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Amtrak brings information about train line project to public

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By **EILEEN ZAFFIRO**, Staff writer 

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May 13, 2010 12:05 AM

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DAYTONA BEACH -- Imagine being able to hop aboard a new high-speed train leaving from downtown Daytona Beach, kick back with a thick book for a few hours, and be in Miami by the time you've reached the end of your tome.

That could be reality by 2013 if plans fall into place for a new Amtrak passenger train line running from Jacksonville to Miami.

Most local residents gathered Wednesday night for a meeting on the proposed service seemed to like the idea.

"It makes sense on a lot of different levels," said Anthony Ehrlich of Barberville. "It would reduce road traffic, reduce pollution. To me the biggest plus will be reducing global warming. ... I think it's important for my grandkids."

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But before the 350-mile line that would run through 11 counties has a chance to become reality, lots of pieces need to fall into place.

An environmental study under way to examine the impacts on everything from wetlands to archaeological sites needs to pass muster. State legislators would have to formally get behind the idea.

And an application being submitted in July for federal funding will have to get the thumbs up in October.

Daytona Beach city commissioners already passed a resolution supporting the project in September. But the city still doesn't have an answer to the question asked at the meeting by Government Relations Administrator Hardy Smith: Who will be responsible for costs to build, operate and maintain a new train station?

While the city waits for that answer, local officials are trying to decide where they would want to locate a station. They have five top picks along the tracks just west of Ridgewood Avenue.

The first idea is to put a station east of the Florida East Coast tracks between International Speedway Boulevard and Magnolia Avenue.

A second site is east of the FEC tracks between Orange Avenue and Live Oak Avenue. A third spot is east of the FEC tracks and north of Orange Avenue.

A fourth is west of the FEC line between Live Oak Avenue and Loomis Avenue. And the fifth site is east of the FEC tracks and north of International Speedway Boulevard.

A meeting to talk about those five sites and station design is set for 11 this morning in City Hall in conference room 149-B.

People in the standing-room-only crowd that spilled into the hallway outside the meeting room had questions that ranged from accessibility for people with disabilities to where passengers could buy tickets.

One man asked if the estimated 2,100 jobs that would be created with the project would go to Florida residents.

"Will some of the old railroad stations be included? That's history," one Volusia County woman said.

An official at the meeting said historic stations could be used in three of the cities proposed for stops: Titusville, Cocoa and Vero Beach. Other stops include Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Melbourne, Fort Pierce and Stuart. There are no proposed stops in Flagler County.

The proposed service would provide two southbound and two northbound trains per day. The goal for the total trip time from Jacksonville to Miami would be six hours, with the trains reaching a top speed of 90 mph between stations.

The idea for the passenger line has been around for 10 years, and Amtrak still wants to make it happen, said Michael Latiff, an Amtrak official at the meeting.

"Amtrak is very committed to this project," Latiff said. "We want to make it work."

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Imagine, boarding a plane from "downtown Daytona" and arriving in Miami about 8 hours later (2 layovers) for \$410. Oh, wait, you can already do that. Reduces road traffic. Systems already in place. No stops for more passengers at each city in between (like taking the bus).

We don't have the money for this pipe-dream stuff anymore. Costs to study, bribe, build, maintain, run - no thanks.



dldfl | May 13, 2010 7:44 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

I think train travel north and south is excellant. What about the Sunset Limited from Deland to LA? Those tracks and bridges have been completed several years but must wait for government approval - For what?, the line was regular before Katrina. Three states cannot get approval. Guess what Gulf states they are? Government intervention! This N-S route will be tied up with unnecessary litigation and polical deals well beyond 2013. Automobile travel and plane travel is becoming expensive and a real pain with all kinds of extra charges. At one time I had 180,000 skymiles. I will travel from Deland to Newark for \$204.00 round trip. It takes about 1.5 hours longer than driving and staff is very accomodating. I have never had a bad meal on a train the the rest rooms are cleaned a scheduled bases. How can a train not stop in Flageler?? My rule is if you don't understand something "look where the money is". I am sure a lot of pockets need be filled before we have two major elections.



laser | May 13, 2010 7:59 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

next will be a billion dollar project to bring back the typewriter. the only one's touting this are the one's making money organizing it.



LBOrmond | May 13, 2010 8:06 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Can you imagine I-95 in 20 years if you do a simple extrapolation based on today's traffic. Drive on I-5 oe I-15 in California today and I think you can have some idea of what the future holds and the difficulty we will suffer in getting around the state. I'm for rail service and I'm for in-state commuter air service as well. U. S. Air had one about 25 years ago. I could hop on a plane here on its way to Jacksonville, pick up passengers there and then non-stop on the same plane to Miami. The time for these services is now.

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