

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members

AGENDA ITEM 11

From: Staff

Date: April 16, 2010 Regional Planning Council Meeting

Subject: West Palm Beach CSX/FEC Connector Charrette Master Plan Presentation

Introduction

For the past five years, Council's involvement in land use/transportation planning has been a rapidly increasing part of its work program and service to the Region's local governments and agencies. Much of its recent activity has been concentrated on land use planning for transit, transit-oriented development, and expanding interagency relationships with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA). A large part of Council's work with these agencies has been focused on establishing more transit-supportive land use patterns around stations along the current Tri-Rail corridor, which includes the CSX rail line in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.

Council has also been heavily involved in work dealing with the Florida East Coast (FEC) corridor, which is the subject of the South Florida East Coast Corridor (SFECC) Study. This effort, led by FDOT with participation from the three southern Metropolitan Planning Organizations (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade), SFRTA, and Treasure Coast and South Florida Regional Planning Councils, is evaluating the potential reintroduction of passenger service on an 85-mile portion of the FEC corridor through the three counties. The SFECC Study is considering an extension of Tri-Rail north to Jupiter as well as other transit modes along the FEC corridor in the three counties.

Council's work on the SFECC Study is part of a broad-based effort for evaluating the physical requirements to accommodate passenger transit and required parking along the FEC corridor as well as the land uses surrounding each of the nearly 50 station locations currently prioritized for consideration along the 85-mile corridor. Transit-supportive land use conditions, both existing and planned, will greatly influence where train stations are located and how successfully they will function. Federal funding for transit projects has also become much more competitive in the past two decades, which has elevated the emphasis on transit-supportive land use from the Federal perspective. Accordingly, Council's charrette work, such as the West Palm Beach CSX/FEC Connector Charrette, have helped address transit and land use challenges in several cities and towns along the corridor as well as improve project competitiveness through expanded public participation, and detailed local master plans for carrying out transit-supportive land use changes.

Background

In all of Florida, the location where the CSX and FEC rail corridors run closest to one another (+/- 1,200 feet) is within the City of West Palm Beach. The SFEECC study is considering future passenger service on the FEC as well as future Tri-Rail service extension north to Jupiter. The extension of Tri-Rail service north to Riviera Beach, Palm Beach Gardens, and Jupiter will require a physical rail connection between the two rail corridors. In October 2009, a joint application for High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail funding was submitted by FDOT and Amtrak. This request for federal stimulus funding is to extend Amtrak service from Jacksonville to West Palm Beach (and then on to Miami) on the FEC corridor. This new Amtrak service would also require a physical rail connection between the FEC and CSX rail corridors and would result in the first passenger service to be provided on the FEC corridor since 1968.

The West Palm Beach CSX/FEC Connector Charrette focused on two primary objectives: designing the connection between the CSX and FEC; and developing station area plans for eight different potential station locations along the FEC corridor in West Palm Beach. This process was a multi-agency effort coordinated by Council, with funding from the City of West Palm Beach, West Palm Beach Community Redevelopment Area, FDOT, Palm Beach MPO, and SFRTA.

The Charrette Process

The charrette, conducted by Council staff, was held from January 9 – 15, 2010. Approximately 100 residents, elected officials, business and property owners, and staff from the City participated in the opening session and activities during the week. Council's charrette team tested the various station locations and developed a plan for the physical rail connection north of 25th Street in the Northwood Industrial District (see Attachment). The design team paid careful attention to the two sacred sites in the area, the Evergreen Cemetery and the Storm of 1928 Mass Burial site. Neither of the sites would be negatively impacted in the proposed connector location. Instead, the proposed designs for the rail connector and station emphasize enhancements to these key cultural amenities.

In addition to creating designs for eight different station locations within the city, the charrette team looked at architectural, land use, and zoning implications for key redevelopment locations. Council staff will continue to work with the city and CRA on refining design and policy recommendations from the charrette as well as a detailed fiscal impact analysis for properties affected by the proposed rail connection.

Conclusion

Improving the relationship between land use patterns and transportation planning will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation network, create additional transportation choices for the Region's residents and visitors, and enhance quality of life throughout the Region. Charrettes, such as the one recently conducted by Council in West Palm Beach, are a highly effective mechanism to evaluate conditions, identify transit-supportive opportunities, and lay the groundwork for implementation.

Recommendation

For information only.

Attachment



West Palm Beach
CSX/FEC Connector
Location

General Area



West Palm Beach
CSX/FEC Connector
Location

Detailed Area