



MEETING SUMMARY

TO: Scott Seeburger & Project Record

FROM: Aviva Baer & Odalys Delgado

DATE: April 17, 2006

REFERENCE: South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis (SFECCTA)
Financial Project ID: 417031-1-22-01

SUBJECT: Public Kickoff/Scoping Meeting

ATTENDEES: Refer to sign-in sheets (available upon request)

On Monday, April 17, 2006, the first Scoping/Public Kick-Off Meeting for the SFECCTAS was held in the Broward Library Main Branch at 100 South Andrews Avenue in Downtown Fort Lauderdale, Fl. Approximately 401 invitations were mailed to public officials, and a random mailing of 100,000 was completed by Rapid Mail utilizing the County's GIS list.

Approximately 137 people, including staff, were present for the first meeting from 3:30 pm to 6:00pm and 52 people were present for the second meeting which ran from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

Part I: Public review of project illustrations

Prior to the formal presentations, project maps were exhibited in the rear of the room and staff members were available to assist the public in examining the aerials and exhibits and answer any questions regarding the project during this "open house" period. The meeting handouts included the scoping booklet, agenda, Advance Notification, and fact sheets. These materials were also provided in Spanish and a Spanish translator was available.

There was a formal presentation by Scott Seeburger, Carlos Cejas and Rob McMullen. Mr. Seeburger made concluding remarks and opened up the meeting to comments and questions.

Part II: Meeting (First session)

At the 3:30 p.m. meeting some of the following elected/public officials or their representatives were present:

- Commissioner Keith Wasserstrom, City of Hollywood
- Commissioner Beam Furr, City of Hollywood

- Assistant City Manager Ray Lubomski, City of Oakland Park
- Commissioner Christine Teel, City of Fort Lauderdale

1. Welcome

Ric Katz opened the formal part of the meeting at 3:30 pm by introducing FDOT Project Manager Scott Seeburger.

2. Introductions

Scott Seeburger asked elected officials to stand so they could be recognized, then explained the format of the meeting and said there would be two presentations.

3. PowerPoint Presentation

The project PowerPoint was narrated by Scott Seeburger, Carlos Cejas and Robert McMullen and will be posted on the project website.

4. Open discussion

Betty Horvath, a resident of Fort Lauderdale, asked why it was necessary to build another rail line. She said she couldn't see pouring \$1 billion into transit along the FEC Railway when Tri-Rail is already in place, \$400 million had just been spent on double-tracking, and Tri-Rail and the FEC are only five miles apart. She also questioned whether there would be more traffic tie-ups if commuter trains cross major roads.

She said money would be better spent providing east-west connections with feeder buses and more frequent Tri-Rail trains. She said Tri-Rail is underutilized now, even though the trains run more often on time. She said if people don't ride Tri-Rail they won't ride transit along the FEC. She also noted that if freight had priority on the CSX that would probably be the case on the FEC. She mentioned the noise factor from train whistles.

Joseph Platnick, an Aventura resident, said he is concerned about safety along at-grade crossings and is involved with an organization called "Project Whistle Stop" which believes in the creation of quiet zones. He said crossings should be elevated or the FEC railway should be moved since there are many accidents when people go around the guard arm. He also asked why trains are being considered when the goal of the Citizens Independent Transportation Trust is to have synchronized traffic lights and trains would block traffic. He commented that planners had ideas already laid out and hadn't asked the public what they would prefer.

Scott Seeburger responded that there is no predisposition towards a solution, but that the study team was looking at what will move people best. He said moving all freight off the FEC Railway would not be easy, especially because the regions' three seaports rely heavily on it and the FEC doesn't want to jeopardize their business, which is good for South Florida.

Mr. Platnick added that if there is a median at a crossing, people don't go around the lowered guard arm.

Gaylord Wood, a land use lawyer, described himself as a super-commuter. He said if passenger service had been profitable on the FEC, the railway wouldn't have suspended it. He said that in order to get transit on the FEC, two Florida statutes, §361-025 and §361.03, would need to be repealed to allow FDOT to gain eminent domain over the railroad right-of-way. He said FDOT would need to purchase the entire system.

Beam Furr, Hollywood Commissioner, asked if there was room for double-tracking on the FEC and was told there was. He said Hollywood is zoning for Transit Oriented Development. He asked if the cost of the project had been determined and Scott Seeburger said it had not as yet.

Cara Campbell of the Broward County Green Party said houses near the track belong to low income families and she was concerned that they would be displaced. She said if transit brought about redevelopment it would make it difficult for people to find replacement homes because of the lack of affordable housing. She supported Tri-Rail since it goes through mostly commercial and industrial areas and there is little impact to residential areas. She said the FEC transit project would be wasteful and destructive.

Rob McMullen responded that planners are looking at the issues of relocation. He said there are checks and balances in the NEPA process which require it. Carlos Cejas said environmental justice considers providing transit a good thing for lower income populations.

Dolores Farqueharson of Pompano Beach said if the project takes a mile on either side of the railway all those people would lose their homes to condemnation.

Dan Glickman of Deerfield Beach asked if during the first six or seven months of the study there had been any surprises. Scott Seeburger said there had been none, but he was surprised at how impatient some citizens were to get transit service.

Mr. Glickman asked if the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) model is new, and if the study team has used it so far and sees any problems going forward. Scott Seeburger said that the process is set up to streamline activity, and this is one of the first in District 4 to be using it. He said doing environmental work and alternatives analysis takes time and agency personnel change. Rob McMullen said FDOT is breaking new ground with this study and they don't know how well ETDM will work, so they are dual-tracking the study and doing it both the ETDM and the traditional way.

John Fiore is an urban planner with the county, formerly vice-mayor of Wilton Manors. He is supportive of the study because Metrorail doesn't go to key areas where people want and need to go. He said Tri-Rail, which was a temporary reliever during I-95 construction, also isn't useful for short runs. He said transit along the SFECC would

connect every downtown in South Florida. He thinks the technology should be more like light rail with more stops.

Terence MacCaffrey of Hollywood agreed that an elevated line was the ultimate solution at grade crossings, which would be similar to the Long Island Railroad.

Riva Saker lives near the Golden Glades and prefers to use mass transit because of the price of gasoline. She expressed concern about the two-mile wide corridor and asked if all properties within it would be subject to eminent domain. She then asked how many tracks there would be within the two miles. Scott Seeburger explained that the two-mile corridor was just the area within which several alignments were being considered and all properties would not be taken.

Alfredo Peraza asked if transit would reduce truck traffic and was told that FDOT would explore ways of taking trucks off the roadway and moving that freight to the FEC line.

Doug Matthews of Pompano Beach asked what could be built into a transit system on the FEC line so trains would run on time. He said if it required double-tracking, that should be done. Scott Seeburger said the issue with Tri-Rail and the CSX is which has priority. He said one of the conditions of putting transit on the FEC would be to agree on who has dispatch control.

Mr. Matthews then asked if Tri-Rail and the proposed service would be managed as one system. Scott Seeburger said it depended on what was implemented.

Mr. Matthews said Tri-Rail should be included in this study, and the response was that it would be included although at this time there was no way to know the management details. Mr. Matthews also commented that Tri-Rail doesn't go to any of the three major airports. He said a system needs to run to the airports and between major cities on one technology without passengers needing to change vehicles. He said if this is done, the system will be successful.

Gwendolyn Clarke-Reed of Pompano Beach said planners should look to where the ridership will come. She said those people who live near the CSX tracks are the ones who need the service. She said there is no station in Deerfield Beach on the display maps but that city needs one.

Dan Glickman said the idea is to get ridership now on buses and get the political will now for a system. He said elected officials need to do something to expand ridership now.

Michael Smith expressed the hope that this study will include intercity rail traffic and will include connections to state activity centers like Orlando and Jacksonville. He said service should be complementary to Amtrak and Tri-Rail.

Andrew Dancidu of Deerfield Beach said this study is putting the cart before the horse. He said first there needs to be more transit ridership and city officials should work to implement service that people want to use. Scott Seeburger said that there are different county transit agencies in this region and that the issue raised by the speaker falls under the aegis of the transit agencies.

6 PM SESSION

This meeting began in the same manner as the first session. Following are comments made by attendees:

Juan Carlos Valls asked about the budget for the project. Carlos Cejas said there was no budget now, and that it would depend on the technology.

Walt Jolliff, a member of the Broward MPO Community Involvement Roundtable, said he supports the efforts of the study. What he thinks is lacking with transit so far is that planners didn't recognize the nature of South Florida. He said ridership fails because transit doesn't address where people want to go. He said what is missing in studies is who are the people who will use the system. Carlos Cejas said surveys on the transit routes along the corridor will help planners with this study. He said the study team is also gathering information on land use and employment density.

Scott Park, president of the Tarpon River Civic Association, said incorporating greenways into the study is very important. He asked how the balance of ridership and freight is going to be addressed. Carlos Cejas said the study team was aware of the proposed greenways in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties and they will be taken into account during the study. Carlos Cejas also said that balancing freight and passenger rail is part of the study. He said Tier II will include a more detailed analysis. He noted that most decisions will be made by the three MPOs as to what they would like to see developed.

Keith London of Hallandale said that city just did a traffic study. He asked if there is a way of taking the money from this study to alleviate congestion there.

Mike Spear said he appreciates this effort. However, he has some reservations about how to balance service without adding more tracks. He said adding another system along the FEC would put it within one mile of Tri-Rail in some places. He said east-west movement is where help is needed and that's why Tri-Rail is underutilized. Scott Seeburger said we can expect a 50% increase in population within the next 25 years but the best we can do is improve traffic flow by 12%. He said most demographic studies anticipate the population growth to the east. He said a system in addition to Tri-Rail will be needed. Scott Seeburger said that in the future there will also be more east-west transit service.

Pablo Lalaguna said mass transit in South Florida isn't efficient. He said more connections are needed. He said we live in an automotive culture and need to figure out

how to educate those people to make them part of the system. Scott Seeburger said when auto traffic becomes so difficult, transit becomes more attractive.

Juan Carlos Valls said in other parts of the country employers create incentives so their employees will use transit. Scott Seeburger said we have Gold Coast Commuter Services which is funded by FDOT and encourages ride sharing. He said things will change when there is more traffic congestion and driving gets more difficult.

John Stanecki of the National Association of Railroad Passengers said the biggest mistake would be to have different technologies. He said whatever service is developed should be seamless.

Vicki Eckels of Fort Lauderdale said she has ridden Tri-Rail since she moved to South Florida in 2001. She thinks this study is reinventing the wheel, as we already have the other system. She asked what system that provides frequency and convenience will make people get out of their cars. She said a huge investment had been made in Tri-Rail so people should be brought to that line. Carlos Cejas said Tri-Rail doesn't go where there is the greatest concentration of population and jobs. He said a SFECC system would connect the downtowns of the coastal cities. Ms. Eckels said if a system is put on the FEC Railway, it needs to run frequently.

Andy Ziffer questioned the statement that the study corridor runs through areas of lower income. He said where mass transit works, there is adequate parking for those who use it. He wondered if funds couldn't be put to better use. Carlos Cejas said the NEPA process requires looking at parking. He said zoning may need to be changed to require less parking with development. Mr. Ziffer said instead of two levels of parking in highrise buildings, 25% of the units could be affordable housing.

John Olinzock of Wilton Manors said municipalities don't have the staff to apply for funding. Carlos Cejas said transit funding is difficult to get and there will need to be a dedicated source.

John Howes, a snowbird from Vancouver, said his area is a peninsula like South Florida with a population of 2 million including the suburbs. He said very active planning is now in process and they have had light rail for 15 years. He said students at the University of British Columbia asked for free passes on public transit and its use increased by 50%. Scott Seeburger said usually 25% of cost is recouped at the fare box, so he wondered how the transit agency recouped those costs.

Pablo Lalaguna said that free transit would create a social good and would help get people accustomed to using it. He said there is no culture of ridership here so we have to make it easy.

Walter Zullig uses Tri-Rail and said service has greatly improved now. He said the FEC Corridor is very densely populated and developed and he assumes that planners will

look at whether it is viable to have two systems running at the same time. He said if a system runs on the FEC it will need to be commuter rail.

Odessa Bennett of Lauderdale Lakes said there are lots of north-south roadways so we need to link with them, and it needs to be soon. She said waiting for city buses is too long, and we need east-west connections. She asked why the study was considering transit between Jupiter and Miami. Scott Seeburger said there are two reasons: Tri-Rail was looking at extending service to Jupiter and Miami-Dade Transit was looking at a north extension, so this became a project of the Regional Transportation Authority.

Juan Carlos Valls said a bus rapid transit system was developed in Bogota and Bilbao in a short time. He said the study team may want to consider that here. Scott Seeburger said it would require changing the culture in South Florida. He said bus solutions make sense and can be implemented quickly, but people down here won't ride buses. Carlos Cejas said the decisions will come from the MPOs.

Michael Arts of Deerfield Beach asked if there is a way in the study to figure out the real cost of driving and make people see how much they are really paying to operate their cars.

Cassie Boatwright asked if the study team had any ideas on how to get this accepted, and if there are any ways to get a system in place sooner.

Jack Burrie asked how traffic can go around if a train is stopped on the tracks at a station. He asked if the station can be off the main line, and if there will be connections between the FEC and Tri-Rail. Scott Seeburger said yes to both. Mr. Burrie then asked if the three counties have transit ways and wondered if they could be created to protect the corridor.

Bill Munsimer asked if survey packets could be sent to highrise office buildings. He said that might help decide if east-west or north-south transit was needed. He said it would also help with the development of station locations. Carlos Cejas said the survey is very costly and is done according to a scientific method.

There being no further questions or comments the meeting adjourned at 9 pm.