



Meeting Notes

South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis Study

**Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners
Regional Transportation Committee Meeting
9:30 a.m.
Thursday, October 19
Commissioner Chamber
Stephen P. Clark Government Center
111 NW 1 Street
Miami**

The following are remarks by Joe Giuliatti, Executive Director of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, before the October 19 meeting of the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners Regional Transportation Committee. Mr. Giuliatti was there on another matter, and in the course of his comments he was asked a question by Commissioner Sally Heyman regarding the FEC Corridor Study. Below is his response to her question and to comments by other members of the committee.

Giuliatti: The Department of Transportation came in and reported to our board at our last board meeting on the progress that they were making with it and the public hearings they were holding. I know that this particular item is already in the governor's office and the governor is also reviewing some of the issues that are associated with it and the governor has made some comments about it.

I can't, not that I can't, I don't know how far the negotiations with the FEC are at right now. I do know that the FEC is very pleased in their reports to us that we are looking at it from a regional perspective because they will not allow their system to be piecemealed. They want to look at how it's going to go through all three counties. Naturally from their standpoint they are looking at the possibility that a master plan that takes their entire corridor into use is in their best interest as well because they don't want to get locked up with each one of the counties trying to turn around and say, "All right, we've got something going here that's going to affect our entire operation," because the way they look at it their entire operation is affected by any portion that is sold off.

The good news to report is that we have looked at their corridor. Their corridor is mostly a single-tracked corridor and they own a 100-foot right-of-way all the way through, which leaves a lot of options. It's wrong for me to report on that because actually the DOT is doing the work on it, but I will tell you the options have allowed for everything from the standpoint that you could put in two additional tracks that would be exclusive passenger, you could put in a Metrorail-type system on some of the areas because of the amount of land that is available and what they are trying to rationalize out is where it makes the most sense to go for a rapid transit bus, a Metrorail system, a commuter rail system, and for that matter **where it could actually make sense if we**

own the property to asphalt adjacent to that property and set up those bus lanes so that you could actually immediately get rapid transit bus going. Utah won the right that you could actually asphalt within the same corridor and adjacent to a main line and put in rapid transit bus without the FRA taking issues over that.

So it's exciting from the standpoint of what the potential is. The problem is also then that you don't want to give away any leverage towards how bad you want something for the FEC because you know quite candidly their price tag has been all over the place and what we're trying to do at the same time that we rationalize and our board and several members of our board have already said, "We don't really need to discuss whether or not we need the FEC, everybody knows we need the FEC, now it's a matter of which is the best way to go after it -- that you can go after federal funds to support your plan and that you can come up with the money that it would take to go in and purchase this corridor." And that's an active discussion that is going on with the DOT right now.

I would like to suggest that you ask the DOT to do the same presentation that's been done for our board so you can be brought up to speed with where they are and what's going on in terms of the public hearings.

Commissioner Heyman: Thank you. Mr. Donn is behind you two rows so I 'm sure its being heard by others. If I might, Mr. Chair, the other things is if you could memorialize some of that specific to your RTA report it may help us facilitate money in Washington when we ask for it because it's not just Miami-Dade, or the two other counties through their Association of Counties, or transit -- it's a regional request and everything from fuel considerations to the legitimacy of the project-- we're out of options.

Giulietti: Yeah, and if you don't mind, Mr. Chair, my reaction to that, yeah, we have to make some changes right away because even one of the Congress persons that was working for us on part of the FEC is no longer a member of the Congress and we have to scramble to get other supporters and we have had supporters throughout the region on it so we're in the middle of some of that right now and I'll be happy to get that information over.

Commissioner Heyman: Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chair.

Chairman Carlos Gimenez: That was exactly what I was going to ask him about, the FEC Corridor. It's an incredible asset. The number of riders I think are going to be astronomical to that corridor and it's something that we need to jumpstart and get on right away. I know you are working on it, but I would like to see a little bit more, we are talking, talking, I think we need to start putting some plans together. I just think that's a no-brainer, and when you look at the maps of where people commute to and from in this county at least it's the number two area and I'm sure that if you add Lauderdale and above it's going to be an astronomical number of people that can take advantage of mass transit. It needs to come all the way down to this facility right here, and that way then you can really distribute people. We really need to move on the FEC Corridor.

Giulietti: One more reaction. From our standpoint not only do we recognize that because it's the ability to take what we already have for existing equipment and the board was very proactive. We had an opportunity when we were going out and procuring additional equipment, we went in with Los Angeles on it and got very good prices back on the bid so the board actually authorized additional monies to the expense for going after more equipment and then we actually at the last board meeting we went in to grab equipment with the Department of Transportation matching funds and the Feds matching funds. We are in an extremely good position equipment-wise as well and if you look at these corridors these are corridors that if you got the equipment to go and operate on, it's a matter of just getting stations set up and starting an operation, so we are poised and in position that we can make this happen once we have a deal to be able to go through, so I just want you to know from the RTA perspective this is very logical, it's something we would love to go and do and love to work with the counties on, and I believe that we are in a very good position to make it happen once we can get this deal done with the FEC.

Commissioner Sorenson: So can we get that report from FDOT at our next committee meeting? That would be, I think, very useful to have. It is just so logical because if you look at it in terms of just our affordable housing crisis, if you provide transportation, people have a lot more options about where they can live and then work because they may not necessarily need a car and it provides – we are a region, and that's just a fact, and people don't think of those uses, separate counties so much. It would provide so much opportunity for families.

Chairman Gimenez: In terms also of traffic itself, you know, one of my assistants who lives in Belle Meade which is just up the block here, took her an hour to get into work the other day so it must be incredibly, the traffic up there is at a gridlock right now.

Giulietti: The Secretary of Transportation appeared before our board at the last meeting and it was refreshing to hear a Secretary of Transportation that's saying that it's now getting to the point where they're measuring what you get back for investment on a road versus what you get back for investment when you're looking at a mass transit or a rail corridor and they're realizing that there's a tremendous return on a rail corridor that you go and purchase because of what you can move in terms of passengers on that corridor. So that expression has been heard and was very positive. The other thing that is very positive is unlike in '88 when they were negotiating to buy the corridor that we're operating on and FEC did not want to negotiate, we have an FEC that is willing and does want to negotiate, so from that perspective it's positive, it's a matter of getting it done, not a matter of whether or not there's a recognition that it's wanted.