilmember, City of Dallas

Jungus Jordan
Vice Chair, Regional Transportation Council
Councilmember, City of Fort Worth

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Harris County

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cc: Alan C. Clark, Manager, Transportation and Air Quality, Houston-Galveston Area Council
John A. Barton, P.E., Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations, Texas Department of Transportation
Bill Glavin, P.E., Rail Division Director, Texas Department of Transportation
Michael Morris, P.E., Director of Transportation, North Central Texas Council of Governments
Karen Rae, Deputy Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration
Matthew K. Rose, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway