



# MEETING MINUTES

**TO:** Scott Seeburger & Project Record

**FROM:** Aviva Baer

**DATE:** June 29, 2006

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

**SUBJECT:** Public Workshop Series No. 1 (Broward County)

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

On Thursday, June 29, 2006, from 6 – 8 pm, a Public Workshop was held in Broward County at the Mitchell Moore Center, 901 NW 10 Street, Pompano Beach.

Invitation postcards for all five Public Workshops were mailed to 227,191 households and businesses within the vicinity of the study corridor, and 34 people attended this workshop. E-flyers were sent to Broward County elected officials and the meeting notice was posted on the county calendar and on the calendars of the nine municipalities within the Broward study area.

## Part I: Public review of project illustrations

Upon their arrival, members of the public were asked to sign in and were given meeting materials, included the scoping booklet, project newsletters, Advance Notification, and fact sheets. These materials were also provided in Spanish and Creole.

There was an “open house” prior to the PowerPoint presentation, so members of the public could review the project maps taped to the walls of the gymnasium and discuss them with staff members who were stationed around the area.

## Part II: Workshop

**FDOT Project Manager Scott Seeburger** began the formal presentation at 6:30 pm by narrating the project overview. He introduced Gannett Fleming National Transit Planning Manager Tom Hickey, who began his narration of the slides regarding alignments and technologies with definitions of those terms. He said an alternative consists of a technology plus an alignment plus a travel market to be served. (Alternative = technology + alignment + market.)

At the close of the PowerPoint, Mr. Seeburger opened the floor to questions.

**Ms. Linda Brown** of Fort Lauderdale said she has been hearing about plans for the future of mass transit in Broward County. She said she understands the county is coming to voters and asking for money so she is very interested in knowing the cost of this system. She said mass transit is a very important part of infrastructure in densely populated areas. Mr. Seeburger said the team doesn't have the numbers now, but will have a better idea as work progresses over the summer.

**Ms. Monica Wilson** asked how long it will take to bring the system into place. Mr. Seeburger said one factor will be the tax issue and whether there will be a local source of funds. He said if all things come together we can see something happening in about six years. Ms. Wilson asked if there will be a referendum and if Seeburger and others at FDOT will be promoting it. Mr. Seeburger said as public employees they can't do that.

**Ms. Cara Bloomberg** said she thinks 15-minute headways would greatly improve the system. Mr. Seeburger said more funds would be needed to provide more service, so it's a difficult balancing act.

**Mr. Gary Hoekur** of Fort Lauderdale said one of his overriding concerns is that when a project of this magnitude comes to fruition, planners should be aware that there are other issues closely tied to it, such as affordable housing. He said something like this project will attract a lot of retail, but people are concerned about affordable housing. He said if the system runs along Federal Highway it will wipe out a lot of existing housing so elected officials must be aware of those needs as well.

**Douglas Matthes** of Pompano Beach said planning is centered on the FEC Corridor, but in Pompano it is only a couple of miles from the CSX Corridor. He said millions of dollars have already been spent there but the trains still run late and stations are poorly maintained. He asked why this system will be any different. He said what is really needed is more affordable housing. He asked if anyone has considered building a rail line along the Sawgrass Expressway, because people on the western edge of the county need a transit system, and there also needs to be more east-west transportation. He wondered if there had ever been a study of the demand from the western communities to downtown Fort Lauderdale. Mr. Seeburger went back to the PowerPoint slide which showed systems currently under study or about to be constructed and said maybe something else will be planned in the future.

**Marguerite Luster** of Pompano Beach said the city already has Tri-Rail but development in downtown Pompano Beach will bring people north. She said she could envision a station at Atlantic Boulevard. She said the system would also be a good way to get to downtown Miami to the medical center there, so it would be very good for Pompano Beach. Ms. Luster said she noticed how the systems are being connected. She would like to see it happen but is concerned about homes being taken by eminent domain. She said the Tri-Rail stations are too far apart because it only stops at Sample Road, so she said an FEC system would make a big difference.

**Mr. Lyle Gamble** four three different comments:

- 1) He said the presentation seemed to be targeting people commuting to work. He asked how much the study incorporated weekend excursions. He asked if Tri-Rail can be extended from Vero Beach to the Florida Keys. He said that would provide weekend uses for people who want to go to festivals.
- 2) Mr. Gamble thinks an elevated system is best because during the school year a lot of children have to cross the tracks. He said increasing frequency is a good idea, provided the trains run on time. He said punctuality is the biggest problem, so if the system runs on time but only every half hour, that would be good.

- 3) He asked which jurisdiction covers the FEC tracks, since planners are looking at different forms of transportation. Mr. Hickey said tracks could be laid alongside the existing FEC Railway, and would be under the aegis of the Federal Railroad Administration and the Florida Department of Transportation.
- 4) Mr. Gamble asked how much the project costs. He said on many railroad projects 60% goes to labor, or to the people who will be maintaining the equipment and right-of-way as well as operating the trains. Mr. Seeburger said that will be a function of government and there will be equal opportunity employment.

**Ms. Rosie Lacue** asked how many people will need to be relocated by the construction. Mr. Hickey said most alignments involve the existing railroad tracks so at this point it doesn't appear there will be much in the way of right-of-way acquisition. Acquisition will most likely only be needed for station locations.

Ms. Lacue asked if that meant the project wouldn't be taking homes within one mile on either side of the tracks. Mr. Hickey said that was just the range of the study, which was looking at environmental or historic issues within the area. Mr. Seeburger said the study area is all built out, and the last thing planners want to do is take right-of-way, which is why the FEC Railway looks so attractive. He said that regarding possible alignments on Dixie Highway and U.S. 1, planners are only considering them within the roadway. He said the only property taking would be for stations and a maintenance facility or storage yard.

**Mr. Dan Glickman** of Deerfield Beach said he had been happy with the study up to and including the draft alternatives. However, he said he was very unhappy about the stations, because the public hasn't been consulted on them and the exhibits around the room imply that alignments have already been decided. He said no one knows about these things, and people were told that the alignments wouldn't be identified until some time in the fall of this year, but then it's too late to comment.

Mr. Seeburger said he wasn't clear as to what Mr. Glickman was unhappy about. He said the process proceeds in this way, and it's the process followed by transportation professionals. Mr. Seeburger said he hasn't heard any comments about stations. Mr. Hickey said the process has to start somewhere, and in the past few weeks stations have been placed on the map but the process doesn't end there or that night. He said the exhibits will be on the website and planners will continue to work on them. He said that work on refining the alignments and station locations continues even after the project receives a Record of Decision from the Federal Transit Administration.

**Mr. Bill Keith** said he thinks this is the most comprehensive study he has seen in a highly complex area. He said he assumes housing will be addressed directly or indirectly. He asked if educational centers had been considered and said there could be benefits to school systems and universities. He said he hasn't heard anything about hurricane evacuation and thinks these would be good vehicles for evacuation. He then asked about availability of study information, and if it is posted on a website. Seeburger said planners will plug in school locations, but he doesn't think trains can move a lot of people for an evacuation. Mr. Hickey said as a means of evacuation, the trains can only move north and south but can't move around. He said evacuation isn't just an issue of transportation, but of how to collect people and what to do with them at the other end of the trip.

**Mr. Larry Eldridge** asked if the FEC system will take the place of the Seaboard system. He said Tri-Rail is getting more ridership as service improves. He said his concern is that planners aren't making better use of a system already in place and asked if it might be more practical to use the system already there, add more stations and make them better quality. He said if a system is duplicated on the FEC Rail it will have to start from scratch, so why not use the Seaboard tracks. Mr. Hickey said the Seaboard railroad, now the CSX, already has much activity on it. He said there is not as much industrial activity along the FEC, so planners are looking at how they can coordinate with that system. He said that will provide a basis of comparison between using the FEC or the CSX.

**Ms. Daisy Joseph** asked if this system will replace Tri-Rail. Seeburger said no, and that it wasn't looking to replace freight service, either.

Mr. Gamble asked how much space will be needed for a service area. Mr. Hickey said there are two types of facilities. There is a major maintenance facility and there are satellite facilities where trains are cleaned and inspected which would require two or three sets of tracks.

Mr. Matthes asked where trains will be fueled, and Hickey said it is done overnight and is scheduled so at least every other day the train goes back to the maintenance facility.

Mr. Glickman said he looked at the station areas and apologized for being unhappy. He suggested that Copans Road would be a major destination as a mall is being built there.

Mr. Matthes said planners shouldn't think about taking part of the Pompano Beach airport for a maintenance facility.

**Mr. Walt Slotten** asked if someone wanting to go from Palm Beach to the Fort Lauderdale airport would have to transfer. Hickey said planners are still looking at travel patterns. Seeburger said all 85 miles of the project can't be built at once so that gives planners the opportunity to figure out how to break up the corridor and allow the different county governments to proceed. He said he doesn't know how it could be done all at once considering the growth in the corridor. He said putting transit in the FEC Corridor is an obvious choice because the tracks are already there and Tri-Rail isn't as practical because it doesn't operate where most of the population is.

Mr. Gamble said planners should concentrate on getting people from neighborhoods to the stations so they don't have to get in cars to get there. He said when the various segments share with freight it will affect their schedules.

Monica Wilson asked if anyone has considered the possibility of a Metrorail system. She said there is already some delay at railroad crossings with people waiting for freight trains to pass and wonders what will happen during rush hour traffic at those crossroads. Mr. Hickey said it will depend on whether it is a surface or elevated crossing. He said if people get what they want, they will use the system and it wouldn't be practical to give people something they won't use. He said that looking at the system from the public's point of view, going elevated would be the best solution. Mr. Seeburger confirmed that Wilson was suggesting an elevated system similar to Metrorail all along the corridor. He said going elevated takes away the concern for safety at the crossings.

Mr. Eldridge asked how much more expensive it would be to build the system in segments with different technologies. He asked if there would be a benefit and ultimately cost less to build up because the area underneath the tracks could have other uses. He said the system would help people who now can't afford cars or fuel.

**Mr. Eric Goodman** said he knows lots of people like elevated tracks, but he thinks having more pedestrian access is better, especially for people with disabilities. He said it is much more difficult to get on and off trains if they are elevated. He said maybe in the downtown area an elevated system would be good, but planners need to look at pedestrian accessibility, which is a good thing for people who want to take their bikes on the trains. Mr. Hickey said the analysis takes all those benefits and costs into account.

Mr. Eldridge said to keep the cost down maybe it would be more practical to build an elevated system within the cities but to come down in other areas. He said if this transportation were extended further north where there is less population density it would be a way to provide affordable housing.

Mr. Matthes said he hopes when the stations are planned they will be close to the system. He said there might be parking around the planned Pompano Beach bus facility but it's not going to be built for awhile.

Mr. Eldridge asked if where there are stations in the interior of the bigger cities there can also be parking garages. Mr. Hickey said access to the stations is an issue, but there is a concern about bringing too much traffic to the downtown center.

The meeting ended at 8:45 pm.