

**South Florida East Coast Corridor Summary Presentation Script  
Transit Analysis Study DRAFT v 2.8 (As Edited with Tom Hickey)  
November 4, 2006**

1.  
The State of Florida Department of Transportation on behalf of the Federal Transit Administration welcomes you to this Public Hearing for the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis Study.
  
2.  
The purpose of this evening's hearing is to provide you with an opportunity to express your views and concerns regarding the study. The hearing consists of two parts. First, you are invited to watch this presentation and then share your questions and opinions with the study team. At 6:30 PM, there will be a short formal presentation followed by a period of public testimony. You are invited to make your ideas part of the official Public Hearing record. You may make a statement directly to the Court Reporter before the Formal Program begins or make a statement during the Public Testimony session. You may also submit a written statement tonight or after you leave. Please see the booklet you were given at registration for details.
  
3.  
The study addresses growing north-south mobility congestion in a corridor that is 85 miles long and two miles wide, centered on the Florida East Coast Railway in three counties: Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach. It follows a tiered alternative analysis/environmental impact statement process in accordance with federal and state regulations. The first tier of the study began in September 2005 and consisted of corridor length travel and environmental investigations. In Tier 1, many alternatives are considered and evaluated with the goal of screening out marginal ideas. The remaining alternatives will be evaluated in greater detail in Tier 2.
  
4.  
Southeast Florida is witnessing a surge in urban redevelopment as people and businesses continue to migrate to the area. Two-and-a-half million more people are forecasted to live in the region by 2030. The highway capacity planned for the study area will not be capable of accommodating the projected volumes of north-south traffic in this corridor. The right-of-way of the Florida East Coast Railway (or F-E-C) represents an underutilized transportation resource that could be used to improve mobility and reduce delays between city centers, major economic centers, transportation hubs and residential communities.

5.  
The FEC has maintained a continuous right-of-way through the core of historic Southeast Florida communities. It is part of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System and operates 26 freight trains on a typical weekday. Passenger service would require increasing corridor capacity by adding tracks and possibly eliminating maritime conflicts. Adding passenger service to the corridor would also require a deliberate effort to reduce the impact of grade crossings on traffic circulation and the quality of life in surrounding neighborhoods

6.  
Alternatives were developed that consist of a specific combination of alignments and modal technologies to address a particular travel need. Three kinds of alternatives were developed:

A "No Build Alternative" anticipates no transportation improvements beyond those projects already included in the region's Long Range Transportation Plans.

A "Transportation Systems Management Alternative" is similar to the No Build alternative but assumes all transit systems operate at their maximum capacities.

"Build" alternatives that assume construction and operation of new north-south public transportation options in the corridor.

7.  
Travel needs in the corridor were identified by analyzing north-south travel patterns forecasted for the Year 2030. The corridor was subdivided into six service segments for Tier 1 analysis based on these travel patterns. Each service segment was oriented around one or more of the three major Central Business Districts in the corridor.

8.  
Alignments considered in Tier 1 included both the FEC and the South Florida Railroad Corridor, where CSXT freight trains, Tri-Rail and Amtrak run. Highway corridors included US-1 and a part of Interstate 95 in Palm Beach County. The Intra-Coastal Waterway, power utility rights-of-way, and canals were also considered.

9.

The study started with a very long list of technologies but quickly focused on five modes that were most suitable for longer-distance travel in the corridor. The leading transit technologies were:

Rail Rapid Transit trains, like Metrorail, operating on exclusive rights-of-way.

Light Rail Transit trains operating on exclusive or shared rights-of-way.

Bus Rapid Transit: buses, like the South Dade Busway; operating on exclusive or shared rights-of-way, and

Regional Buses providing premium express service on existing roadways.

10.

The final mode was Regional Rail, which includes a number of railroad technologies. Regional rail can include locomotive-hauled commuter rail trains like Tri-Rail and diesel or electric self-propelled rail cars (called D-M-Us or E-M-Us, respectively). Some D-M-Us and E-M-Us can share tracks with freight trains, Amtrak and other commuter trains, while others require a separate set of tracks.

11.

Station areas were identified for modeling purposes. Specific station locations were not identified. Rather, half-mile circles were used to describe the general area in which a station might be needed. The initial station areas were selected based on highway access. The suitability of each station area to support transit oriented development was rated based on land use, socio-economic data and other factors. More specific station locations will be determined and evaluated in greater detail in Tier 2 in partnership with communities.

12.

38 alternatives were identified for Tier 1 evaluation. Each represented a unique combination of alignment and modal technology that addresses a specific travel need.

13.

Year 2030 weekday ridership was forecasted for each alternative using a three county travel demand model. Higher speed rail modes --rail rapid transit and regional rail --yielded the highest ridership. Short extensions of Tri-Rail on Interstate 95 or using regional buses in Palm Beach County yielded the lowest ridership.

14.

A range of capital costs were also estimated for each alternative, based on recent construction costs nationwide. Alternatives using the US-1 alignment were far more costly than comparable options on the FEC. Rail rapid transit generated the highest costs of all alternatives using the FEC.

15.

Operating costs were also estimated for each alternative based on unit costs drawn from the National Transit Database. No clear distinctions between alternatives were identified at the Tier 1 level of analysis with respect to operating costs.

16.

Most of the proposed improvements can be accommodated within the existing FEC right of way. Additional property needs may be identified in Tier 2, however, to augment station areas, for maintenance facilities, for east-west connections, and to relieve minor constraints. As these properties are identified, the department will carry out a Right of Way Acquisition and Relocation Assistance Program in accordance with Federal and State statutes. Information concerning these programs and statutes is available at the registration desk. Should relocations be found to be necessary in Tier 2, department staff will be available to assist you in finding a replacement for your home or business location at the time when right of way is actually acquired. Our primary aim is to minimize the hardship involved in the unavoidable relocation of residents or businesses due to transportation improvements.

17.

Environmental analyses were also carried out for the study corridor as part of the Tier 1 study, following an environmentally streamlined manner in accordance with federal and state regulations. The analyses screened for potential impacts on the human and natural environment, although the degree of impacts were not determined in Tier 1. In Tier 2, these impacts will be analyzed in greater detail and mitigation strategies will be developed.

18.

Tier 1 screening activities covered a range issues and concerns associated with the human and natural environment, including impacts on air quality, noise, vibration, flood plains, wetlands, endangered and threatened species, archeological or historic resources and environmental justice.

19.

In general, the proposed improvements should have a positive impact on air quality, urban in-fill, densification and economic development around new station areas in the coastal communities, and environmental justice concerns.

20.

Potentially negative impacts of the improvements were also identified. None of the negative impacts were deemed insurmountable. All will be addressed in detail in Tier 2 and mitigation plans will be developed. These impacts include noise and vibration, community cohesion, local traffic circulation, cultural resources, aesthetics, possible contamination sites in station areas, property acquisitions and relocations, and canals and waterways.

21.

Tier 1 analysis concluded that the US-1 and I-95 alternatives were invariably more costly, less productive and had more potential negative impacts than their counterparts using the FEC alignment. The sole exception was a regional bus alternative on I-95 between the Mangonia Park Tri-Rail station and Jupiter, which attracted relative few riders but had very low capital costs. Therefore, this regional bus alternative, as well as bus rapid transit, light rail, rail rapid transit and regional rail alternatives on the FEC alignment, were recommended for further more detailed analysis in Tier 2.

22.

Based on the travel patterns identified in the Tier 1 travel demand forecasts, it was also recommended to restructure the Tier 2 study into four sections. Service, engineering and environmental analyses will determine the most appropriate choices for modal technology and alignment for each section as well as for the corridor as a whole. The minimum operable segments, and the priorities accorded to each section, will reflect technical considerations such as ridership, and policy considerations such as community support and the availability of local funding.

23.

This concludes our study overview. Please take this opportunity to visit with the project team in the adjacent room and share your questions and comments. At 6:30, we ask you to return to this area where we will convene the formal portion of this public hearing. You are invited to make a statement on the formal record regarding your opinion of the Study and its recommendations. Thank you.