

Phase 2 Kick-off Information Booklet 2009

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The environmental review process is beginning for Phase 2 of the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis (SFECCCTA) multi-phased study. This booklet is designed to help you understand the early scoping/planning process being undertaken by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and describe the proposed project, briefly identify alternative alignments, modal technologies, transit stations, and operations and maintenance facilities that will be evaluated in the environmental study.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Phase 2 of the SFECCCTA will continue the alternatives analysis (AA) initiated in Phase 1 of the study. AA studies are corridor-level analyses of a range of alternatives designed to address locally identified mobility issues in a transportation corridor. This study is designed to evaluate passenger transit improvements in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties, Florida within a study area generally centered on the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway from Downtown Miami, through Ft. Lauderdale's Central Business District (CBD) to the Town of Jupiter in northern Palm Beach County. Phase 2 of the study proposes to evaluate modal technologies,

transit station locations and alignments through areas characterized by heavily congested roadways and transit-dependent populations. The environmental screening and AA conducted during Phase 2 will be documented in various technical memorandums and culminate in a Detailed Alternatives Analysis/ Environmental Screening Report (AA/ESR). At the conclusion of Phase 2, one or more Locally-Preferred Alternative(s) (LPA) will be recommended for further refinement in Phase 3 of the SFECCCTA study. Individual LPAs may then be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for federal assistance in the form of New Starts funding as described in the public transportation statute: the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). In addition, the LPAs will ideally be adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) into their Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) as well as a plan for financing the project's capital and operating costs. Due to the timing of the LRTP development and approval cycle in 2009 and the current project schedule, the MPOs may have to consider the SFECCCTA as an amendment to their 2009-approved LRTPs.

PROJECT HISTORY

1989 – The State of Florida acquired a 72-mile section of the CSXT rail corridor from CSXT Railroad. This section is now called the South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC) and is used by Tri-Rail, Amtrak and CSXT. CSXT retained a freight easement. The FEC Railway was considered but was not available from FEC Industries at that time.

1993 – FDOT completed a Transit Corridors Transitional Analysis which analyzed, in broad terms, the feasibility of various proposed transit corridors in Miami-Dade County, including the Northeast Corridor, which extended from Downtown Miami to the Broward County line along the FEC corridor.

2002 – Miami-Dade County initiated a consultant selection process for the performance of an AA of the Northeast Corridor in 2002. This corridor segment is 13.6 miles in length.

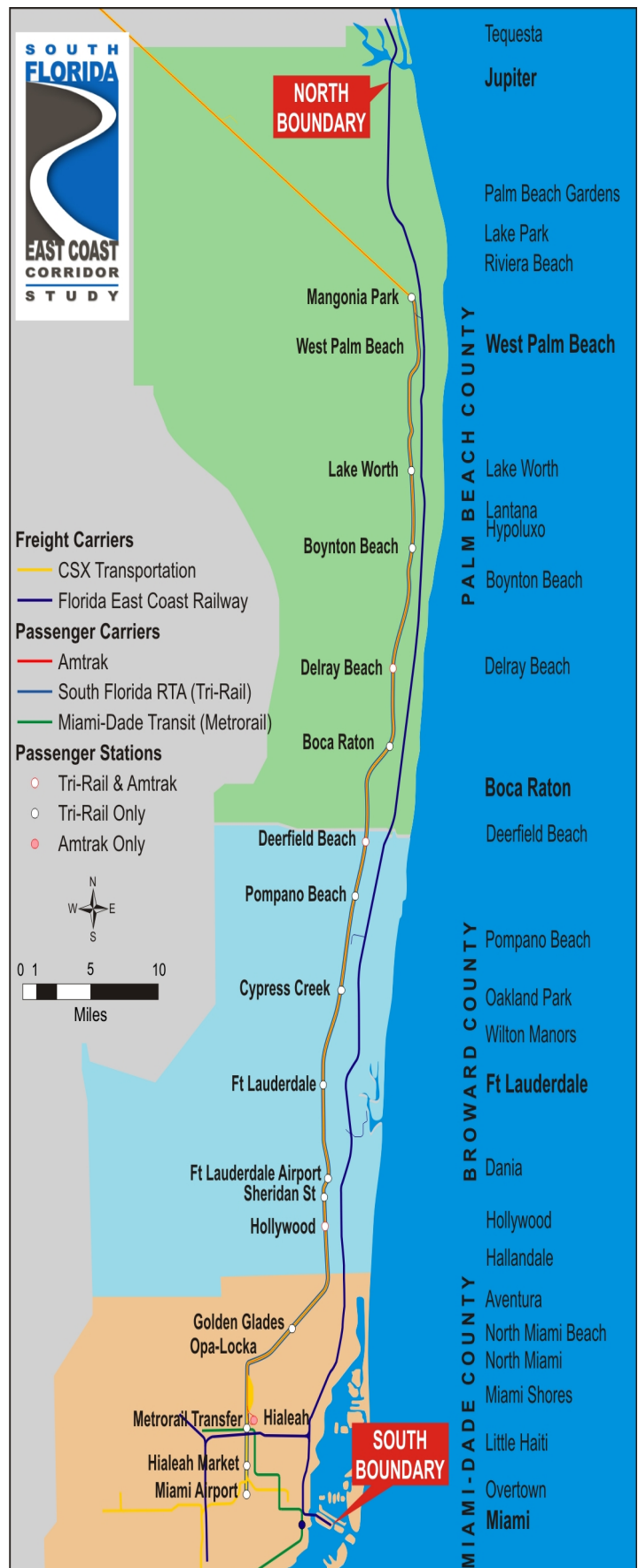
2003 – The Florida Legislature established Florida's Strategic Intermodal System, a statewide network of high priority transportation facilities making up the core of Florida's transportation system.

2003 – The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) began the Jupiter Corridor Alternatives Analysis. This corridor is 15.7 miles in length.

2004 – FEC Industries, the owner of the FEC Railway Corridor, requested the SFRTA to coordinate an overarching regional study of the entire corridor in the three counties of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach. FEC Industries indicated that it would not be possible for them to consider public use of the FEC right-of-way for transit when the corridor is being planned in a piecemeal way in individual, uncoordinated segments by multiple sponsoring agencies with different project implementation schedules. Meetings involving the SFRTA, the three MPOs, Miami-Dade County, and the FDOT were held and all agreed that FDOT District IV would be the lead agency for this project, including contract award, and all independent planning in the corridor would be discontinued and merged into one comprehensive study.

2005 – FDOT initiated the SFECCTA study with Elected Officials/Agency Kickoff Meetings held December 12th (Miami-Dade County), December 15th (Broward County), and December 19th, 2005 (Palm Beach County). The study limits extend approximately 85 miles from Downtown Miami to the Town

Project Study Area



of Jupiter and through Miami-Dade and Broward counties and into northern Palm Beach county.

2006 – FDOTs Advance Notification (AN) was mailed out on January 23, 2006 and was made available on the project website. On March 28, 2006 a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published to prepare a Tiered Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and held public and agency scoping meetings from April 17 to April 24, 2006 (details also on project website). The FDOT published a notice of the public/scoping meetings in the Florida Administrative Weekly on April 14, 2006.

2006 – A series of public workshops were held to gather input on alternatives alignment, modal technologies, and transit station locations.

2006 – A Public Hearing was held at three different venues throughout the study area on November 8, 9 and 15, 2006 to inform the public of the results of the Tier 1 Draft PEIS and offer them the opportunity to comment on the document and/or project.

2008 – The SFECCTA study continues as a multi-phased early scoping - Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process.

EARLY SCOPING PROCESS

FDOT initiated the SFECCTA study as a Tiered PEIS transit study with FTA as lead federal agency. However, while processing the Tier 1 Final PEIS, FTA and FDOT agreed that the process followed during Tier 1 (Phase 1) was consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) early scoping process. Early scoping is a NEPA process that is particularly useful in situations where, as here, the proposed action or LPA have not been identified and multiple transportation alternatives are under consideration in a broad corridor. As a result, FDOT will discontinue the pursuit of a Tiered PEIS process and continue the AA process as a multi-phased early scoping - ETDM process. Under this approach, the Tier 1 Final PEIS will be considered an interim planning report and, as such, has been renamed the Final Conceptual AA/ESR. An early scoping notice announcing the availability of the Final Conceptual AA/ESR and the initiation of Phase 2 was published in the Federal Register on January 13, 2009 and in the Florida Administrative Weekly on January 16, 2009.

PROJECT PURPOSE & NEED

“The eastern cities of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties are witnessing a surge in urban redevelopment as people and businesses continue to migrate to coastal Southeast Florida. The existing and proposed highway capacity network within the SFECCTA corridor will not be able to accommodate the travel demand market evident and projected in this north-south corridor. Due to highway capacity constraints, commuting times in the region are expected to triple over the year 2000 levels by the year 2020. Therefore, regional, premium, “fixed guideway” transit system improvements are needed along the SFECCTA corridor, generally defined by the alignment of the FEC Railway, to improve mobility and reduce delay between the CBDs, major economic centers, transportation hubs and residential communities. The SFECCTA study and Transit Feasibility/AA will identify alternate modes of transportation focused on providing increased capacity for passenger mobility as well as addressing the anticipated increase in travel demand along this highly urbanized, traffic congested eastern portion of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties, Florida.”

The **purpose** of the proposed action is to develop a reliable, predictable and integrated system of passenger transit service to link the region’s CBDs, seaports, and major travel generators such as regional hospitals, entertainment districts, employment centers, and colleges/universities. Such a system would enhance the area’s transit network by interfacing with existing mass transit services within the tri-county area.

The **need** for the proposed action is as follows:

Meet the demand for transportation services and mobility

- The highest level of highway congestion in the tri-county area is concentrated east of I-95 along the study corridor. Interstate-95 and US-1 are the only two continuous north-south roadways in the corridor and both experience severe congestion throughout the day. A reliable transit alternative is needed in the area to relieve north-south travel congestion.

- The existing Level of Service (LOS) is poor along the major north-south highways, particularly during the peak hours where 70% of the roadways in the study area are operating at LOS D, E or F and 31% are at LOS F. Increasing highway capacity to alleviate congestion is impractical due to high infrastructure cost, limited availability of right-of-way, community and environmental impacts. The FEC Railway corridor is the last remaining transportation corridor in the area with underutilized capacity. Additionally, the FEC Railway corridor is most likely to fulfill the transportation needs in the area with less impact to the surrounding communities and environment compared to roadway corridors.
- The area's highest concentration of highway trip producers and attractors are along, and frequently within walking distance of the FEC Railway corridor. For example, an Origin/Destination bus survey of 19 north-south routes indicated that 20% of the riders, on 10 of the routes, had an origin and destination within ½ mile of the FEC Railway and over 50% of the riders on 15 of the routes had an origin or destination within ½ miles of the FEC Railway. A similar survey of auto users along I-95 revealed that over 33% of surveyed auto users had an origin or destination within ½ mile of the FEC Railway.
- The greatest existing and forecast (2030) employment and population densities in the region are currently located within the study corridor. Approximately 20% of the tri-county area's population is located within the study area and approximately 27% is employed within the study area. Transit service in this study area is needed to service both the population and employment growth in the region.

Meet system linkage needs

- Tri-Rail currently does not provide a direct link to major employment and population centers, therefore access to these centers is limited to other transportation means. The average north-south trip length within the SFECCTA study area is approximately 20 miles. A need exists for passenger service along the FEC Railway to link employment centers and expand the existing transit

service network by providing multiple service opportunities for differing trip lengths.

- The proposed FEC Railway improvements could link passenger and freight service opportunities between and along the SFRC/CSXT Railway.

Meet the social demands and economic development opportunities in South Florida

- The study area, most notably within Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, has a large transit-dependent population. The existing transportation system is limited in offering these individuals convenient access to employment, medical, educational and other social/cultural centers due to a discontinuous transit network.
- Community Redevelopment Areas, Enterprise Zones, and Empowerment Zones are programs, created by governments, designed to encourage development/redevelopment and investment opportunities in economically depressed communities suffering from blighted conditions, low productivity, as well as limited business and employment opportunities. The proposed project would support these efforts and further encourage development near transit stations within the study area consistent with these program goals.
- New premium transit service would provide a safer mode of travel within the study area compared to vehicular travel.

PROJECT GOALS & OBJECTIVES (see next page)

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Improve mobility and access for personal travel and goods movement.

- Expand transit options to accommodate future travel demand in the corridor and serve major transportation hubs, employment, medical, retail, educational, and entertainment centers, and residents in the region.
- Provide regional transit options that improve travel time reliability for people and goods and results in travel time savings. Integrate the proposed transit options with existing and planned transit in the region.
- Integrate the proposed transit options with existing and planned freight transport and potentially intercity passenger transport located within or traversing the study area.
- Provide for seamless connections to all modes of transportation including bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Provide regional access and mobility improvements for minority, transportation disadvantaged and low income groups.
- Support goods movement in the corridor with higher capacity and connectivity.

Goal 2: Coordinate corridor transportation investments to contribute to a seamless, integrated multi-modal transportation network.

- Invest in infrastructure, facilities and services that improve connectivity, transfer and circulation in the region.
- Coordinate and integrate with other regional rail, mass transit, and roadway projects.
- Maintain working relationships with transportation partners, including the FTA, FDOT, Regional Transportation Authority, MPOs, Counties, Cities, Regional Planning Councils, Business Groups, Florida East Coast Industries, and other stakeholders.
- Avoid or minimize duplication of premium transportation services.
- Coordinate with other transportation and land use planning efforts that are supportive of transit options.
- Accommodate a proposed greenway along the corridor.

Goal 3: Encourage the implementation of transit supportive development.

- Locate transit stations where higher density development exists or can readily be accommodated and near activity centers.
- Complement and support economic development/redevelopment and potential joint development activities that include a mix of uses and affordable housing, within the study area.
- Establish a transit improvement that will contribute, guide and support the urban, transit-oriented scale envisioned for the various downtowns, commercial corridors and abutting residential areas.
- Facilitate creation of transit-supportive and context sensitive development guidelines, zoning and policies.
- Provide transit that complements the scale and character of neighborhoods, housing, and business developments.

Goal 4: Minimize adverse impacts to the community and local businesses.

- Minimize or mitigate adverse local traffic, parking and safety impacts.
- Minimize or mitigate adverse noise and vibration impacts.
- Avoid or minimize adverse impacts to minority and low income communities.
- Minimize adverse right-of-way and physical impacts to established communities and businesses.
- Optimize the use of existing infrastructure and transportation corridors for expansion of transit.

Goal 5: Preserve and enhance the environment.

- Minimize or mitigate adverse impacts to existing environmental resources.
- Preserve historical and cultural resources.
- Provide transit options that reduce traffic congestion and energy consumption.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Improve regional air quality by promoting alternative transportation modes and reducing auto emissions.

Goal 6: Provide a cost-effective transportation solution to meet identified travel needs consistent with the availability of implementation and operating funds.

- Provide new transit service that is financially feasible with existing and new revenue sources.
- Meet FTA goals as they relate to cost effectiveness.
- Ensure that the investment strategy for the corridor will be eligible to receive federal funding.
- Optimize transportation funding resources and obtain local financial support.
- Explore lower technology cost solutions, where applicable, that can be upgraded over time to a higher transit technology solution based on changing needs.

Goal 7: Improve safety conditions for vehicular traffic and pedestrians.

- Plan transit stations consistent with applicable FRA and FTA safety guidelines.
- Plan safe and effective corridor crossing locations for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Plan rail freight improvements consistent with applicable FRA regulations.
- Minimize overall modal conflicts.

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES

Due to increasing highway capacity constraints throughout South Florida other mobility options, such as premium transit, must be considered. Examples of premium transit services are those such as Tri-Rail, Miami-Dade's Metrorail, light rail transit, and bus rapid transit. The FEC Railway corridor presents a unique opportunity to develop and implement a regional passenger transportation service within an existing right-of-way. San Diego, Saint Louis, Washington, D.C., Houston, Baltimore, and Salt Lake City are among the cities across the nation that have examined the use of existing rail corridors and parallel streets for developing new premium transit service corridors. This concept has already been applied in South Florida with the acquisition of portions of the former CSX Railroad, now the SFRC used by Tri-Rail.

For Phase 2 of the study, alternatives will generally be made up of five primary components or elements. These are: alignment (north/south route); east/west connections; modal technology; transit stations, and operations and maintenance (O&M) facilities. The decision relating to the location of the service depends on right-of-way availability, adjacent land uses, future freight demand and capacity for passenger service, and others. The decision on the type of technology may be based on the varying characteristics of each technology, including capacity, the desires of the community, and the available alignments. Additional criteria to consider when choosing a technology are capital cost, operating costs, service distance, station spacing, service frequency, power source, speeds, right-of-way requirements, vehicle life, accessibility, maneuverability, integration with other transportation modes, and flexibility.

Alignment Alternatives to be Considered

For Phase 2 of the SFECCTA study the following general alignments will be considered:

- FEC Railway corridor
- I-95 (in northern Palm Beach County only)

East/West Connections to be Considered

East/west connections between the FEC Railway alignment and the SFRC will be explored in order to interface the proposed transit improvements with existing passenger transit services such as Tri-Rail. Connecting to existing transit services will serve to

enhance South Florida's transportation network. Currently, east/west connections to be explored include a north-end connection to extend Tri-Rail service beyond West Palm Beach, a Pompano connection in Broward County, a Little River connection in Miami-Dade County, and possibly other connections.

Modal Technology/Transit Services Alternatives to be Considered

Determining what mode(s) will be selected for the SFECCTA will be a major decision for this phase of the project. The study may determine that a single technology may be used along the entire corridor or a combination of modal technologies may be more appropriate. Issues that will aid in this decision include the predicted number of passengers (ridership), affects on adjacent communities and environmental impacts. During Phase 2 of the study the following five modes will be considered.

1) **Light Rail Transit (LRT)** is a flexible transportation mode which consists of a system of lightweight passenger rail cars operating singly or in short, two- or three-car trains on fixed rails. This mode can operate in a dedicated right-of-way or in street traffic on tracks embedded in the street much like a streetcar. However, LRT cannot share tracks with freight or Tri-Rail. Trains may be electrically powered or run on diesel engines. They may attain speeds up to 65 MPH and carry as many as 60 to 100 passengers per car.



2) **Regional Rail (RGR)** trains can carry from two to 12 cars and typically use diesel engines but may also be electrically propelled. These trains comply with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations and therefore may share tracks with freight and Tri-Rail. RGR can operate at speeds of 60 - 80 MPH and carry as many as 120 seated passengers per car. A regional example of RGR is Tri-Rail.



3) **Rail Rapid Transit (RRT)** employs trains that are self-propelled on a dedicated right-of-way separate from freight and Tri-Rail. These trains are electrically propelled, on elevated tracks and may carry 200 passengers per car (seated and standing). RRT trains may be four, six or eight cars long. They are characterized by rapidly accelerating passenger rail cars capable of obtaining speeds of 65 MPH. A regional example of RRT is Metrorail in Miami-Dade County which could function as an extension of Metrorail.



4) **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** is a bus service that usually operates within a service corridor, or dedicated right-of-way, with a reduced number of stops through traffic signal management favoring the buses. However, BRT may also operate in HOV lanes, expressways, or ordinary streets. These buses operate on diesel but some may use advanced hybrid electric

technology. One regional example of BRT is the South Dade Busway.



5) **Regional Bus (RGB)** is a longer distance, limited stop bus service operating in street traffic. These buses are typically diesel powered and may carry as many as 60 seated passengers.



Station Types and Locations to be Considered

The SFECCTA corridor will service approximately 60 transit stations within the study area. These transit stations will be affected by, and have an affect on, the surrounding land use. As such, transit station designs will to some degree be influenced by the surrounding land use and community and the type of service and access that will be needed. For Phase 2 of the study, eight primary station types have been identified.

They are:

- City Center Stations
- Town Center Stations
- Neighborhood Stations
- Employment Center Stations
- Local Park & Ride Stations
- Regional Park & Ride Stations
- Airport/Seaport Stations
- Special Event Venue Station

Details on each of the station types may be found in a separate technical memorandum available as a hand-out during the kick-off meeting.

Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Facilities

The requirements for and location of O&M facilities are heavily dependent upon the choices eventually made concerning alignment and modal technology. Generally, O&M facilities are best located at the ends of service alignments. However, there are other factors that come into play when ultimately deciding where to place O&M facilities such as the availability and cost of land, transit network design, environmental impacts and the surrounding land use.

Transportation System Management & No Build Alternatives

To satisfy FTA New Starts (49 USC 5309) alternatives analysis requirement, FDOT will also evaluate options for transportation improvements in the study area that do not involve significant capital investment including Transportation System Management (TSM) improvements and the implications of taking no action (i.e., the "no build" alternative).

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS & TERMS

AA	Alternatives Analysis
AN	Advance Notification
CBD	Central Business District
ESR	Environmental Screening Report
ETDM	Efficient Transportation Decision Making
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FEC	Florida East Coast
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
LPA	Locally Preferred Alternative
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PEIS	Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
SFECCTA	South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis
SFRTA	South Florida Regional Transportation Authority

SUBSEQUENT STEPS

Phase 3 of the study would refine the results of the Phase 2 corridor analysis and develop detailed sub-corridor sectional LPAs. Sub-dividing the corridor would allow individual sections to be advanced independently based on local commitments to funding

and/or a different level of 'transit readiness' within the corridor. At this stage, the technical analysis and public/agency involvement would be advanced to a level necessary to assist decision makers in reaching consensus regarding independent LPAs and as required by NEPA. The transportation potential of each section will be investigated and evaluated independently, as well as in context with the longer range, regional 2035 corridor vision.

CONTACT US:

The FDOT is committed to public participation knowing it is an essential and vital part of this effort. FDOT is working to ensure that members of the public and participating/reviewing agencies have a voice in the planning process. A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) has been developed for this study to encourage public participation throughout the study. Opportunities for ongoing involvement by the public and agency staff include:

- Public/Agency Meetings (including these Kick-off Meetings)
- Newsletters
- Project Website: <http://www.sfecstudy.com>
- Project mailing list (to subscribe visit project website)
- Public Workshops
- Public Hearing

These Kick-off meetings are designed to afford the public and agencies with an early opportunity to learn about the study's purpose and process, and to encourage communication with FDOT and the consultant team about any issues, concerns or ideas. FDOT will accept written comments any time during Phase 2 of the study. Comments may be mailed directly to the FDOT Project Manager or through the project website.

Contact:

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