



WORKSHOP SUMMARY

TO: Scott Seeburger & Project File

FROM: Michael Brady

DATE: May 22, 2006

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

SUBJECT: Municipal Workshop (held in Delray Beach City Hall – Commission Chambers)

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

FDOT Project Manager Scott Seeburger opened the meeting at 2:12 pm and turned the program over to SFECC-TAS team member John Hart of Hart Consulting Group, who asked that attendees introduce themselves. Mr. Hart gave a brief overview of the study and then turned the meeting back to Mr. Seeburger, who introduced Gannett Fleming Project Manager Carlos Cejas and made some opening remarks. Prior to commencing with the presentation, Mr. Hart emphasized that this is an interactive workshop intended to break down geopolitical boundaries and foster partnerships. Mr. Seeburger, Mr. Cejas and Gannett Fleming Director of Environmental Services Robert McMullen narrated the PowerPoint and Mr. Cejas invited questions during the presentation.

Open discussion moderated by John Hart

Martin County Commissioner Doug Smith stated that he attended because Martin County is interested in commuter rail service. He indicated that he personally lives approximately 75 feet from the FEC track. He had several issues that he wanted to raise: (1) Vibration is an issue. His house continues to settle due to the vibration from the freight trains; (2) Noise from the multiple engine freight trains vs. single engine trains is something to be aware of; (3) soot from the trains in the residential area is a concern; (4) grade crossings will be an issue; the only way to go will be grade separations.

Mr. Cejas stated that these issues will be addressed in Tier 2. The effect of passenger rail will not be as great as freight due to the (shorter) length of the trains and load being carried.

Commissioner Smith also stated that the FEC rail is very well maintained and that there are few complaints at the end of season in Martin County.

Vice-Mayor Rita Ellis, City of Delray Beach, stated that the City is changing its one-way east-west streets in downtown to two-way streets. In discussion with FEC Industries, they were notified that the City would be liable for the crossings where the changes are made. This issue may come up with other municipalities along the corridor. She indicated that the public in Delray would utilize commuter rail. Mr. Hart stated that it is possible for the SFRTA to eventually be the dispatcher for the FEC line.

Mr. Seeburger stated that the FEC currently incurs an additional cost and liability with the addition of any grade crossings. Mr. Cejas asked the group if the City would consider consolidating existing grade crossings. Response was that issue has not been considered.

Vice-Mayor Ellis stated the City is willing to pay for crossing improvements but thought the additional liability was unreasonable.

Commissioner John Levinson, City of Delray Beach, stated he has had conversations with FEC on the issue of liability caps for crossings. The FEC is reluctant to change operations in SE Florida because it could affect all of the FEC line to Jacksonville. The added liability would negatively affect future bonding capacity for the City of Delray Beach. The City will be signing new agreements for grade crossings as they convert streets to two-way.

Patrick Sullivan, Community Development Director of Lake Park, made the point that vibration is a major issue with Scripps and other potential biotech companies locating near the FEC. This should be taken into consideration during the study, especially in northern Palm Beach County.

John Levinson commented about the Inland Port proposal by the Port of Palm Beach. It could add to the freight traffic load.

Larry Merritt of FDOT commenting on the liability of grade crossings issue, stated that as FDOT moves forward, the crossing liability issue will have to be addressed statewide. He will bring this to the attention of Central Office.

John Levinson stated that FDOT should begin the dialogue on liability and RR crossings with the FEC now and not wait until it becomes an issue city by city.

PowerPoint Presentation continued

Paul Kissinger of EDSA and Carlos Cejas of Gannett Fleming presented.

John Levinson remarked on the content of a slide. No urban planner will support fewer grade crossings. It would affect the grid in downtown areas. He suggested modifying the language in the slide. Commissioner Smith concurred. If you grade separate, that's OK as long as you still have continuity.

Hypoluxo Mayor Ken Schultz inquired about the 230 crossings in the study. He asked how much of the scope deals with these crossings and possible recommendations on them. Mr. Cejas responded that, in Tier II, we will examine grade crossings more closely. The flexibility of the tiered approach allows for that flexibility.

Commissioner Doug Smith of Martin County stated that someone mentioned the doubling of rail traffic. How is that possible?

Mr. Cejas responded that, as the population continues to grow in south Florida, the freight traffic alone will grow. When you add commuter/passenger rail traffic, and it could easily double.

John Levinson stated that the Delray Beach Master Plan allows for a location of a transit station in downtown but that holding onto vacant land is increasingly difficult. The City holds one of two parcels being considered for a station. The challenge is convincing the private landowner to hold their property. It is very difficult to keep areas undeveloped based on "some day we may get a station."

John Hart commented on the need for the study to meet FTA criteria in order to qualify for federal funding. Nick Serianni will address this during his presentation.

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Mr. Cejas and Mr. Serianni presented information on grade-separated transit, local municipal transit service and funding options.

Commissioner Doug Smith stated that the E-W connectors are a major issue. Will the study look at this? Mr. Cejas responded that the study team will study bus and other connectors along the east-west corridors. We will study existing connectors and not compete with Tri-Rail on the locations of stations. Feeder service will be a big deal as will connections to other transit projects.

John Hart summarized the five major issues that came from today's meeting. They are; vibration, soot, grade crossings, liability and east-west connectors.

Mr. Seeburger made some concluding remarks and asked for any other questions or comments. He thanked all for attending and participating.

This meeting adjourned at 3:56 PM.