MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members
From: Staff
Date: March 20, 2009 Council Meeting
Subject: Resolution Supporting the Inclusion of the Intercity Rail Component of the Florida East Coast (FEC) Corridor Project as part of Florida’s Economic Stimulus Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this item is to have Council adopt a resolution supporting the inclusion of the Intercity Rail component of the FEC Corridor Project (from Jacksonville to Miami) as part of Florida’s economic stimulus plan. The project would enable Amtrak to operate passenger train service on the FEC Corridor between Jacksonville and Miami. Reintroducing passenger service on the FEC Corridor has been a high priority for Council since the early 1990s. The Strategic Regional Policy Plan encourages the creation of a balanced and integrated transportation system, with strong emphasis on a regional mass transit system. Since 1994, Council has adopted a number of resolutions supporting passenger transit on the FEC, within the Region and beyond, to complement on-going redevelopment efforts, improve mobility, and expand economic development opportunities (see Attachments A, B, C). Council’s Model Economic Stimulus Project list included as part of the staff report to Council for the February 20, 2009 meeting specifically includes putting passenger rail service back on the FEC as an initiative that should be funded (see Attachment D).

Background

In early 2000, Amtrak, FEC, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and regional authorities agreed to a service concept to reintroduce passenger rail along Florida’s east coast on the FEC Corridor. Thirteen preliminary station locations, primarily in downtowns, were identified between Jacksonville and West Palm Beach, including Stuart, Fort Pierce, and Vero Beach. The new Amtrak long-distance service was anticipated to utilize existing FEC tracks, with limited additional track sidings as needed. An interconnection in West Palm Beach between the FEC and Chessie and Seaboard (CSX) tracks would be required to accomplish Amtrak service south to Miami. This general alignment is included in the 2006 Florida Rail Plan, which was developed by the FDOT, as a potential “East Coast Route” for long distance and new corridor rail service (carrier unspecified), and illustrated in the map.
Negotiations were nearly completed between Amtrak, FDOT, and the FEC. However, in 2002, the Federal government directed Amtrak to suspend negotiations pending revisions to Amtrak’s budget and debt structure. It is Council’s understanding the Federal loan provisions have been satisfied, and Amtrak began investigating new service alignments last year. In 2008, Amtrak’s budget was nearly doubled to $13 Billion over five years (2009 through 2014), allowing the carrier to better expand its operations. The January 2009 economic stimulus legislation directs an additional $8 Billion to states specifically to develop new corridor and long distance services and is being acted upon by states across the country.

**Analysis**

Council discussions with Amtrak representatives indicate the Amtrak/FEC Corridor Project (Jacksonville to Miami) could be an appropriate project for Florida to request as part of the Federal economic stimulus package termed the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.” New long distance and intercity corridor service would complement on-going efforts in southeastern Florida, such as the current Tri-Rail service or potential new service to be recommended by the South Florida East Coast Corridor (SFECC) Study. The SFECC study is evaluating new service in the 85-mile FEC segment in Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties.

The cost to carry out the Amtrak/FEC Corridor Project is estimated to be approximately $100 million. It should be noted that an Amtrak project would compete for a different source of Federal funding than either Tri-Rail or the SFECC project (Federal Railroad Administration funding versus Federal Transit Administration funding). Further, a Jacksonville/Miami Amtrak project would likely include an interconnection between the FEC and CSX tracks in Palm Beach County, which could shift this capital expense away from a future SFECC-recommended service, thereby improving the cost/benefit ratio for a Palm Beach/Miami FEC service.

**Conclusion**

The reintroduction of passenger transit on the FEC Corridor throughout the Region is an important component of the successful and sustainable redevelopment of the Region. The reintroduction of passenger transit on the FEC Corridor has been a high priority of the Council for nearly two decades. As part of a larger state-wide transit system, expanded Amtrak service could provide enhanced inter- and intra-regional mobility as well as
economic development in coastal cities. Amtrak’s regional rail service would complement the existing Tri-Rail service (commuter rail) as well as the intensive service proposed on the FEC Corridor in Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade. Recent discussions with Amtrak representatives suggest good potential for this project to be advanced if included as part of Florida’s request for Federal economic stimulus money.

Moving this project forward will require the State of Florida to include the Intercity FEC Corridor Project (Jacksonville/Miami) as part of its Federal economic stimulus request. The request should be initiated by FDOT, and Council should promote support among the Region’s Legislative and Congressional delegation, the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) and affected local governments along the FEC Corridor. If needed, Council staff would be available to assist with gathering land use, economic, and other relevant data as well as coordination with FDOT, the SFRTA, and other agencies as necessary. Council draft Resolution 09-04 which supports making this request, is included with this staff report.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council: 1) adopt Resolution 09-04 supporting the inclusion of the Intercity FEC Corridor Project (Jacksonville/Miami) as part of Florida’s request for Federal economic stimulus money; 2) transmit the resolution to the Governor, the Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation, and Florida’s Legislative and Congressional delegation; and 3) transmit the resolution to FDOT District 4, the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, and affected local governments along the Florida East Coast Railway Corridor, with a request to adopt similar resolutions of support.

Attachments
RESOLUTION 09-04

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, PALM BEACH, AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES, FLORIDA REQUESTING THE ASSISTANCE OF GOVERNOR CRIST AND FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY KOPELOUSOS TO PRIORITIZE THE INTERCITY RAIL COMPONENT OF THE FEC CORRIDOR PROJECT (FROM JACKSONVILLE TO MIAMI) AS PART OF THE FEDERAL ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA

WHEREAS, the FEC corridor was historically operated as a passenger rail line along Florida’s east coast, traversing the Treasure Coast Region; and

WHEREAS, cities along Florida’s east coast historically developed around train stations along the FEC railroad; and

WHEREAS, modern cities along Florida’s east coast are currently implementing programs to redevelop historic downtowns built around train stations; and

WHEREAS, improved mobility is highly desired in the Treasure Coast Region and throughout the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, transit, including rail transit, is a key component of improved mobility, especially between cities and throughout the Region; and

WHEREAS, the 2006 Florida Rail Plan identifies passenger transit along the FEC corridor as a potential “Coastal Route” for new passenger rail service in the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak is well-suited to provide passenger rail service along Florida’s east coast; and

WHEREAS, station locations in the Treasure Coast Region should include a minimum of Vero Beach, Fort Pierce, Stuart, and West Palm Beach; and

WHEREAS, the reintroduction of Amtrak service along Florida’s east coast would provide near-term jobs and economic stimulus for Florida’s residents and businesses; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Government is seeking appropriate projects for inclusion in the Federal economic stimulus package to provide immediate and near-term job opportunities for projects; and
WHEREAS, the Intercity FEC Corridor Project (Jacksonville/Miami) is an appropriate project for inclusion by the State of Florida in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan; and

WHEREAS, former work by Amtrak and FDOT includes plans for the improvements necessary to initiate Amtrak service on the FEC corridor;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council requests the assistance of Governor Crist and FDOT Secretary Kopelousos to prioritize the Amtrak/FEC Corridor Project (from Jacksonville to Miami) as part of the Federal economic stimulus package for the State of Florida.

The Chair thereupon declared the Resolution duly passed and adopted this 20th day of March 2009.

Attest:

Gary C. Wheeler, Chairman
Michael J. Busha, Executive Director
Attachment A

Resolution 01-08 adopted October 19, 2001
RESOLUTION 01-08

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, PALM BEACH, AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES, FLORIDA, SUPPORTING FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S REQUEST FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE TRANSPORTATION OUTREACH PROGRAM TO DEVELOP A NEW PASSENGER STATEWIDE RAIL ROUTE BETWEEN JACKSONVILLE AND MIAMI WITH Stops IN THE TREASURE COAST REGION.

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation, Amtrak and the Florida East Coast Railway have cooperated to develop the Florida State Passenger Rail Vision Plan, which is a project to expand the state-wide intercity passenger rail program; and

WHEREAS, this program initiates a new passenger rail route between Jacksonville and Miami with new intermediate stops at St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Titusville, Cocoa, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Stuart; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation has requested $23 million dollars from the Transportation Outreach Program for Fiscal Year 2002-03 to invest in Florida East Coast Railway route improvements and construct eight new passenger rail stations; and

WHEREAS, the Strategic Regional Policy Plan supports development of a commuter rail service with stations linking the coastal cities and towns of the Region.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council supports the Florida Department of Transportation's request for funding through the Transportation Outreach Program to develop a new passenger statewide rail route between Jacksonville and Miami with stops in the Treasure Coast Region.

The Chairman thereupon declared the Resolution duly passed and adopted this 19th day of October 2001.

Michael J. Busha, Executive Director

Dennis Armstrong, Chairman

A-1
Attachment B

Resolution 96-02 adopted March 26, 1996
OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL IN SUPPORT
OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO ACQUIRE THE
RIGHT-OF-WAY OF THE FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY

WHEREAS, it has been recently disclosed that the Florida East Coast
right-of-way is for sale, and

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation is required to
expand and enhance rail systems in Florida to respond to statewide mobility
needs, and

WHEREAS, the Florida East Coast right-of-way represents an important,
but underutilized transportation corridor currently providing only freight
service to the heavily populated coastal communities between Jacksonville and
Miami; and

WHEREAS, this presents a unique opportunity for the Florida
Department of Transportation to purchase the right-of-way, and initiate rail
passenger service linking the heavily populated coastal communities between
Jacksonville and Miami; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of rail passenger service on Florida East
Coast rail lines between Jacksonville and Miami could be a catalyst to encourage
infill and redevelopment within coastal communities; and
WHEREAS, rail passenger service along the Florida East Coast right-of-way could connect with the Tri-Rail and provide Treasure Coast and Florida visitors, workers and residents with a transportation alternative to the private automobile, reduce roadway congestion, increase mobility, and enhance ridership on Tri-Rail and Metrorail facilities which are of significant state and federal investment; and

WHEREAS, such service would otherwise provide diverse and numerous benefits to residents of the Treasure Coast Region and its economy.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council strongly encourages the Florida Department of Transportation to evaluate purchase and/or strengthening partnerships regarding the Florida East Coast right-of-way between Jacksonville and Miami and initiate rail passenger service to the coastal communities as soon as it is possible.

The chairman thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this on the 25th day of March 1996.

Attest: [Signature]
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

By: [Signature]
Deny Green, Chairman
MEMORANDUM

To: Affected Coastal Cities and Counties

From: Michael J. Busha, AICP
Executive Director

Date: March 27, 1996

Subject: Resolution Supporting the Purchase of and/or Strengthening Partnerships on the FEC Railway

The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council passed Resolution 96-02 at its regular Council Meeting on March 15, 1996. The resolution encourages the State to evaluate purchase of and/or strengthening partnerships to encourage the restoration of passenger/commuter service on the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway.

The Resolution also requests that all affected jurisdictions within the Region pass a similar resolution as a declaration of support for restoring rail passenger/commuter service on the FEC Railway.

Restoration of passenger service along the FEC corridor could enhance the attractiveness of coastal towns and cities in the Region for development and redevelopment. Providing passenger service on this railway also could one day provide a viable alternative to the Region’s dependency on and usage of I-95 and Florida’s Turnpike for regional travel.

Thank you for your cooperation.

MJB:lg

Attachment

3228 S.W. Martin Downs Blvd.
suite 205 - P.O. Box 1529
Palm City, Florida 34990
Phone (407) 221-4069
Fax (407) 221-4068
Memorandum to Affected Coastal Cities and Counties
March 27, 1996
Page Two

cc: Chairman Fran Adams, Indian River County Board of County Commissioners
Chairman Ken Foster, Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners
Chairman Cliff Barnes, St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners
Chairman Janet Gettig, Martin County Board of County Commissioners
Mayor Louise Cartwright, City of Sebastian
Mayor Jack Grossett, City of Vero Beach
Mayor Edward Enns, City of Fort Pierce
Mayor Ruth Hoke, Town of Ocean Breeze
Mayor Charles White, City of Stuart
Mayor Ron T. Mackail, Village of Tequesta
Mayor V. A. Marks, Village of North Palm Beach
Mayor William Wagner, Town of Lake Park
Mayor Clara Williams, City of Riviera Beach
Mayor Nancy Graham, City of West Palm Beach
Mayor Rodney Romano, City of Lake Worth
Mayor Al Merion, Town of Hypoluxo
Mayor Gerald Taylor, City of Boynton Beach
Mayor Jay Alperin, City of Delray Beach
Mayor Carol Hanson, City of Boca Raton
Governor Lawton Chiles
Representative Peter Rudy Wallace, Speaker of the House
Representative Bill Posey, Florida House of Representatives
Representative O. R. Minton, Jr., Florida House of Representatives
Representative Tom Warner, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Addie Greene, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Edward Healey, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Charles Sembler, II, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Ken Pruitt, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Sharon Merchant, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Lois Frankel, Florida House of Representatives
Representative William Andrews, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Suzanne Jacobs, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Debby Sanderson, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Ron Klein, Florida House of Representatives
Senator Jim Scott, President of the Senate
Senator Kenneth C. Jenne, II, The Florida Senate
Senator William G. “Doc” Myers, The Florida Senate
Senator Thomas Rossin, The Florida Senate
Senator Patsy Ann Kurth, The Florida Senate
Senator Robert Wexler, The Florida Senate
Memorandum to Affected Coastal Cities and Counties
March 27, 1996
Page Three

cc: Senator Matthew J. Meadows, The Florida Senate
John Anderson, Florida Department of Transportation
Jeffrey Jackson, Tri-Rail Commission
Cheri Fitzgerald, St. Lucie County MPO
Keith Burnsed, Indian River County MPO
Colleen Roland, Martin County MPO
Randy Whitfield, Palm Beach County MPO
One Thousand Friends of Florida
Florida League of Cities
Florida Association of Counties
Jack Horniman, Palm Beach County Municipal League
The Treasure Coast Council of Governments
Florida Regional Councils Association
Attachment C

Resolution 94-02 adopted September 16, 1994
RESOLUTION 94-02

OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
SUPPORTING THE CONCEPT OF AMTRAK SERVICE FROM JACKSONVILLE
TO MIAMI ALONG THE FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR

WHEREAS, AMTRAK presently does not provide service to
heavily populated coastal communities between Jacksonville
and Miami; and

WHEREAS, the existing Florida East Coast freight rail
lines between Jacksonville and West Palm Beach will
facilitate this service contingent upon improvements to
accommodate passenger train service; and

WHEREAS, regular AMTRAK service along the East Coast
would provide Treasure Coast and Florida residents with a
transportation alternative, and better, more diverse
service; and

WHEREAS, regular AMTRAK service would facilitate inter-
city transportation service and commence by connecting
Treasure Coast Communities such as Vero Beach, Ft. Pierce,
Stuart and West Palm Beach to Miami, Jacksonville and other
important destinations; and

WHEREAS, such service could significantly enhance
ridership on the Tri-County Rail and metrorail, a facility
of significant State and Federal investment; and
WHEREAS, such service would help to revitalize existing Coastal Cities, a goal and objective of State, Regional, and local concern; and

WHEREAS, such service would otherwise provide diverse and numerous benefits to the residents of the Treasure Coast Region and its economy.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council supports the concept of AMTRAK service between Jacksonville and Miami along the east coast corridor of the FEC, connecting with West Palm Beach and Tri-County Rail, and supports the efforts of the Florida Department of Transportation, CSX, FEC, Tri-Rail and AMTRAK to provide passenger service as soon as is possible.

The Chairman thereupon declared the Resolution duly passed and adopted this 16th day of September, 1994.

Treasure Coast
Accepted: Regional Planning Council

Attest: Daniel M. Cary, Executive Director

By: Jeff Krauskopf, Chairman
Amtrak could be rolling on FEC tracks by spring

By BERT ELJERA
Indian River County Press Journal - June 1, 2001

In the most optimistic projection yet, officials are anticipating the first trains on the Amtrak line connecting Vero Beach to Jacksonville and Miami to begin rolling by next spring — if funding is secured on time.

At a Thursday meeting in Cocoa of officials from cities and counties along the route, it was decided to intensively lobby efforts to secure at least $7 million from the state to get the train service started.

The money will be added to the $15 million the Florida Department of Transportation already has allocated for the project. Officials said it would take at least $22 million to make the necessary improvements to the line, build train stations and get the service going.

City managers of the train stops — St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Titusville, Cocoa/Port Canaveral, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Stuart — will meet again in two weeks to create a steering committee for the project.

"We will appoint a project manager from among ourselves and create the working committees," said Cocoa City Manager Ron Holt, who will again host the meeting in two weeks.

Amtrak is planning two daily trips over the 250-mile Jacksonville-Miami line, owned and used by the St. Augustine-based Florida East Coast Railway as a freight railway.

Under a recently signed agreement between the two companies, Amtrak will be allowed to run its passenger trains on the same tracks FEC will continue to use for its trains.

Through railway improvements and modifications, including new signals and track additions, the faster passenger trains will be able to pass by the slower freight cars.

Amtrak officials say the track improvements and construction of the train stations will take about 10 months, so that if that begins in July, the first trains by the spring is a real possibility.

"It's a realistic target," said Indian River County Commissioner Ken Macht, who attended the meeting. "It depends on what everybody does. To build the platforms takes time, and it may be pressing it a little bit."

Cities along the route are expected to chip in at least 20 percent of the cost of constructing the train stations in their respective cities. Macht said he expects Vero Beach to approach the county for help.

"The money is the thing," said Macht, adding that local officials are not very enthusiastic in spending money for what had been a state-proposed project. "It's the state's responsibility."

Vero Beach City Manager Rex Taylor said the meeting was productive because, "the goal of where we need to move was pretty well established."

He said creation of the committee would provide a framework and a structure to the effort. "We are trying to move forward," Taylor said. "The lobbying effort to secure funding is moving."

He said local governments will draft a resolution addressed to Gov. Jeb Bush, FDOT Secretary Tom Berry and the Legislature to release the funds necessary to begin service.

The entire project is estimated to cost $24 million.

Please see AMTRAK on A2

Amtrak

CONTINUED FROM A1

However, $22 million will be enough to fund the initial improvements and start the service, officials said.

The state DOT already has $15 million set aside for the project and is now available for use. The remaining $7 million can be covered right away if Berry made good his promise to use his department's discretionary fund, Cocoa's Holt said.

"It was his (Berry's) idea to use the discretionary fund," Holt said. "But we need to put added pressure to swing him — or the governor — to use the funds for that purpose."

Holt said local officials will be drafting a "White Paper" detailing how the Amtrak line would benefit the cities along the route, such as the one posted on Cocoa's Web site, and send to Bush, Berry and the Legislature.

In a fact sheet posted on the Cocoa Web site, the Amtrak train services is touted as a link connecting the Florida East Coast to a national railway system that will make it possible for passengers to travel to Boston, New York and Vancouver, British Columbia, with a few train changes.

Cruise lines, such as Carnival and Sterling, have offered to transport their passengers by Amtrak, promising more than 3 million passengers each year and ensuring that the line is profitable.

Each train can carry up to 300 passengers, adding in the economic development of the cities along the route.

In addition, the train would help alleviate road and airport congestion and provide an alternative means of transportation.

Amtrak is planning to run demonstration trains on June 13 and June 16 from Miami to Jacksonville and back, or on June 26 when Gov. Bush moves the capital for a day to Martin County, Macht said.
Attachment D

Staff Report of Economic Stimulus Sub-Committee
and
Resolution 09-01 adopted February 20, 2009
Attachment D

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members

From: Staff

Date: February 20, 2009 Council Meeting

Subject: Report of the Economic Stimulus Sub-Committee

Introduction

At its December 12, 2008 meeting, Council voted to: 1) pass a resolution in support of a federal economic stimulus package that is accompanied by a fair system for ranking and filtering stimulus project requests; and 2) establish a subcommittee to create a list of examples or model projects—the kind that should be funded with economic stimulus dollars.

The consensus was that an $800 billion federal economic stimulus package could have a significant impact on the quality of the Region's growth, economic development, standard of living, and recovery from the recession. To this end, any federal aid to the states should be strategic and directed towards projects that: 1) contribute to a "new economy" and jobs; 2) rebuild and improve existing public infrastructure (e.g., roads, schools, bridges, railroads, transit systems, etc.); 3) trigger redevelopment of existing towns, cities, and urban areas; 4) create sustainable, transit-supportive growth and development; and 5) move the nation towards energy independence and away from fuels contributing to climate change and sea level rise.

Discussion

The subcommittee members suggested individual projects as examples that would pass the filtering tests described above. The list is by no means comprehensive or in order of priority. Many of the region's local governments are still developing their specific lists. This list typifies the kind public infrastructure projects that should be funded under the economic stimulus plan according to Council's Resolution.
Examples of Model Federal Economic Stimulus Projects

1. FEC Railway/CSX Railway Interconnection for the Treasure Coast Region
2. Upgrading and Extending the FEC Railway to Accommodate Passenger Service for the Treasure Coast Region
3. Upgrading and Replacing the Region’s Transit/School Bus Fleet for Alternative Fuel Use and Hybrid Technology
4. Relocation and Reconstruction of the Fort Pierce Water Reclamation Plant
5. Construction of the Lake Region Water Treatment Plant Site
6. Redevelopment of the HD King Municipal Power Plant
7. Completion of the Crosstown Expressway as a Multimodal Corridor
8. Congress Avenue Right of Way Acquisition and Construction
9. Completion of Kings Highway as a Multimodal Corridor
10. Completion of Becker Road as a Multimodal Corridor
11. Modernization Projects for Public Schools
12. Development of the South Florida Inland Port
13. Estuary Restoration Projects within the Treasure Coast Region
14. Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Implementation
15. Herbert Hoover Dike Rehabilitation
16. Water and Wastewater Main New Installation and Upgrades in the Region’s Urban Areas
17. Development of the Treasure Coast Research and Education Park
18. Bridge, Street, Sidewalk, and Water Management, Additions and Upgrades in the Region’s Urban Areas
Conclusion

Council has an opportunity and responsibility to speak out on items like the proposed economic stimulus bill that could have a significant impact on the Region’s growth, economic development, standard of living, and its ability to recover from the national recession. As it relates to how public infrastructure dollars spent, Council should communicate its position to the Governor and its Congressional Legislative Delegation.

Recommendation

Council should approve the attached Resolution 09-01 requesting the State of Florida establish a strategic evaluation system for Federal Economic Stimulus project proposals.

Attachment
RESOLUTION 09-01

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, PALM BEACH, AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES, FLORIDA REQUESTING THE STATE OF FLORIDA ESTABLISH A STRATEGIC EVALUATION SYSTEM FOR FEDERAL ECONOMIC STIMULUS PROJECT PROPOSALS

WHEREAS, the country is facing a severe recession that is seriously and negatively affecting communities and regions across Florida; and

WHEREAS, over the last several weeks, the President and U.S. Congressional leaders have met with various state governors and other groups to discuss the size and shape of an economic stimulus package that is estimated to be valued at $800 billion dollars; and

WHEREAS, the federal economic stimulus package is being designed to fight recession and build a truly competitive, world class, 21st Century American economy; and

WHEREAS, a key provision of the federal economic stimulus package is the provision of infrastructure investment and that these investments are an important driver in where, how and when cities and counties will grow and develop, and the form and pattern of growth that will occur; and

WHEREAS, the test or filter for qualifying projects for economic stimulus dollars should not be solely that they are “ready-to-go” or “shovel-ready;” and

WHEREAS, federal aid for infrastructure investments should be made strategically across Florida’s communities and regions in a way that will: 1) contribute to a “new economy” and jobs; 2) rebuild and modernize existing public infrastructure (e.g., roads, schools, bridges, railroads, transit systems, etc.); 3) trigger redevelopment of existing towns, cities, and urban areas; 4) support sustainable, transit-compatible growth and non-sprawl development; and 5) move Florida towards energy independence and away from fuels and power distribution systems contributing to climate change and sea level rise; and

WHEREAS, on January 26, 1977, the State of Florida, Department of Administration, Division of State Planning officially designated the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council as the regional clearinghouse for A-95 reviews for the four-county area and in this capacity Council plays an important role in reviewing federal grant applications from local governments, community service providers, educational institutions and non-profit organizations with respect to transit provision, road building and infrastructure planning to ensure avoid of duplication, effective coordination and for consistency with the State Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Regional Policy Plan; and
WHEREAS, the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council has a primary interest in safeguarding and ensuring the sound and orderly growth, economic development and standard of living in the Treasure Coast Region as it relates to and may be affected by large-scale infrastructure investment spending in the areas of roads, bridges, schools, transit systems and telecommunications systems;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council requests that the State consider: 1) the five criteria listed above and establish a strategic rating system for evaluating and filtering all “ready-to-go” State and local government requests for federal aid for infrastructure; and 2) using the regional planning councils to assist the State in evaluating and coordinating these requests.

The Chair thereupon declared the Resolution duly passed and adopted this 20th day of February 2009.

Attest:

Gary C. Wheeler, Chairman

Michael J. Busha, Executive Director