



## SOUTH FLORIDA EAST COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT ANALYSIS STUDY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis Study is looking at **new regional passenger transit services in eastern Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties**. These options are necessary to reduce roadway congestion and meet north-south mobility needs in our tri-county region — the most populated corridor in Florida and the fifth largest in the country. The study area extends along an 85-mile long, two-mile wide corridor centered on the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway tracks.

### How is the study being conducted?

The study consists of two tiers. **Tier 1** began September 26, 2005 and is scheduled to be completed by spring, 2007. It is examining possible routes, or *alignments*, for north-south transit. Various kinds of transit vehicles, called *technologies* or *modes*, have also been analyzed. Tier 1 will conclude by identifying alignments and technologies most suitable for further analysis. The end result will be a corridor Record of Decision (ROD) from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which indicates approval of the work done so far and authorization to proceed with Tier 2.

**Tier 2** will begin in mid-2007 and divide the corridor into sections for more detailed analysis. It will consider existing commuter rail service, land use densities and coordination of freight and passenger traffic. Tier 2 will conclude with determination of one or more **Locally Preferred Alternatives** that identify the routes and services best suited for the study corridor. The necessary documentation will then be submitted to the FTA to gain another, more detailed ROD with authorization to proceed to engineering and construction.

Both study tiers will follow requirements of the FTA, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Florida's Efficient Transportation Decision Making

(ETDM) process. Depending on how the service and funding packages are structured, transit service along portions of the corridor could begin as early as 2012.

### What is an Alternative?

An Alternative consists of three elements:

- a particular technology or vehicle
- an alignment, or route
- an identified travel need

*Alternative = technology + alignment + travel need*

### What technologies are being considered?

A broad range of technologies were considered. Those currently under study for all or part of the corridor are:

- **Regional Rail** such as a Tri-Rail train or self-propelled railcars
- **Regional Bus**, a motorcoach like Greyhound making limited stops
- **Light Rail Transit**, electrically-propelled railcars operating at grade on their own alignment
- **Bus Rapid Transit** using modern buses operating at grade on their own alignment
- **Rail Rapid Transit** such as Metrorail, using trains of electrically-propelled cars on elevated tracks.



Please contact any member of the SFECC Study's Public Involvement Team and ask to be included in the project database. That way you will receive all meeting notices and periodic updates as the study moves forward.

Miami-Dade County Gladys Kidd & Associates 305-573-2049 x43 infogka@bellsouth.net	Broward County Communikat, Inc. 1-800-330-7444 info@communikat.com	Palm Beach County L.B. Limited & Associates 561- 833-8080 mr1pr@netscape.net
--	---	---

You can also visit the project website [www.sfeccstudy.com](http://www.sfeccstudy.com).

**What alignments are being considered?**

A number of north-south alignments were considered. The one remaining extends the length of the tri-county corridor along the FEC Railway. In Palm Beach County a combination of I-95, US-1 and local arterials also remains under consideration for one alternative extending Tri-Rail service to Jupiter using Regional Bus.

**Have station areas been determined?**

So far the study has just identified general areas for stations based on east-west connectivity, potential ridership and land use. These are not final determinations and will be refined in Tier 2. Specific station locations will not be selected until there has been ample consultation with the public, probably some time in 2008.



**Will people's homes be taken to make room for stations?**

Based on the choice of alignments, few if any homes will need to be acquired except perhaps for station development. In order to gain maximum ridership, station areas are generally located near commercial centers. However, every effort will be made to minimize impacts should a station need to be located in or near a residential area.

**How soon could passenger service be operating?**

Some transit along certain segments of the corridor could be in service as early as 2012 depending on several factors -- if consensus is reached, if the project receives approval in the form of a ROD from the Federal Transit Administration and, most importantly, if the project has a local dedicated source of funding.

**Can passenger service be extended north beyond Tequesta into Martin County and beyond?**

The limits of the present study encompass the heavily urbanized areas of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Land use and travel patterns are significantly different north of the Palm Beach-Martin County line and would warrant a separate study. Nevertheless, every effort is being made in the present study not to rule out future options, including Amtrak, from Martin County and beyond.

**Will FDOT build a noise wall along the FEC Corridor if a passenger train of some kind operates there?**

If passenger trains are put into service on or alongside the FEC tracks, FDOT will conduct detailed noise studies to determine if a noise wall is warranted next to residential or other noise sensitive areas, such as schools, churches or hospitals. Generally, passenger trains are quieter and shorter than freight trains.

**Will passenger trains be required to sound horns at grade crossings?**

Federal Railroad Administration regulations currently require trains to sound their horns at all at-grade highway crossings for valid safety concerns. However, some crossings may be reconstructed to eliminate at-grade crossings. At others, new federal "Quiet Zone" regulations could permit elimination of train horns if certain safety improvements are added to an at-grade crossing. The applicability and funding of either approach will be considered in Tier 2 as well in on-going efforts by FDOT.

**What will the impact be on street traffic when railway crossings are closed more often to accommodate passing transit service?**

More frequent train service will mean more gate closings, although passenger trains are shorter and faster than freight trains so their impact on traffic is less severe. The study will analyze the need to raise either the roadway or the tracks, or close the crossing altogether wherever practical, in order to minimize delays to auto traffic. FDOT will work closely with each municipality along the FEC alignment and these issues will be studied in greater detail in Tier 2.

**How will the rail lines cross waterways like the New River in Fort Lauderdale?**

This is another issue to be studied in detail in Tier 2. Most likely a fixed high level bridge will be needed to handle the frequent passenger trains since navigation takes precedence over railroads and drawbridge openings would impact train service.



**How many tracks can be built in the railroad right-of-way?**

There is generally enough room along the FEC alignment for at least four sets of tracks—two for passenger rail and two for freight if necessary. How many are actually built will be decided during Tier 2 of the study when certain corridor segments are examined more closely.

**Won't passenger service on the FEC service just duplicate Tri-Rail service?**

Transit along the FEC alignment would complement and enhance Tri-Rail service, and interconnections would be made between the two services. People who presently ride Tri-Rail are generally long-distance commuters who arrive at stations by car, bus or shuttle. Transit along the FEC has the potential of servicing shorter trips with more frequent stops within easy walking distance of future transit stations. Travel forecast models predict that a combined FEC-Tri-Rail service would generate more than twice the number of trips than Tri-Rail alone.

**Will freight trains be removed from the FEC alignments?**

The potential of rerouting FEC freight trains was analyzed in Tier 1 and some opportunities were identified that may be pursued by the FEC, FDOT

and other study partners. Regardless of the outcome of those discussions, the necessity of servicing ports and local shippers along the FEC corridor means there will always be some level of freight train service along that alignment.

**Will a transit service on the FEC run on time?**

Every effort will be made starting with the earliest stages of design to ensure that passenger and freight services will safely and reliably co-exist in the corridor from the opening day of service.

**It seems many decisions will be made in Tier 2. Will the public be kept informed and have opportunities to comment on them?**

There will be at least as many public meetings during Tier 2 as there were in Tier 1 and the public will definitely be consulted. Notices of meetings will be mailed to those already in the project database and announced in newspaper ads. To be added to the project database, contact any member of the SFEC Study's Public Involvement Team listed below, or log onto [www.sfecstudy.com](http://www.sfecstudy.com) and add your e-mail address to the project list.

**How much will the project cost?**

Cost estimates for the different technologies and alignments are being prepared now and will be presented to the public at the August, 2006 workshops.

**Who will manage construction and operation of the new transit service? Will it be FDOT, the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) that manages Tri-Rail, or another entity?**

That decision will also be made some time in the future based on examples from around the county. The most likely solution will be a partnership between FDOT, Palm Tran, Broward County Transit, Miami-Dade Transit and the SFRTA, all of which are also partners in this study.

