



MEETING SUMMARY

TO: Scott Seeburger & Project File

FROM: Gladys Kidd & Associates, Gannett Fleming, Inc.

DATE: April 19, 2006

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

SUBJECT: Public Kick-Off/Scoping Meeting

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

On Wednesday, April 19, 2006, the first Scoping/Public Kick-Off Meeting for the SFECCTAS was held in Miami-Dade County at the Gwen Margolis Community Center, 1590 N 123rd Street, North Miami, Fl. Approximately 486 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 86 people, including staff, were present for the first meeting from 3:30 pm to 6:00pm and 64 people were present for the second meeting which ran from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

Part I: Public review of project illustrations

Part II: Meeting (First session)

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

- Spencer Goldenberg, Legislative Assistant, Senator Gwen Margolis
- Herta Holly , Miami Shores Village
- Mark E. Collins, City of North Miami
- Kathy Andres, Port of Palm Beach
- Raymond George Bush, Representative of Commissioner Jose Diaz
- Lilia Medina, City of Miami
- Dennis Kelly , City of North Miami
- Jazzlyn Diaz, Representative of Commissioner Sally Heyman
- N. Jasmine Yaconthe, City of Hollywood
- Miguel Santibanez, City of Hollywood
- Richard Mialler, Commissioner Audrey Edmonson's office
- Joanne Carr, City of Aventura

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 Creole, and a Creole translator was available and utilized during the 6:00pm session.

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.

An **Unidentified Speaker** made a comment that, since this is a 90-mile railroad, there are some trips that are going to be short and some are going to be long. FDOT needs to have an express and local track. If you don't have a lot of stations will just be a railroad and not transit. Need to find out what kinds of trips are being taken, long or short trips. Mr. Seeburger responded that the travel markets are being studied and the team is figuring out what travel markets will need to be fulfilled.

Mr. Charles Dunn from the National Association of Railroad Passengers commented with the following points:

- There is a railroad already existing in the corridor so the environmental impact should be minimal
- There is no condemnation necessary since FEC right-of-way will be used
- You will have to put in trains that comply with FRA standards which means no light rail.
- There should be one mode from end to end. Do not use different technologies; create a seamless system.
- Implementing a bus will only attract public transit dependent. If want to attract non-transit dependent, you are going to have to go to rail mode.
- A question should be added on the web survey that asks: if the mode chosen is bus, would you ride?

Commissioner Bob Anderson from Biscayne Park spoke in support of the transit along FEC as long as associated noise impacts were addressed.

An unidentified speaker asked if brownfield sites included in the evaluation. Project presenters responded in the affirmative.

An unidentified speaker asked if FEC was willing to sell. Mr. Seeburger responded that they are willing to sit down and talk.

An unidentified speaker asked about double-tracking and whether there was sufficient right-of-way. Mr. Seeburger responded that the current right-of-way could accommodate 6 tracks so there is room to handle freight and passenger traffic.

An unidentified speaker asked if any of the tracks ran along Indian-owned lands. Project presenters responded in the negative, and that an Advance Notification package was sent to these groups anyway for comment.

An unidentified speaker stated that the FEC was previously double tracked and FEC took them out in 1968 and that double-tracking is very costly. It was just finished along the CSX for Tri-Rail. This speaker asked where will that money come from? Mr. Seeburger responded: typical sources – Federal, State, local and how those monies will be generated will be a part of this work.

An unidentified speaker asked if it was true that the technology will have to be heavy rail? Could light rail be used? Mr. Seeburger responded that light rail could be used on the FEC. The answer is yes but to meet FRA standards you would need to spatially separate or separate by time or separate physically. This same speaker was asked about maintaining plant material along the corridor. Mr. Seeburger responded that the current Greenways Plans that exist will have to be taken into account as this study progresses.

Mr. Jorge Trakos made comments and asked questions as follows:

- In similar studies what impact has found to be shown to adjacent properties? Have there been studies on this? The answer was yes and that generally property values increase adjacent to transit more so at transit stations that in between stations. These studies are available on the web.
- A question was asked if there is any funding for noise walls along the residential areas. Mr. Trakos suggested that the noise from wheels of rail passenger vehicles would not be as bad as from freight rail cars. The answer was that noise impact assessments would be made and noise walls would be built if warranted and met required thresholds.
- A question was asked if there were plans to connect this to the Port of Miami. Mr. Cejas responded that the Port of Miami connection was once part of the East-West Study. Access to the Port will be considered in this study.

Mr. Charles Lowe asked whether there has been thought given to coordinating/joining this with a statewide system. Mr. Seeburger responded that the FDOT Central Office is doing that and communicating with this project on this study.

A land owner in Little Haiti warehouse district mentioned that a rezoning in the City of Miami was including a transit station in his area and he wanted to know if this was true. Mr. Seeburger mentioned that no transit station locations have been identified, and he referred the speaker to a City representative for more information on the rezoning. This same speaker made the following questions/comments:

- How will FEC passenger transit be coordinated with planned greenways and pedestrianways? Mr. Seeburger responded that they would have discussions about the fit between the two.
- This speaker asked about how will acquire land for stations, through condemnation or outright purchase. The answer was a combination of the two.

Mr. Peter Ehrlich asked about how much land would be needed for a station. Mr. Cejas responded that ultimately it will depend on the type of technology and the overall function and other variables. The short answer is that it depends. It is desirable to have the highest density you can near the station. Mr. Seeburger added that the minimum would be 2 acres for a station and the maximum would be nearer 6 acres.

A question was raised whether there would be any right-of-way needed to lay more tracks. Response given was that no more right-of-way would be needed.

A question was raised about the rock freight. Is it true that as Doral grows west that the gravel and sand pits out there may become new waterfront developments and those quarry businesses may move out of town? Mr. McMullen responded that the businesses have recently applied to renew their 50-year permits. Mr. Seeburger responded that interest exists in extending their line to the rock pits in northwest Dade.

Jazzlyn Diaz, representing County Commissioner Sally Heyman's office asked if traffic studies are being done for the project and if they could have a copy. The answer to both questions was yes.

Ms. Marie Samuel made a comment that more buses needed to go east and west. She also expressed concern about FDOT taking their property since they lived 2 blocks away. She also spoke of the EI in Chicago and how well it works. She hopes that the passenger train will not make the noise worse. Would support it if could be done quietly. She stated that she didn't understand the 2-mile wide area designation. Mr. McMullen clarified the 1 and 1.5-mile buffer lines shown on the exhibits.

An **unidentified speaker** made a comment about vibration and whether the additional train would generate vibration. He works at a property adjacent to the tracks. Mr. Cejas responded that vibration will be part of the analysis. In general, light rail trains produce less vibration. Some response to the vibration issue will be included in the FAQ's.

This same speaker raised other issues as follows:

- whether property taxes will go up. Mr. Seeburger responded: probably.
- Hours of operation. Response was that it is unclear right now, but the hours will probably resemble Metrorail and Tri-Rail operating hours.
- Will eminent domain be used. Mr. Seeburger answered that would prefer not using this since much more expensive in the long run. Eminent domain is avoided.
- Cost. Mr. Seeburger responded that it will be billions, and years in a phased approach.

A question was asked if heavy rail was a preferred technology. Scott Seeburger responded that the FDOT has not made a determination or assessment yet but it is an expensive technology.

6 PM SESSION

This meeting began in the same manner as the first session.

The following elected/public officials or their representatives were present at the 6:30 p.m. meeting:

- Commissioner Bob Anderson of Biscayne Park
- Zev Auerbach, Aventura Commissioner
- John Hornbuckle, Mayor, Village of Biscayne Park
- Gerald Philippeaux, Office of Commissioner Audrey Edmonson
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Following are comments made by attendees:

Mr. John Cox was enthusiastic about the project because traffic congestion is only going to get worse along adjacent roadways. We are also running out of room to develop. Hopes that the FEC transit is grade separated, steel wheeled, Metrorail like. Mr. Cox thinks that heavy rail is needed along the corridor, and he does not advocate changing modes.

Another unidentified speaker was also enthusiastic about the project. Traffic congestion is a detriment to quality of life. Anything that helps to reduce it should be implemented. FEC transit is long overdue since it connects all the downtowns. Wished Tri-Rail had been built here. He thinks project is pro-environment and pro-health and will be a catalyst for pedestrian oriented community. Also wants a bikeway along the corridor.

A rail freight engineer for CSX agreed that in theory transit on FEC would work but in reality it won't work. Tri-Rail should have been built at this location. However, Tri-Rail is not working because there are too many rail crossings. Tri-Rail should have been built in the middle of I-95. She is in favor of whistle-free zones. He thinks that if you don't grade separate that the same mistakes that Tri-Rail made will be made again.

There was a comment made that, in Dade County, there must be connections from all existing rail to Tri-Rail. There should have less freight operating at grade level. The FEC is only trying to make money out of this venture.

A Palm Grove resident has been waiting for this project for a long time. The speaker expressed the need to add more trains and then people would use it. The speaker supports the project 100%.

An unidentified speaker asked that laws be changed so that everyone stops at grade crossings.

Another speaker was very enthusiastic about the project and liked the idea of elevated trains at crossings.

There was a comment that the FEC could serve local travel with lots of stops and keep Tri-Rail as the long haul and intercity service. If you build transit on FEC they will come.

A resident of Keystone Point is looking forward to this project. The speaker works at Jackson Hospital and would like to see feeder routes to stations. Mr. Seeburger answered that these would be incorporated into the design and cost of service along with parking lots. This study will also look at what kind of parking lots to build depending on the location along the FEC line.

Steve Mahoney from the Sierra Club lives in Miami Shores and supports the project. He was pleased to see that the environmental issues are being considered and addressed. He heralded this project as a great opportunity to reduce traffic congestion.

Mr. Albert Green representing Terra Towers condo owners advised that the team should get with MDT and BCT and outfit buses with special rail wheels like trolley buses and run on FEC

Joe Arnold of Miami Shores said there is a segment of the FEC that runs along a residential area and there are no fences or barriers along the tracks which presents safety issues. He would like to see buffering adjacent to the residential areas. Also in favor of whistle free zones. Mr. Cejas responded that access will need to be restricted and accommodations will need to be made for greenways.

An unidentified speaker made a comment that FDOT should put the heaviest train possible on the FEC and educate people about the trains and crossings. In other areas of the country like Chicago don't need barriers because people used to the trains. Want this project to happen quickly.

Mrs. Sara Brown who lives ½ block from the FEC line does not agree that we should spend money for transit here. She thinks that money should be spent on the extension of Metrorail and on connections to existing transit. She is concerned about her property being taken. Mr. Cejas responded that we are trying to connect where the densities are and where they are anticipated to be. We are connecting generators of activity and people. Mr. Seeburger responded that there is a good piece on growth, development, etc. on the Miami Herald website.

Councilman Michael Blynn spoke in support of the project since there is lots of development coming including that associated with slot machines. This is a quality of life issue and if we want to keep it in this area we need transit. Also, there is a need for transit connections between affordable housing and employment centers.

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