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In today's paper
LOCAL: South MS
will remember
Hurricane Katrina
with events marking
20th anniversary. 2A

1st Amtrak train east in 20 years delayed in Mississippi

BY MARY PEREZ
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It wasn't the start envisioned for Amtrak's first commercial runs east and west across the Mississippi Coast in 20 years, as issues put the new Mardi Gras trains late getting to New Orleans and Mobile on Monday.

The morning train left New Orleans, bound for Mobile, with four stops in Mississippi. It was supposed to leave Biloxi at 9:57

a.m., but instead of boarding the train, passengers got a message on their cell phones from Amtrak that the train was delayed by freight traffic.

The advisory didn't say it also was delayed by an "errant trucker" with a high-centered 18-wheeler who got hung up on the tracks at Pratt Avenue in Gulfport, despite a warning not to cross. That was about 7:45 a.m. and it took about 45 minutes to tow the truck off the crossing, which is east of U.S. 49 and

downtown.

The stuck truck held up both trains.

The eastbound train to Mobile arrived 26 minutes late, according to Amtrak, and the west-bound train pulled into to New Orleans 46 minutes behind schedule.

The train from Mobile left the station on time, said Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari., but then met with freight train interference in Mobile. "That delayed us 16 to 17 minutes," he



PHOTO COURTESY OF TODD STENNIS

Morning riders on Amtrak's first day of service on the Mississippi Coast in 20 years were delayed Monday, August 18, 2025, by a truck stuck on the tracks at Pratt Avenue in Gulfport.

said.
The trains traveling east and west originally were to pass each other around Bay St. Louis,

said Knox Ross, chairman of the Southern Rail Commission.

SEE TRAIN, 3A



LILLIAN FOSTER Sun Herald

The Amtrak Mardi Gras Service train takes about four hours from New Orleans to Mobile, reaching speeds of up to 80 mph.

Coast celebrates Amtrak's return after Hurricane Katrina

BY LILLIAN FOSTER
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The new Amtrak Mardi Gras Service drew major crowds in four Coast cities during a preview run on Saturday as city and state officials, Amtrak

leaders, Southern Rail Commission representatives and Mardi Gras Krewe executives rode the train from New Orleans to Mobile.

The train service opened to the public on Monday, marking the return of Amtrak to the Coast for the first time since

Hurricane Katrina.

"This is one of the final pieces of the recovery puzzle," U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker said. "It's been 20 years since we've had a rail service. People are going to be able to count on the schedule and know that the train's coming in on time."

The service will offer two daily departures with four stops along the Coast: Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi and Pascagoula.

The route takes about four hours from New Orleans to

SEE AMTRAK, 4A

Former Pass Christian employee alleges wrongful firing

BY MARTHA SANCHEZ
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A former code enforcement employee in Pass Christian sued the city and two top leaders on Friday, alleging she was fired earlier this year because she reported one of them for misconduct.

The complaint, filed in U.S. District Court in Gulfport, claims Virginia "Jenny" Lowery was fired this spring after an altercation with then-Ward 4 Alderman Victor Pickich at a bar in the city.

The complaint comes days after the Pass Christian Board of Aldermen voted to ask the State Auditor's Office to investigate possible financial mismanagement in the city's code, water and harbor departments. City leaders have called the problems alarming but have not described details of their financial concerns because they say the issue's full scope is still unclear.

The complaint names as defendants the city, Mayor Kenny Torgeson and Pickich, now the alderman-at-large. It claims Pickich "launched a tirade" and hurled curse words at Lowery when she crossed paths one night in February with him and Torgeson, then the alderman-at-large, and now mayor.

"Pickich appeared intoxicat-

SEE LAWSUIT, 4A

Deputy finds 118 pounds of cocaine at traffic stop

BY MARTHA SANCHEZ
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Three men from Mexico were arrested last week on federal drug trafficking charges after a

Harrison County deputy found 118 pounds of cocaine hidden in their van, Sheriff Matt Haley said Monday.

The deputy stopped a black Chevrolet van on a traffic violation Thursday morning as it

headed east on Interstate 10 through Gulfport. A trained dog smelled drugs in the car, according to the sheriff, and authorities found the cocaine in a van compartment made of wood.

Authorities booked three

suspects into the Harrison County jail: Hector Rodriguez-Valdez, 32, Bryan Rodriguez-Valdez, 26, and Raul Quijas-Aguero, 26. The sheriff's office said the suspects were held without bond on an immigration hold, which gives U.S. Border Patrol time to take them into custody.

Deputies also arrested a man from Florida on Friday in an unrelated incident, according to Haley. Authorities say they found 4.4 pounds of cocaine

hidden in luggage during a separate traffic stop on eastbound I-10 in Gulfport.

The suspect in that case, 47-year-old Christopher Gill, faces a drug trafficking charge and is held in the Harrison County jail on a \$250,000 bond.

Federal authorities have said I-10 is one of several drug trafficking corridors across the South.



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