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## Vero Beach could move on Amtrak station Thursday

By Ed Bierschenk

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VERO BEACH — Amtrak service could potentially start in fall 2013 at the site of the Historic Train Depot if the City Council passes a resolution in support of the location on Thursday.

The fare for the service is expected to be in line with current Amtrak fares with variation based on distance and time of travel.

For example, an advance ticket between Miami and Jacksonville currently costs \$39, noted Kim DeLaney, growth management coordinator for the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council.

Initially, the plans call for two northbound and two southbound trains geared toward overnight trips rather than commuter day trips. DeLaney, however, said trains could be added for such day trips in the future, possibly as soon as one year after rail service begins.

Vice Mayor Sabe Abell thinks the service will be good for the city.

"I think everybody just has to watch the cost and in the long run it will be beneficial," said Abell.

Abell thought a number of people might be interested in using the service to access Palm Beach International Airport. DeLaney said stops are planned for that airport as well as those in Fort Lauderdale and Miami.

In Vero Beach, the historic train station site north of 23rd Street was the station location preferred by people attending public meetings about proposed sites and seems to have the support of City Council members. Another location receiving support was one at the site of the old Diesel Power Plant south of eastbound State Road 60.

DeLaney said a separate facility will be constructed to serve passengers. She said it was thought that the old historic train station building that houses a museum would be too "delicate" to handle daily passengers. DeLaney noted the museum is not open at all times and the new structure needs to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The need to comply with the American with Disabilities Act also is one of the reasons that the proposed platform for the station will be 1,000 feet long. DeLaney said that a platform of that length would allow everyone on a 10-car train to disembark at the same time.

At last week's meeting of the city's Planning and Zoning Board, one member thought that a platform of that length might not be necessary and the train could make a double stop. DeLaney, however, said Amtrak does not want platforms that will require a double stop. She noted it would add cost and impact the train schedule.

The length of the platform would necessitate the closing of the northern portion of 14th Avenue, which serves as a one-way southwest cut-through from U.S. 1.

The Florida Department of Transportation is working on cost estimates for the eight stations being proposed, said DeLaney. Other stops will include Fort Pierce and Stuart. Jupiter, Jensen Beach and Sebastian have expressed some interest. DeLaney said stations at those communities could be looked at in later years.

DeLaney said the Florida Department of Transportation could make application in July for part of the \$2 1/2 billion in federal stimulus money available through the High-Speed Intercity Rail Program. Money awarded will be in the form of matching grants comprised of 80 percent federal and 20 percent state, local or private funds.

DeLaney said part of Vero Beach's match could consist of the property, lighted parking and utilities already in place at the site, which the city maintains.

Like other transportation systems throughout the world, DeLaney said the new transit service will require subsidies. She said the Florida Department of Transportation has spoken about providing an annual operating subsidy of \$1 million to \$ 5 million for the new service.



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