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Amtrak, planners want to use Historic Train Station for Vero Beach rail

By Debbie Carson - Jun. 17, 2010, 2:30pm

VERO BEACH -- If Amtrak and regional planners get their way and passenger rail service comes to the Treasure Coast, the Vero Beach Historic Train Station could be the place for trains to stop and pick up travelers.

The Vero Beach City Council is expected to approve the proposal to use the historic site at a special meeting next Thursday, June 24, starting at 9:30 a.m. Amtrak, Florida East Coast Rail and the Florida Department of Transportation, "all feel it's an excellent location," planner Kim Delaney said, "and should work very well for the project."

Councilman Brian Heady asked Delaney if the historic site's use would require a road to be closed to accommodate the passenger rail service.

Delaney said that one lane would have to be closed on 14th Street at US 1 to make room for the train platform needed. She did not go into further detail on the project, noting that she would have a full presentation at the special meeting next week.

The Florida Department of Transportation has submitted a \$268 million grant request to the federal government for funds that would be used to get passenger rail going again between Miami and Jacksonville. The 350-mile ride between the two cities would take less than seven hours by rail.

According to FDOT, if awarded, the rail project would create 2,100 jobs and take three years to complete.

Officials plan to have a stop in Ft. Pierce and another in Melbourne, with Vero Beach between them.

If successful, Delaney said it would be possible for other towns along the route – including Sebastian – to get a train stop. Express service could also be a possibility between nearby cities.

The first phase, however, consists of plans for four trains – two northbound and two southbound.

New stations Amtrak wants:

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- Ft. Pierce
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Existing stations to tie into:

- Miami
- Hollywood
- Ft. Lauderdale
- Deerfield Beach
- Delray Beach
- West Palm Beach
- Jacksonville

Expected Amtrak service:

- Connect Florida East Coast and CSW railways in West Palm Beach
- 2 trains running northbound and southbound – could grow to 4 or 6 trains daily
- Trip between Miami and Jacksonville to take 6 hours

Amtrak Passenger Rail at a Glance:

- **Total Est. Cost:** \$268 million – Federal stimulus
- **Est. Cost/Mile:** \$750,000
- **Miles:** 326
- **No. Stops:** 15
- **Est. Jobs Created:** 2,100
- **Est. Project Construction:** 3 years
- **Est. Annual Ridership:** 175,000-plus

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