



Florida Department of Transportation

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT DISTRICT 4

3400 West Commercial Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33309-3421

Telephone: (954) 777-4601 Fax: (954) 777-4671

Toll Free Number: 1-866-336-8435

JFK BUSH
RNOR

DENVER J. STUTLER, JR.
SECRETARY

July 27, 2005

Ms. Elizabeth Martin
Federal Transit Administration
61 Forsyth St. SW, Suite 17T50
Atlanta, GA 30303-8917

Dear Ms. Martin:

**SUBJECT: SOUTH FLORIDA EAST COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT ANALYSIS
Concurrence on Lead Agency and Study Approach
FM 411189-2-22-01**

Attached is a summary of the initial project coordination meeting held in your Atlanta offices on June 24, 2005 for the subject Study. Our understandings from this meeting are as follows:

- 1) The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will be the lead Federal agency and the Florida Department of Transportation will be the lead State agency for the project.

A two-phased Tiered Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process will be used for the project. The Phase 1 (Tier 1) analysis will serve as the initial step of a tiered alternatives analysis. It will formulate the initial set of alternatives, define a systems plan for the study corridor, and define and address regional-level issues. The first phase will result in a corridor-level Draft EIS and a Record of Decision to formally document these regional-level issues and decisions that will facilitate the Phase 2 analyses.

Phase 2 will consist of the subsequent tiers of individual alternatives analyses conducted for subsections of the 85-mile long corridor as defined and documented in Phase 1. Individual Locally Preferred Alternatives will be developed, and localized sectional-level issues will be defined and addressed. The second phase will produce a Draft EIS and Record of Decision for each subsection analyzed that formally documents the sectional-level issues and decisions.

- 4) FTA will coordinate with the Federal Railroad Administration regarding their role in the study.
- 5) FTA will research the applicability of designating this project as a National Priority Project.

MEETING SUMMARY

July 27, 2005

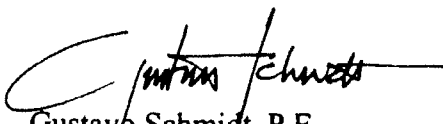
Page 2

- 6) FDOT will provide the project schedule.
- 7) FDOT will provide timely and complete information to FTA throughout the study.
- 8) FDOT will provide a narrative outline of the Tiered EIS documents so FTA can advise on how to reduce or eliminate issues addressed in the EIS documents.
- 9) Evaluation measures to be used in the evaluation will include the New Starts Criteria and cost per new transit rider. The financial feasibility analysis should not be part of the evaluation criteria but will be included as part of any New Starts submittal resulting from the study.

We are asking for your concurrence with the project direction, process, and documentation as described above and in the meeting summary that will allow us to proceed with the study.

Thank you for making arrangements to meet with us and the opportunity to present our project.

Sincerely,



Gustavo Schmidt, P.E.
District Planning and Environmental Engineer

GS:ss

Enclosure

cc: Carlos Cejas, Project Manager, Gannett Fleming, Inc.
Gerry O'Reilly, Director of Transportation Development, FDOT – District 4
Nancy A. Ziegler, Office of Modal Development Administrator, FDOT – District 4
Scott Seeburger, Project Manager, FDOT – District 4
Paul Lampley, District Project Development Engineer, FDOT – District 4
Ann Broadwell, District Environmental Administrator, FDOT – District 4

MEETING SUMMARY

South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis (SFECTA) From Downtown Miami, Miami-Dade County To Town of Jupiter, Palm Beach County

Initial Project Coordination Meeting with the FTA

**Federal Transit Administration
Atlanta Federal Building**

June 24, 2005

ATTENDEES:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>	<u>E-mail</u>
Elizabeth Martin	FTA, Div. 4, Atlanta	(404) 562-3500	elizabeth.martin@fta.dot.gov
Chris White	FTA, Div. 4 Atlanta	(404) 562-3500	chris.white@fta.dot.gov
Romay Truly	FTA, Atlanta (Intern)	(404) 562-3500	
Carlos Cejas	Gannett Fleming, Inc.	(786) 845-9540	ccejas@gfnet.com
Don Ostenson	Gannett Fleming, Inc.	(786) 845-9540	dostenson@gfnet.com
Scott Seeburger	FDOT District 4	(954) 777-4632	scott.seeburger@dot.state.fl.us
<u>Via Teleconference</u>			
Chris Van Wyke	FTA, Wash., D.C.	(202) 366-4043	chris.vanwyke@fta.dot.gov
Beth Day	FTA, Wash., D.C.	(202) 366-4043	beth.day@fta.dot.gov

MEETING SUMMARY

On June 24, 2005 at 10:30 a.m., an initial project coordination meeting was held at the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), District 4 Offices in Atlanta, Georgia to discuss various issues related to the above-referenced project. Ms. Elizabeth Martin began the meeting by welcoming the FDOT representatives to the FTA offices in Atlanta, followed by an introduction of all attendees.

Mr. Scott Seeburger handed out an agenda and a packet of information about the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis (SFECCTA). He described the background events in South Florida which have resulted in the initiation of this regional study for transit improvements along the South Florida East Coast Corridor. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in cooperation with the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and three county transit properties initiated this regional transit study. It involves a two-mile wide study corridor, centered on the Florida East Coast Railroad (FECR), extending approximately 85 miles from Downtown Miami in Miami-Dade County to the Town of Jupiter in northern Palm Beach County.

Mr. Seeburger discussed the need for a regional transit improvement that services the mobility and freight needs in the Tri-County Area comprised of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties. The study corridor is experiencing an extensive amount of growth and redevelopment due to the decreasing developable land in the western parts of the three counties, the age of development in the eastern areas, and land use policies making the study corridor attractive for redevelopment. There are 28 different municipalities along the study corridor that are in various stages of implementing the Governor's

MEETING SUMMARY

July 27, 2005

Page 2

Commission on a Sustainable South Florida recommendations through a comprehensive growth management public policy program known as "Eastward Ho!". This Policy encourages municipal and county governments to focus future growth through redevelopment in the eastern portions of the Tri-County Area. The three MPOs have each contributed \$2,000,000 of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for the study.

The corridor study is to be conducted in two phases utilizing a Tiered Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The first phase would include a regional analysis including determination of travel markets and logical segmentation of the corridor, alternatives development and initial screening, freight capacity/rationalization analysis, and environmental impacts assessment under the first tier of the Tiered EIS. The second phase of the corridor study will involve various sectional alternatives analyses along the corridor that would develop an individual DEIS and Record of Decision for each section. Mr. Seeburger explained that it is the intent of FDOT and the SFRTA to be in a position to begin Preliminary Engineering (PE) for one or more of the sectional Locally Preferred Alternatives (LPA) following completion of the sectional analyses conducted in the second phase.

Mr. Carlos Cejas provided additional information concerning how the consultant team will conduct the phases of this study. He provided additional details of the approach to the freight capacity/rationalization study and explained that the first tier of the study would include a broad range of alternatives. The freight capacity/rationalization study will determine if the FECR has sufficient right of way to accommodate both future freight and passenger demands, and if freight movements can be optimized between the FECR and CSX rail lines should the right of way be found insufficient. Surveys will be conducted to understand existing travel markets. The South Florida Regional Planning Model (SERPM) will be updated to 2030, and upgraded based on the discussions with FTA conducted during the Central Broward East-West Transit Analysis being conducted by FDOT.

The travel market analysis and forecasting will be used to for corridor segmentation and to define initial appropriate alternatives serving subsections of the corridor. The initial alternatives identification will also provide "corridor-length" alternatives. Initial screening of the full set of alternatives will be conducted in the first phase.

Mr. Cejas further explained that an extensive Public Involvement Program will be conducted throughout the study. He described the need to closely involve various stakeholders throughout the Tri-County Area in the process in order to develop appropriate alternatives. Mr. Cejas explained that the consultant team includes four sub-consulting firms that have local public involvement experience in each of the three counties. He explained that throughout the study the FDOT and the project's consultant team will involve local officials, regulatory agency representatives, business and community leaders in all aspects of the study.

Mr. Don Ostenson described the constraints to future growth between the Atlantic Ocean and the Everglades ecosystem within the Tri-County area, then explained why the implementation of a Tiered EIS would become a significant benefit under this study. Unlike most transportation projects proposed within South Florida, this regional transit project will become one of the most environmentally sensible projects, helping to focus future growth and redevelopment within the eastern portions of the three South Florida counties. A Tiered EIS would allow the FDOT, in cooperation with the regulatory agencies, to identify the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this regional transit project. Many of these effects will

MEETING SUMMARY

July 27, 2005

Page 3

likely be perceived as beneficial effects. By initiating the tiered EIS at the beginning of the study, the transit corridor could then be studied with further refinement during the next tier through the use of sections that have independent utility and logical termini. Also, the proposed Tiered EIS process will provide a means to implement environmental streamlining.

Mr. Ostenson provided background information on the Federal government's efforts to implement environmental streamlining to reduce the length of time typically required for environmental impact assessments required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and reduce overall regulatory review times for transportation projects. One of the consultant recommendations is for the FDOT to seek designation of this project as a National Priority Project because it is regionally significant, is a key element of the Florida's Statewide Strategic Intermodal System, and is nationally significant because it connects three international airports with three international seaports.

Mr. Ostenson further explained that these new Federal environmental streamlining guidelines are being implemented in a number of different ways by the various States. The FDOT has developed an environmental streamlining process that is known as Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed in 2001 between 23 federal and state agencies committing to the continued development and implementation of the ETDM process. This MOU commits the signatory agencies, which include FTA, FRA, and FHWA, to early and continuous participation in the planning and project development process for transportation project. By implementing the ETDM process, FDOT will be able to reduce regulatory review times based on close coordination with the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) members that will be assigned to the study from each agency. The use of a Tiered EIS combined with the ETDM process will allow the FDOT to also streamline the permitting process early in project development as a majority of the permitting concerns can be addressed during the SFECCTA study.

Mr. Cejas explained that the use of a Tiered EIS will provide the opportunity to implement advanced acquisition of additional right of way. He explained this measure could provide a considerable cost savings to this transit improvement because real estate costs within the study area are very high and continue to increase at a rapid pace as redevelopment progresses.

The attendees then discussed various aspects of the SFECCTA study. Ms. Martin emphasized that the FDOT should make certain that all the latest New Starts criteria are adequately addressed under the alternatives evaluation. She requested that the FDOT distinguish the objectives for financial feasibility analysis of each alternative and that the latest criteria of costs per hour of user benefit be employed as part of the analysis. Mr. Chris VanWyke asked inquired about when FDOT would apply for New Starts Funding under this transit study. After some discussion, the attendees agreed that the New Starts funding application would probably be submitted during the second phase of the Study. Mr. VanWyke then stated that the FTA has not participated in a Tiered EIS. Mr. Cejas mentioned that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Federal Highway Administration have participated in a number of Tiered EISs in other states. After a discussion about the potential benefits of employing a Tiered EIS within this Study, Mr. VanWyke then requested that the FDOT provide an outline to the FTA, as soon as possible, of the Tiered EIS with a short narrative for each section. He also requested a schedule for the study which incorporates appropriate reviews times required by the FTA. The attendees then discussed the need to involve the FRA and FHWA in the study as cooperating agencies.

MEETING SUMMARY

July 27, 2005

Page 4

FTA indicated that the Tiered EIS approach is sensible way to conduct the study.

DECISIONS/GUIDANCE/ACTION ITEMS

- 1) FTA supports using the Tiered EIS process for the project. The Phase I (Tier 1) analysis that addresses regional issues is not inconsistent with New Starts study approaches.
- 2) FTA will be the lead federal agency for the project.
- 3) FTA will coordinate with the Federal Railroad Administration regarding their role in the study.
- 4) FTA will research the applicability of designating this project as a National Priority Project.
- 5) FDOT will provide the project schedule.
- 6) FDOT will provide timely and complete information to FTA throughout the study.
- 7) FDOT will provide a narrative outline of the Tiered EIS documents so FTA can advise on how to reduce or eliminate issues addressed in the EIS documents.

Evaluation measures to be used in the evaluation will include the New Starts Criteria and cost per new transit rider. The financial feasibility analysis should not be part of the evaluation criteria.