

Application reveals details for FEC service

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As *Examiner* reported yesterday, the state applied Friday to the FRA for funding to run Amtrak trains on the Florida East Coast Ry. The documents are posted online at www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/HSIPR-FECAmtrakApplication.shtm.

In her cover letter to the FRA, Florida Transportation Secretary Stephanie Kopelousos stated, the \$250 million



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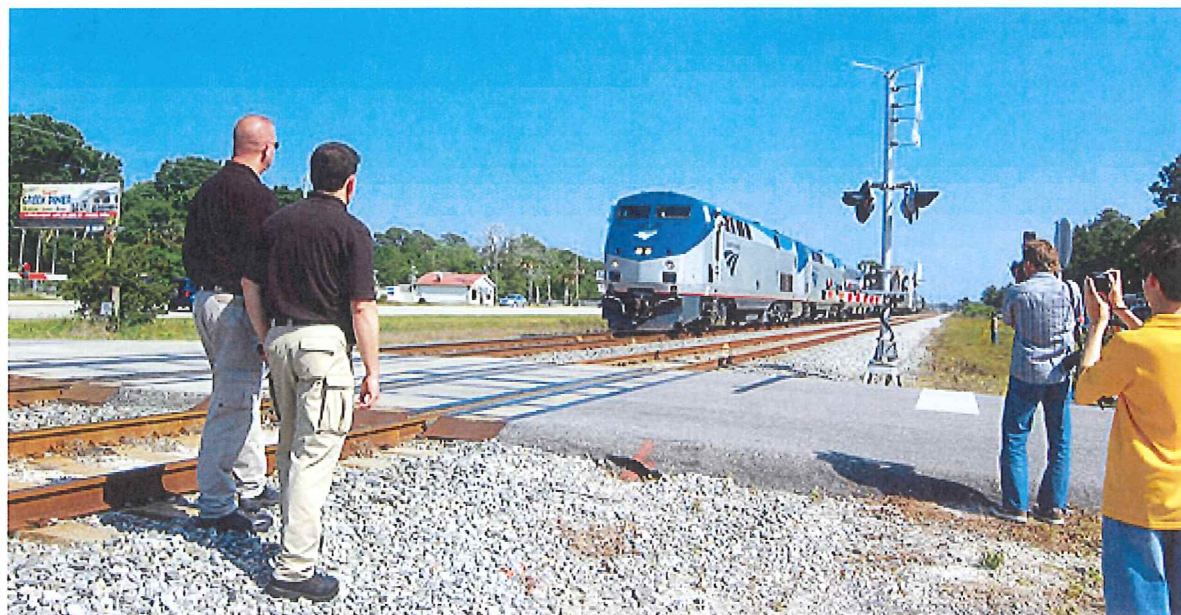


Photo / Leo King

On May 1, when the Amtrak inspection trail rolled over Florida East Coast Ry. tracks, the train was greeted by two of FEC's finest, who were watching out for cars on a grade crossing which would serve as a "platform."

request to supplement the state and local government commitment of \$123.3 million will provide improvements to the Florida East Coast Ry. to allow 90 mph operations, builds Amtrak stations in eight

east coast cities, constructs a connection between FEC and the South Florida Rail Corridor at West Palm Beach.”

She pointed out, “It is supported by every local government along the corridor,” and Kopelousos noted Amtrak and FEC have already signed on to the notion.

Some details gleaned from the documents show that Amtrak trains Nos. 91/92 – the *Silver Star* and 97/98 – the *Silver Meteor* between New York and Florida would leave CSX rails in Jacksonville and don’t return to that carrier until milepost 298 in West Palm Beach.

“The proposed service design will split the *Silver Star* daily in Jacksonville and add one FEC corridor train between Jacksonville and Miami to operate two round-trip trains daily – two northbound and two southbound – on the FEC corridor.”

The application states “Additional rolling stock is needed to support the proposed service via the FEC, both to accommodate growth anticipated from expansion of service to new cities, and to provide the necessary types of cars for both portions of a train when it is divided in Jacksonville.” The *Silver Star* and *Silver Meteor* typically consist of a combination of baggage, dining, sleeping and coach cars.

“First Class and Coach Class services will be operated on both the inland and coastal routes, consistent with Amtrak’s current service quality standards for long distance trains. Train amenities include full dining service, first class sleeping accommodations, and checked baggage service.”

Station amenities will vary by location, but “will be consistent with Amtrak’s adopted station standards” according to the application.

It also stated, “Fare structure for the new service has not yet been determined, but will likely be consistent with the existing Amtrak fares in Florida.”

In the planning process, the Florida DOT planners wrote, “The potential for high-speed intercity passenger rail service to address Florida’s mobility needs has a long history. The connection between the Jacksonville and Miami markets has been included within the State of Florida’s *2006 Intercity Passenger Rail Vision Plan* and again in the *2009 Florida Rail System Plan*. This plan is an update to the 2006 plan and builds upon previous rail planning efforts, including this project.”

They added, “The plan found that the intercity travel market will grow from slightly over 100 million trips in 2006 to nearly 200 million trips by 2020, and 320 million trips by 2040. This increase will add pressure to existing transportation facilities and call for the development of substantial new infrastructure to meet the demand.”

High-speed rail was also considered in the planning when they looked at the big picture.

“These other rail initiatives include enhanced corridor service between Jacksonville and Orlando, High Speed Rail between Orlando and Tampa and between Orlando and Miami, and collector and distributor systems between the longer intercity passenger rail systems in Tampa. They also stated, “The purpose of the project is to restore long distance passenger rail service along Florida’s east coast and thereby enhance intercity transportation connectivity, mobility and economic development associated with the long distance intercity trains between New York and Miami and the future corridor service trains between Jacksonville and Miami.”

Florida’s east coast between Jacksonville and Miami is densely populated with several major population centers. There is no existing passenger rail service along Florida’s east coast to serve intercity travel needs between these communities, according to the document. In addition, some of the communities have limited or no scheduled airplane or bus service. Passenger rail service on the Florida East Coast corridor

will provide an attractive alternative to automobile travel on a congested I-95, and public transportation service to persons who do not drive.

Station planning was also thought out.

“All stations are also integrated to comprehensively planned bicycle/pedestrian networks that connect stations into urban centers and destinations. The southern terminus will be the MCS at the MIC, which will provide connections to Miami International Airport (MIA) via the MIA Mover (an automated people mover system), Miami’s Metrorail urban rapid rail system, a rental car facility, parking, local bus terminal for MetroBus, and a commuter rail station for existing and future Tri-Rail service.

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