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## Railroad-side rally signals support for Flagler station

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By **FRANK FERNANDEZ**, Staff writer

May 2, 2010 12:05 AM

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BUNNELL -- The silver-and-blue Amtrak train slowed down, but it didn't stop as it rumbled through Bunnell on Saturday.

Local officials hope to change that.

They want Amtrak and the state to add a stop in Bunnell, or elsewhere in Flagler County, if a proposed passenger train starts rolling along Florida's East Coast.

"We want a station in Flagler County," Flagler County Commission Chairman George Hanns said after the train passed by. "We don't care where it's at. It has to be in Flagler County ... I think we got the message across."



**Flagler County residents cheer as an Amtrak train cruises through Bunnell Saturday afternoon, hoping to convince officials the city should be a scheduled stop on its Jacksonville to Miami route. N-J | Jim Tiller**

All Aboard

A proposed passenger train line could be carrying

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It certainly appears so. Bunnell officials organized a railroad-side rally Saturday to catch the northbound leg of an Amtrak test train trying out the proposed route. The train had stopped in Daytona Beach -- which is slated to get a stop -- at about 3 p.m., and it was due in Bunnell around 30 minutes later.

As the train approached, the emergency lights started flashing on parked fire engines near the tracks. A parade of American flags fluttered in the wind. Children waved compact versions of Old Glory.

And strung between two massive red, white and blue tow trucks big enough to haul semitrailers were a pair of banners. One read "Welcome to the city of Bunnell. The crossroads of Flagler County" while the other implored "Amtrak. Please stop here."

Dignitaries including Hanns, County Administrator Craig Coffey, Bunnell City Manager Armando Martinez and Bunnell Mayor Catherine Robinson were hoisted into the air on a lift adorned with a pair of American flags. They waved at the passenger train, which was loaded with elected officials, business people and the media. The engineer on the lead locomotive waived back as did the passengers.

The last passenger train to stop in Bunnell was in July 1968, said Bob Pickering, a train enthusiast at the rally. Pickering, who wore an Amtrak T-shirt, said he has ridden Amtrak all over the country.

Pickering and a friend followed this Amtrak test train on its southbound trip from Jacksonville to Miami, taking pictures along the way. Then they chased it north on Saturday. Pickering pointed out that the dome car on this train is the only one Amtrak owns. He also said the last car is the "Presidential Car" used for officials and executives. "What's unique about it is it's got that open ended platform on the back," Pickering said. The two locomotives leading the way were P42DCs manufactured by General Electric and each produces 4,200 horsepower and weighs about 125 tons. "That's basically the workhorse of the Amtrak fleet," Pickering said.

Resuming passenger service with a stop in Bunnell would be an economic shot in the arm to the city, Mayor Catherine Robinson said. The 57-year-old mayor said she remembers when trains still stopped in Bunnell.

"We actually had one when I was a kid. I remember getting on a train and riding to Ormond Beach" Robinson said.

If the route is approved, trains could be running along Florida's East Coast in three years. But the lack of a stop in Flagler County frustrates Hanns, who said he first asked for a train stop in Flagler County on Dec. 14, 2001, in a meeting with then Gov. Jeb Bush. Hanns added that he even has a videotape of the meeting.

"Every opportunity we've had we've been there waving our hand so it's not like we were negligent and didn't pay attention," Hanns said.

But before a stop is added in Flagler County, planners would have to look at its cost effectiveness, U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, said in a telephone interview.

"Everybody wants a stop."

Mica added that the state treasury was a lot healthier in the days of Gov. Bush.

He said communities might have to contribute a local match and many are "hard-pressed" financially. "Amtrak underwrites every ticket at the rate of 54 dollars a ticket, which is a pretty heavy subsidy," Mica said. "You have to have some cost effectiveness to the whole process and see what makes sense."

Mica said officials would have to see if a stop in Flagler County makes sense in the first phase.

"If not, with Flagler's growth, it has excellent potential to be added as a stop, even if it doesn't make it in the first round," Mica said.

Kaylee Crockett, 10, and Kaitlyn Holley, who will turn 4 next week, watched as the train rumbled by. They were there with family members, including their grandfather Paul Jorgensen, 47, of

travelers in three years with stops in Daytona Beach and seven other cities: St. Augustine, Titusville, Cocoa, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Stuart.

The new line would link with existing rail passenger service in South Florida and existing stations in West Palm Beach, Delray Beach, Deerfield Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood and Miami. It would also connect to an existing station in Jacksonville.

But it has no stop planned in Flagler County — a place named after Henry Flagler, a railroad builder whose trains brought people to his hotels in Florida.

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Bunnell. "I think it'd be convenient, mainly I'd use it for vacations," Jorgensen said. "I'd love to take a trip to Miami or up to Washington on a train. I think that would be great."

Lauren Holley, 32, a third-grade teacher at Wadsworth Elementary, liked what she saw of the train. Holley is the mother of Kaylee and the stepmother of Kaitlyn.

"It was cool. It was different than I thought it was going to look because we usually see the freight trains," Holley said. "I was impressed."

Kaylee said the train was "short" but she would like to ride it.

Kaitlyn waved at the train to try to get it to stop. But she had no better luck than Flagler County officials have had so far.

**Photo Gallery**

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nsbnews | May 2, 2010 1:44 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

There was a huge crowd in New Smyrna Beach, too, to see the train. Of course, the Daytona Beach News-Journal wasn't there, but we were. So much for your emphasis on "local" news. But then again, you closed up shop in NSB two years ago.

RKGS | May 2, 2010 2:51 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

About the only person seeing these people associated with the train would have been the engineer. We don't want or need a train service that will end up like the old Greyhound bus line which stopped in every single little town and took excessive length of time to reach its destination. Anyone wanting to go to NSB or Flagler can get off in Daytona and go there from here and if they can't afford that they shouldn't be in Florida or on a train trip in Florida. For many years now anyone in Daytona that wanted to catch Amtrak train had to go all the way to DeLand!

saturn | May 2, 2010 3:55 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

I do agree about stopping on every corner is not a good practice. What about Palm Coast...? ;)

Here is a video of the Bunnell Rally on a Saturday for the Amtrak train to stop:  
<http://palm-coast.net/news/bunnell-begs-amtrak-train-please-stop-here>

 HUGHJASS4 | May 2, 2010 6:01 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

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 Correcto replied to comment from HUGHJASS4 | May 2, 2010 9:15 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

"Frakking"? Really?

 RKGS replied to comment from Correcto | May 2, 2010 3:44 PM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Correcto: This was a "dirty" word that would not have been printed if he hadn't of changed the spelling. Look at his spell incorect though it may be and with your knowledge of English you should be able to figure out what word he meant to say. You have to sometimes speak in code at this site otherwise your thoughts wouldn't be printed and would be deleted as obscene or offensive, etc

 Iuna | May 2, 2010 8:09 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

I live in Flagler County and I don't believe we need a train station here. We can travel 30 miles either north or south to utilize the stations in St. Augustine or Daytona. That is good enough.

I think stopping in every crossroads town makes the railway system ineffecient.

I'm not a big fan of traveling long distances via rail because from personal experience I've learned that it's quicker to drive. Space the stops 50 miles or more apart so there are less stops, the tickets are more affordable and the travel time is quicker.

 czossima | May 2, 2010 9:29 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Hey Frankie..Why don't you try to win a Pulitzer prize and cover real news? Online every county got millions of dollars in ARRA funds. No jobs. Where did the money go? btw, You might want to do a story on how millions of illegal aliens are milking Florida's DCF programs...by endlessly giving birth here on Florida soil and sucking the food stamps, TCA, and medicaid dry. Happy Cinco de Mayo

 Wizard | May 2, 2010 10:49 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Flagler needs to provide parking for the new station, which means Bunnell is out of the question. Further north in the area of Matanzas parkway and US 1 would be the best location. The area could become an attraction to the many on the train as a destination, if it had an inside shopping mall with direct access to the station. Flagler Station Mall would be a theme mall dedicated to Henry Flagler, and the railroads of history.

 darwin | May 2, 2010 10:57 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

How much is this proposed boondoggle going to cost us taxpayers?

 honest | May 2, 2010 11:07 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

A modern train stop in Bunnell is like having a Tiffany's on their MAin ST. This is a backwoods redneck town where people still ride donkeys! What do you think Amtrak is going to deliver you, a toothbrush for your one tooth. lol

 DT&I4ever | May 2, 2010 11:07 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Flagler, stop trying to jump on the band wagon and forget it. For Amtrak to be profitable, it needs long haul routes with few stops. And Flagler county does not have, per capita, enough riders to support a stop in Bunnell. Get over it.

 SaltH2O | May 2, 2010 12:07 PM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Regardless of where they put the stops, Amtrak always has been and always will be a taxpayer subsidized mode of transportation. As John Mica says in the article, every ticket is subsidized by \$54, a Pew Research study last year put the figure at \$32. Amtrak received \$1.3 billion in taxpayer funding last year. The truth is if you had to pay what it actually costs for a rail ticket no one would travel by train. Rail should be used for the transportation of goods and commodities. For people it's cheaper in real dollars to travel by air. Why? Competition.

 hemi2003 | May 2, 2010 2:37 PM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

As a retired 30 yr. employee of the FEC Railway y'all be careful what ya ask for.....ya jess might get it!!!!!!

 oy vey | May 2, 2010 4:32 PM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Why do you even need to build a station these train can stop anywhere pour a slab of cement along side the tracks the train stops and the conductor drops the steps and you step off . and who's getting on a train in bunnell? unless they want to open a crack stand so when the train stops passengers can make a buy. Willoughby! next stop willoughby !

 mrjinx | May 4, 2010 7:31 AM | [Reply](#) | [Report as Offensive](#)

Bunnell a great city to Bypass. Is the rundown habitat for humanity going to be the train station, or maybe one of those run down homes along the tracks. Wait a minute i know jimmy flynt's car garage

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