

Titusville touts train station as Amtrak stop

BY DAVE BERMAN • FLORIDA TODAY • June 9, 2010

TITUSVILLE — A century-old building may become the cornerstone for the next big thing in Titusville.

The city is pushing forward with plans to designate its historic downtown train station at 420 Pine St. as the site for an **Amtrak** station for new passenger service. Amtrak service is targeted to begin in three years along Florida's east coast, with two trains a day in each direction. The Titusville City Council unanimously endorsed the plan Tuesday night.

Ed Kindle, president of the Historical Society of North Brevard, said he likes the idea of reusing the station so that "we can bring something historic back to life." The station is one of downtown's older structures and at various times had been used as a passenger station and a freight station, Kindle said.

He and others in the city also like the idea because Titusville would not have to help **fund** construction of a new building for the train station.

"It's a lot less expensive to refurbish than build a new building," Kindle said.

Under current plans, the state would secure federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act **funding** for stations and other capital improvements related to new Amtrak service from Jacksonville to Miami.

Cities with new service, like Titusville, also would provide **funds** toward the project's capital improvements; this would likely be 20 percent of the local costs for the building, platform and related expenses, according to Kim Delaney, growth management coordinator of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. Specific costs have not been determined.

Delaney said the Florida Department of Transportation still is estimating renovation costs vs. the cost of building a new station.

Once constructed, Titusville would be responsible for maintaining the station facilities and amenities.

Five of the six speakers from the public spoke in favor of moving forward with plans for an Amtrak station in Titsville.

However, Richard Ware of Driftwood Drive cautioned the council that the project could drain city funds at a time when Titusville cannot afford it.

Delaney said initial projections estimate that the Amtrak project along the East Florida corridor will create 2,100 jobs in three years and 6,300 jobs in 10 years. She did not have specific figures for Titusville or Brevard County.

She estimates that about 176,000 passengers a year would use the new service along the 351-mile corridor from Jacksonville to Miami.

By supporting the downtown site and the project in general, Titusville now is the furthest along of the eight communities targeted for new Amtrak service, Delaney said.

Titusville Economic Development Director Matt Chesnut said he likes the idea that the downtown station would be cost-effective, compared with new construction.

He said it also "would create some traffic in the downtown area," as people getting off the train check out the stores and restaurants in the business district.

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A second proposed Titusville Amtrak station site, near Space Coast Regional Airport in southern Titusville, also could be useful in the future, Chesnut said, perhaps as a stop for potential high-speed east-west rail service through Florida that could link Port Canaveral with the Orlando and Tampa areas.

Other new Amtrak stations would be in St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Cocoa, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Stuart.

Plans call for St. Augustine and Cocoa stations to be staffed full-time year-round. The Daytona Beach station would be staffed full-time seasonally, during times when there is high tourist volume in the area, such as during spring break periods, auto racing weeks and bike weeks.

The other five new stations would be "caretaker stations," staffed only around the times when trains are due in the station.

One-way ticket prices are likely to be \$39 or less from Titusville to Jacksonville or Miami, based on current prices for routes of similar length, Delaney said. Tickets to intermediate points along the route would cost less.

Contact Berman at 360-1016or
dberman@floridatoday.com.



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Titusville plans to redevelop the historic train station at 420 Pine St., near the back of the old courthouse, to use as an Amtrak stop. (Tim Shortt, FLORIDA TODAY)



Other stops

- Cocoa:** The city is considering sites on Rosa L. Jones Boulevard or Stone Street for a station, and the city council is likely to discuss the issue further this month. The Cocoa station is viewed as a transfer point for people taking cruises out of Port Canaveral.

Melbourne: An advisory board to Melbourne's redevelopment agency last week unanimously voted to recommend that an Amtrak station be located in the city's downtown area, across from Melbourne City Hall. That proposal will be considered by the city council.
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