

Senator Supports Jax-Miami Amtrak Route

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson on Tuesday offered his support to the 15 Florida mayors are lobbying to bring Amtrak passenger service to cities between Jacksonville to Miami.

Nelson, D-Fla., sent a letter of support to the mayors -- including Jacksonville's John Peyton -- who are looking for creative ways to pay for the project. U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, who is on record supporting the plan, is the new chairman of the House Transportation Committee, and officials are counting on his support too.

According to Nelson's office, the plan has garnered the support of Florida transportation officials who have proposed using \$118 million from the state's transportation trust fund to build the line. Local officials said what is needed to make the project work is for the federal government match the state's contribution.

While the federal government last year awarded \$2.4 billion to build a bullet-train line between Tampa and Orlando, it turned down a \$250 million request for the new East Coast Amtrak proposal.

Last May, Amtrak officials made a 326-mile, one-way inspection trip of the Florida East Coast Railway tracks from Miami to Jacksonville -- the rails proposed to carry the passenger trains.

While Nelson acknowledged the nation is facing significant financial problems, he pledged to do everything he could to support the Amtrak line.

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