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A look at power and the people behind the scenes

Bill Nelson endorses Jacksonville to Miami Amtrak connection on FEC tracks



Submitted by [Larry Hannan](#) on January 18, 2011 - 4:41pm



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Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., became the latest public official to endorse an Amtrak connection from Jacksonville to Miami on the Florida East Coast tracks.

The Times-Union [wrote](#) about this issue in Tuesday's edition.

Nelson announced his support for the project in a letter to multiple Florida mayors, including Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton, who have been pushing the project. He vowed in a written statement to work with local officials to identify funding for the project.

The Florida Department of Transportation is allocating \$118 million to the project, provided the federal government comes up with a match.

The money would upgrade the tracks so that passenger rail doesn't interfere with Florida East Coast freight operations. New stations would also be built in St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Cocoa Beach, Titusville, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Stuart.

The state estimates that 865,000 trips would occur in during the trains' first year of operation.

"Restoring this service will give Floridians a quicker, more fuel-efficient way to travel between our state's major east coast cities," Nelson said. "and, it will create good jobs in engineering and construction."

Nelson will be at the Florida Theatre at 7 p.m. tonight to discuss his support prior to speaking at the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting.

Amtrak has passenger service from Jacksonville to Miami via CSX tracks on its Silver Star and Silver Meteor trains. But the Silver Meteor goes through Orlando and takes nine hours, and the Silver Star takes almost 11 hours through Tampa.

The Florida Department of Transportation estimates that FEC tracks, which roughly parallel Interstate 95, could take an Amtrak train from Jacksonville to Miami in six hours, about the same as driving.

Further information on the project, including the list of organizations that have endorsed it, can be found [here](#).

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