

SOUTH FLORIDA EAST COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT ANALYSIS STUDY

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1

WINTER 2009

Would there be facilities for bicycle storage?



Accommodations for bicycles will be part of station planning. Some stations may have bicycle storage areas and whether those are racks, cages or lockers will be determined later in the study. The needs of bicycle riders will be taken into account, too, when specific types of transit vehicles are selected. Riders may also be able to cycle to a station, put their bikes on board, use transit part of the way and then continue on by bicycle.

How is the study being conducted?

The study will be conducted in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and FDOT's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process and guidelines. Depending on how the service and funding packages are structured, transit service along portions of the corridor could begin as early as 2014.

Who are the Study Partners?



The SFECCTA Study is sponsored by the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations of Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties. The study is managed by the FDOT following guidelines established by the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Railroad Administration and recommendations by the U.S. Maritime Administration, U.S. Coast Guard, Federal Aviation Administration and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Input is being sought from Miami-Dade Transit, Broward County Transit, Palm Tran, the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils and the three county Leagues of Cities.

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



Public involvement is a very important part of the process. There will be 14 Public Kick-Off Meetings and 12 Public Workshops during Phase 2 so the public will definitely be consulted. The project database of property owners and business operators was compiled from tax rolls for sites within a two and one half mile-wide study corridor and along its 85-mile length. The result was a mailing list of over 570,000 individuals and companies.

Meetings will be announced in newspaper ads and meeting notices will be sent via U.S. Postal Service and transmitted via e-flyer to those in the project database. To be added to the project database, contact any member of the SFECCTA Study's Public Involvement Team listed below, or log onto www.sfecstudy.com to submit a comment or add your address and e-mail to our list.

How can I get more information about the study and receive notices of meetings?

Please see our website (below) or contact any member of the 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.

Broward County
Communikatz, Inc.
1-800-330-7444
info@communikatz.com

Palm Beach County
Clear Light Communications, Inc.
561-798-9633
eirikis@clearlightpr.com

Miami-Dade County
Charesse Chester & Associates
(305) 944-7564 x203
CharesseChesterpr@msn.com

You can also visit the project website www.sfecstudy.com.



The South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis (SFECCTA) Study is being managed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District 4, with participation by FDOT District 6 in Miami-Dade County. The study is analyzing options for transit through the heart of 28 densely-populated municipalities in eastern Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Seeking ways to improve mobility along the 85-mile corridor, Phase 1 began September 26, 2005 and was completed in spring 2007. The conceptual Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Screening Report (AA/ESR) for Phase 1 was completed.

Phase 2 of the study began in spring 2008. It will build on and refine the conclusions of Phase 1, focusing first on a corridor-length analysis, and arrive at a corridor system Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The study will then move to sectional analyses, ultimately resulting in one or more LPAs and Records of Decision (ROD).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where will the transit be located?

The Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway, extending the length of the tri-county corridor was selected during the Phase 1 study. The existing railway is wide enough in most places to accommodate at least one track

for passenger service and would therefore require less additional right-of-way than some of the other corridors studied in Phase 1. In Phase 2 of the study, the FEC Railway alignment will be refined to determine where the transitway for each of the technologies would be placed within the right-of-way. In Palm Beach County, a combination of I-95, U.S.1 and local arterials also remains under consideration for one alternative to extend Tri-Rail service to Jupiter using Regional Bus.

What kinds of vehicles are being considered?

A broad range of vehicles, or modal technologies, were considered during Phase 1. The technologies 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** - An over-the-road type motorcoach making limited stops within the region
- **Light Rail Transit** - Electrical or diesel-propelled railcars operating on their own alignment either at-grade or on aerial structures
- **Bus Rapid Transit** - Modern, express buses operating in their own alignment
- **Rail Rapid Transit** - Such as Metrorail, using trains of electrically-propelled cars on elevated tracks.



Regional Rail



Regional Bus



Light Rail Transit



Bus Rapid Transit



Rail Rapid Transit

What is an alternative?

An alternative consists of three elements: the type of transit technology or mode, the frequency of service to be provided and the route, or alignment, which the transit service will take.

How soon could passenger service be operating?

Some transit along certain segments of the corridor could be in service as early as 2014 depending on several factors -- if consensus is reached, if there is a local, dedicated source of funding, how the FEC Railway Corridor is purchased and if the project receives the appropriate federal or state funding approvals.

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

There is generally enough room along almost all 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 may be decided during Phase 2 of the study when certain corridor segments are examined more closely. The question of whether the preferred alignment will include rail at all will be determined as the Alternatives Analysis process advances to the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

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

Transit along the FEC alignment will link to and enhance Tri-Rail service with more frequent stops closer to where people live and work. Phase 2 of the study will analyze the best ways to join the two services so they could operate as an interconnected system. Travel forecast models predict more than twice the number of transit trips on a combined FEC/Tri-Rail service network than for Tri-Rail alone. 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 other shorter trips as well, within easy walking distance of future transit stations.

Where would the FEC/Tri-Rail connections be?

The study team is analyzing connections in Miami, Pompano Beach and West Palm Beach, as well as other locations.

Will freight trains be removed from the FEC alignment?



The potential of rerouting FEC freight trains was analyzed in Phase 1 and some opportunities were identified that may subsequently be pursued by FEC, FDOT and other study partners. Regardless of the outcome of those discussions, however, the necessity of servicing ports and local shippers along the FEC corridor means that some level of freight train service is likely on that alignment.

Can passenger service be extended north beyond Jupiter 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 so they warrant separate study. Nevertheless, every effort is being made in the present study not to preclude future transit options to or from Martin County.

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.

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 best practices drawn from examples 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 whom are also partners in this study.

How much will the project cost?

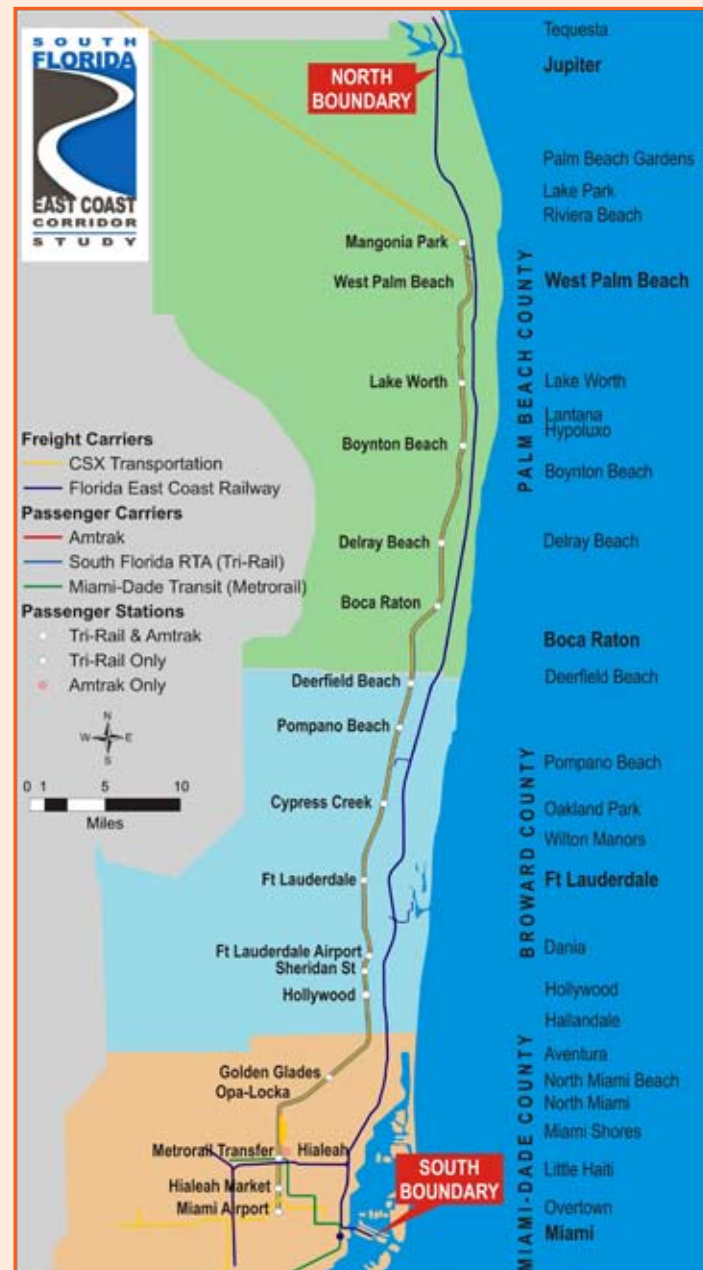
Cost estimates for the different technologies and alignments are being prepared now and are anticipated to be presented to the public at workshops in fall 2009.

Who will pay for this project?

There will likely be many funding sources – local, state and federal – and service is likely to be built out in phases over many years due to the length of the corridor. The first step will need to be acquisition of the corridor by the state, since it is currently held by a private company.

How have station areas been determined?

So far the study has just identified general areas for stations based on potential ridership, land use, and connections that need to be made to the east and/or west of the corridor. The locations of transit stations will be examined during the Phase 2 study as the operating plans are developed for each transit alternative and ridership projections are made. A series of public meetings will be held to refine the stations for each alternative. Specific station locations will not be selected until there has been ample consultation with the public, which is scheduled for fall 2009.



What are the criteria for station locations?



Station Rendering – Town Center Station

Conditions for likely station location within the 85-mile long corridor were analyzed during Phase 1 of the study. Approximately 97 general vicinities have been identified using as criteria:

- Proximity to east-west highway corridors
- Density of surrounding residential or commercial development
- Potential for park-and-ride
- Connectivity to other transit
- Future growth in the area
- Nearby facilities
- Benefits to people who are transit-dependent.

During Phase 2 these areas will be studied in detail and more specific sites will be identified in partnership with the communities.

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



Example of a neighborhood station

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. Property owners will be compensated for any needed property acquisitions.

Some municipalities have put landscaping along the FEC tracks. What will happen to it?

Landscaping already in place will probably be eliminated by construction, but the project will include landscaping plans along the alignment and at stations. FDOT will work with the local municipalities to replant landscaping.

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 than freight trains and much shorter in length, causing less noise for a shorter period of time.

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

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) 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 permit the elimination of train horns if certain safety improvements are added to a crossing. The applicability and funding of either approach will be considered in Phase 2 as well in ongoing parallel efforts by FDOT.

What will the impact be on street traffic when railway crossings are closed more frequently 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 in order to minimize delays to auto traffic. It will also consider closing some crossings altogether wherever practical. FDOT will work closely with each municipality along the FEC alignment and these issues will be studied in greater detail in Phase 2.

How will the rail lines cross waterways like the New River?

A number of environmental, aesthetic, engineering, and navigational issues need to be fully understood before a decision on how to cross each waterway can be made. The current phase of the study focuses on where an alignment should go to provide the best transportation improvement. The specific type of water crossing will be a decision that will be made during future engineering phases of the project.

With so much room in the alignment, is there any thought of creating a greenway for bicycles and pedestrians?



A greenway will be seriously considered, since it is already a part of bicycle/pedestrian planning by the Metropolitan Planning Organizations of the three counties and the technical team has been working with their respective Bicycle Coordinators. Transit service could be complemented by a greenway and it would likely be a widely used feature since the corridor passes through so many municipalities.