

**DRAFT**  
**Subject to modifications**

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members AGENDA ITEM 7C

From: Staff

Date: September 17, 2010 Council Meeting

Subject: Commuter Rail Update – Resolution of Support for the South Florida East Coast Corridor Study

Introduction

The purpose of this item is to: 1) provide an update to Council on the South Florida East Coast Corridor (SFECC) Study; and 2) request Council adopt a resolution generally supporting the current findings of the SFECC Study. Commissioned by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the SFECC Study is designed to evaluate transit demand in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties and develop a long-term, comprehensive transit plan for the three counties, including the Tri-Rail system as well as future service on the FEC Corridor. After four years of analysis, the Study has narrowed the range of alternatives to four (two bus and two rail), incorporating the current Tri-Rail system and proposing 52 new transit stations along the FEC Corridor. These findings will be presented to the three southeast Florida Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), and Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC) in October 2010. FDOT is seeking additional resolutions of support from other agencies to evidence support for the project as it continues to move forward. Mr. Scott Seeburger, FDOT Project Manager, will present an overview of the SFECC Study and its findings.

Background

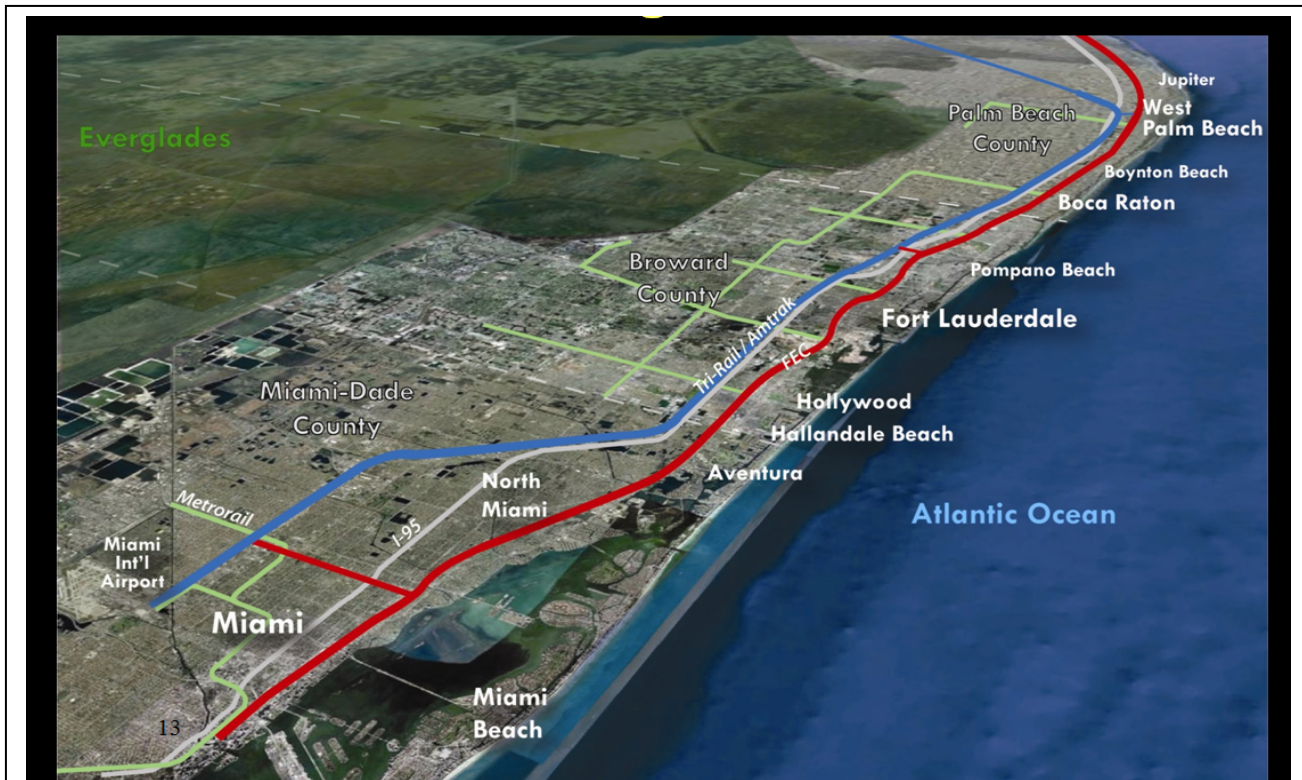
Commuter rail represents a more localized form of transit that typically operates at lower speeds than high-speed and intercity passenger rail services. This form of rail typically utilizes diesel-electric or electrically propelled trains, often sharing tracks with intercity railway freight and passenger trains. While intercity passenger rail stations are typically spaced twenty to thirty miles apart, commuter rail stations tend to be only two to five miles apart, although closer spacing may occur in more urban areas. Although Florida's commuter rail experience is limited, there are commuter rail projects envisioned in all of Florida's major metropolitan areas, including southeastern Florida (Tri-Rail and SFECC Transit Study), Tampa Bay, Central Florida (SunRail), and northeastern Florida, with others likely to emerge over time.

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Established in 1987, Tri-Rail is the only commuter rail system currently operating in the State of Florida, with eighteen stations spaced along its 72-mile corridor in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. In 2005, Tri-Rail's plans to extend service into northern Palm Beach County were absorbed into a broad FDOT analysis of the future transit needs of the three southeastern counties (see Figure 1). This study, called the SFECC Transit Study, is nearing the end of its second phase of analysis. The range of alternatives has been narrowed from nearly two dozen to four (two bus alternatives and two rail alternatives), and the list of recommended stations has been reduced from nearly 100 to 52. The Tri-Rail commuter service and the various components of the SFECC Study (including Tri-Rail extension north to Jupiter as well as other commuter-type service on the FEC between Jupiter and Miami) are broadly supported by the Strategic Regional Policy Plan as well as local government comprehensive plans.

FDOT is convening five public workshops in September 2010 to inform the public of the study's findings and gain additional public input. Subsequently, in October 2010, FDOT will present the study's findings to the three MPOs, SFRTA, and SEFTC, requesting these agencies vote on a preferred alternative for the project. In order to indicate public knowledge and support for the project, FDOT is seeking resolutions of support from local governments and agencies to be included with the project as it moves forward through the Federal funding process. Accordingly, FDOT has requested Council to: 1) adopt a resolution generally supporting the current findings of the project; and 2) work with the local governments of Palm Beach County to do the same (see Attachment A). FDOT staff will be in attendance at the Council meeting to present an overview of the findings and recommendations of the SFECC Study.

In addition, Council has worked extensively with FDOT regarding station locations and planning evaluations along the corridor throughout the SFECC Study. As the Study enters its next phase of analysis, this work is anticipated to continue.



**FIGURE 1:** *The aerial photo illustrates the regional context of the SFECC Study in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. The blue line indicates the CSXT rail corridor, which carries both Tri-Rail’s current 72-mile system as well as Amtrak’s current intercity passenger service. The red line indicates the FEC corridor where new passenger rail service is planned as well as three CSXT/FEC rail interconnections (in Miami, Pompano, and West Palm Beach). The goal of the SFECC is to develop a long-term, multi-modal plan for an integrated regional transit system that would utilize both rail corridors, as well as other north/south and east/west feeder systems, to achieve improved mobility for the southeast Florida region. (SOURCE: FDOT)*

### Conclusion

The Region needs a more balanced, multi-modal transportation system to ensure sustainability, economic prosperity, mobility, and improved quality of life. The State’s continued development of an integrated passenger rail system, which could include various modes of rail service, will provide many benefits to the Region and help advance the Strategic Regional Policy Plan. Support of the Study’s current findings and continued interagency work with FDOT on the Study and on local public outreach will help advance rail projects, improve the understanding of land use/transportation relationships, and make the projects more competitive for Federal funding.

### Recommendation

Council should adopt the resolution generally supporting the current findings of the South Florida East Coast Corridor Study.

### Attachment

**RESOLUTION NO. 10-06**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL, EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S SOUTH FLORIDA EAST COAST CORRIDOR PROJECT (FROM JUPITER TO MIAMI) AND ITS AFFILIATED REGIONAL AND COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES; ACKNOWLEDGING POTENTIAL STATION LOCATIONS; ACKNOWLEDGING THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO THE PROJECT TO ENHANCE MOBILITY IN THE SOUTHEAST FLORIDA REGION**

**WHEREAS**, the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway corridor was historically operated as a passenger rail line along Florida's east coast, traversing the Southeast Florida Region; and

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

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

**WHEREAS**, the public policy Eastward Ho!, developed by the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, provides guidance for improving quality of life and managing growth including the redevelopment of eastern Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties; and

**WHEREAS**, improved mobility is highly desired in the Southeast Florida 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 Southeast Florida Region; and

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

**WHEREAS**, the reduction of vehicle miles traveled and changes to the distribution of trips by transportation mode would reduce fuel consumption and the amounts of pollutants emitted in the Southeast Florida Region; and

**WHEREAS**, an integrated system of transit services is needed for existing and future travel markets including long-distance travel served by the South Florida Rail Corridor, including Tri-Rail Commuter Rail System; moderate-distance travel served by transit in the eastern FEC Railway Corridor; and local travel in the urban centers by local circulator services;

**WHEREAS**, the FEC Railway Corridor right-of-way represents a unique and strategic transportation corridor that provides vital freight and transportation rail services to and from South Florida; and

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

**WHEREAS**, the 2008 SFRTA Strategic Regional Transit Plan, outlined transit corridor expansion alternatives including the FEC Railway Corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, passenger transit on the FEC Corridor is supported in the Strategic Regional Policy Plan;

### **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL:**

SECTION 1. Working with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), local governments, and other appropriate public agencies, a Locally-Preferred Alternative will be recommended to the Boards of the southeast Florida Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), the South East Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC), and the Governing Board of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) for endorsement/adoption.

SECTION 2. The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council has assisted FDOT, MPOs, local governments, and others in the evaluation and recommendation of station locations within the Treasure Coast Region, as identified through a collaborative, public process in Phase 2 of this Study, as appropriate.

SECTION 3. Working with the FDOT and other appropriate agencies, the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council agrees to continue to promote complementary land use policies, land development regulations, and economic development activities consistent with the Federal Transit Administration New Starts Development Process.

SECTION 4. The FDOT, on behalf of all state stakeholders is encouraged to actively pursue obtaining shared access to the current FEC Railway Corridor with the purposes of reintroducing passenger transit services within the FEC Railway Corridor.

SECTION 5. The Executive Director is hereby authorized to forward a copy of this resolution to all appropriate public agencies including County commissions and officials involved in regional transit planning, the SFRTA and its membership, the Florida League of Cities, the Florida Association of Counties, local governments, and Chambers of Commerce within the South Florida area, CSX Transportation, Flagler Development Group, Florida East Coast Railway, L.L.C, and aviation and sea port agency officials.

**DULY ADOPTED** by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council this 17th day of September 2010.

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Samuel J. Ferreri  
Chairman

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Michael J. Busha  
Executive Director