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Officials, DOT talk Amtrak locations

Public hearing set to discuss depot sites

Posted: June 15, 2010 - 12:04am

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By [MARCIA LANE](#)

Attempts to bring Amtrak rail passenger service to St. Augustine continue, but the preferred depot location on Carrera Street is probably out.

The state Department of Transportation "took issue" with the site, pointing to concerns with "traffic and tightness" problems, the city's planning and building director told St. Augustine city commissioners at

Monday's meeting.

"Technical issues could be a problem," director Mark Knight said.

DOT will present a station location analysis at a public hearing at 11 a.m. Wednesday at the St. Augustine City Hall's Alcazar Room. That's when the DOT will go into the wheres and whys of possible depot sites.

Other potential locations are at what was once the railway station where San Marco intersects with U.S. 1 and at the St. Augustine/St. Johns County airport off U.S. 1 North.

"We may hear some things we might not like to hear," Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline said after the DOT meeting was announced, and Knight gave them the news on the depot.

Knight said from day one city officials have been "trying to work around" technical difficulties with the Carrera Street location.

City officials love the Carrera site because it is across from the U.S. 1 fire station and within easy walking distance of downtown St. Augustine. That made it a natural for tourist use.

St. Augustine would continue to be involved in the location process if the San Marco site is chosen, but wouldn't have a "primary role" if the airport site in the county is selected.

"It's not just the decision of the city, it's the decision of DOT and Amtrak," Knight said of the depot location.

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Earlier this year, St. Augustine commissioners joined other representatives from all the major cities along the east coast to talk about how to get Amtrak passenger rail service on the Florida East Coast Railway tracks from Jacksonville to Miami.

How the Amtrak service will be paid for is uncertain. Originally the plan was to go for federal stimulus dollars, but the government decided to spend those funds for the high-speed rail system between Orlando and Tampa. Now there's a second round of funding, one that requires a 20 percent match. Exactly where the 20 percent match will come from hasn't been decided.

Because plans are on a fast track with the application due in July and funding decisions coming in the fall, applicants don't want any technical difficulties that might slow up the process.

IF YOU GO

Amtrak/FEC Corridor Project

Station location analysis

Public workshop

11 a.m. Wednesday

St. Augustine City Hall Alcazar Room

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Amtrak location(s)

By [watchinourbucks](#) | 06/15/10 - 02:38



NOW we know why the interest in rezoning the Lemberg / Cordova Palms sites seemed to be rubber stamped by the PZA. Amtrak and FDOT appear to be "suggesting" the airport site. Only ONE BCC member questioned the far reaching effects this zoning swap could create.

Place Amtrak at the airport site;

Now, imagine all of the transportation boondoggles this will create, as well as the blighting of adjacent homeowner's properties. If we ever get these tourists to arrive on Amtrak, the majority might scratch their respective heads and wonder " which bureaucratic idiots put the terminal 5-6 miles distant from the city of St. Augustine ?"

'Build it and they will come' philosophy only works with endless tax subsidies. Perhaps our new politicians elected in November could apply some sound business sense in their spending of our declining taxes, and, actually be accountable.

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Taxi Lobbyists

By [paradisef1](#) | 06/15/10 - 02:55



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I seem to remember someone spouting all that benevolence towards the new taxi service years ago.

Are we Still Not promoting St. A as a "walking city"?

And wow, think about if they'd rent a vehicle? The parking monstrosity would maybe cut down it's deficit?

Wow. Do we get it now?

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