



MEETING SUMMARY

TO: Scott Seeburger & Project File

FROM: Gannett Fleming, Inc., Gladys Kidd & Associates

DATE: June 22, 2006

REFERENCE: South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis (SFECCTA)
Financial Project ID: 417031-1-22-01

SUBJECT: Public Workshop Series No. 1 (Miami-Dade County)

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

On Thursday, June 22, 2006, the first Public Workshop for the SFECCTAS was held in Miami-Dade County at the Gwen Margolis Community Center, 1590 NE 123rd Street, North Miami, FL.

Approximately 85 people were present for the workshop which was scheduled for 6 PM to 8 PM. A random mailing of 64,534 was completed by Rapid Mail utilizing the County's GIS list. Electronic postcards were sent via email to municipalities within the study area, and requests were made to place the meeting date, time and location on the municipal calendars and bulletin boards.

Part I: Public review of project illustrations

Prior to the formal presentations, project maps were exhibited in the rear of the room and staff members were available to assist the public in examining the aerials and exhibits and answer any questions regarding the project during this "open house" period. The meeting handouts included the scoping booklet, project newsletters, Advance Notification, and fact sheets. These materials were also provided in Spanish and Creole, and a Creole translator was available.

Part II: Workshop

At 6:30 p.m., staff commenced with a PowerPoint presentation. The following elected/public officials or their representatives were present:

- Commissioner Bob Anderson, Biscayne Park
- Jazzlyn Diaz, Representative of Commissioner Sally Heyman
- Jeff Geimer, City of North Miami
- Lilia Medina, City of Miami
- Gary Wohlforth, City of North Miami Beach
- Susan Schrieber, Miami-Dade MPO

- Prospero Herrera II, State Representative District 108

The formal presentation was by Scott Seeburger (FDOT) and Tom Hickey (Gannett Fleming). Mr. Seeburger made concluding remarks and opened up the meeting to comments and questions.

An unidentified speaker asked about tunneling, indicated that BART [the Bay Area Rapid Transit system in San Francisco] provided better service than the buses serving North Miami. Mr. Seeburger responded that this has been looked at in the past and it is very costly. Moreover, there is available right-of-way along the FEC that could be used more cost-effectively than tunneling. Mr. Hickey responded that the exclusivity of elevated and at-grade alignments on the FEC would provide similar service quality.

Mr. Charles Lueb made several comments regarding future service:

- The interior of the bus vehicles needs to be nice in order for patrons to use them.
- There needs to be a Port of Miami to Omni connection.
- There should be a connection to Golden Glades.

This speaker also asked about the timing, with regard to the Aventura area, when can service be expected to be in place. Mr. Seeburger responded that, if a lot of things come together, it would not be inconceivable to see something operating over some part of the corridor in 6 years. However, 8 to 12 years is a more probable expectation.

An unidentified speaker asked what was in it for the FEC. Mr. Seeburger responded that the FEC requested this study. The FEC will be negotiating with the FDOT.

Another **unidentified speaker** asked a follow-up question of whether there will be sharing of track between freight and passenger uses. Mr. Hickey responded that the consultant team is looking at that issue. Some of the technologies presented during this workshop would require use of separate tracks.

Mr. Wayne Sutton, Miami-Dade County Public Works Dept., asked about project funding and what percentages would need to come from State and local sources. He also asked about the top speed that the train could operate at-grade. Mr. Seeburger responded that a typical funding mix consists of 25% local, 25% State and 50% federal, and that the federal share can be negotiated to an extent. Both the FDOT and the FTA will require that there is a local, dedicated funding source to help cover operating costs. Mr. Seeburger elaborated by saying that it will take some time to progress through the necessary work on this project and that if Broward County is not able to put the transit tax referendum question on the ballot this November that there will still be time next year. Mr. Hickey responded that 79 MPH would be the likely top speed for passenger trains and 60 mph for freight trains.

Mr. Sutton asked a follow-up question on how this project fits in with the other transit projects. Mr. Seeburger responded by explaining that each of the MPOs has this

project ranked but not as a top priority. The MPOs have the opportunity to change their project priorities.

Mr. John Van Leer suggested that tunneling is not an option due to storm surge in hurricane season. He also suggested that there should be more tax on gasoline.

Mr. Dennis Pernot asked whether the station areas are a "done deal?" Mr. Seeburger responded "No" emphasizing that we were looking for feedback. Mr. Pernot mentioned that this FEC project is looked upon as a done deal to the Miami21 project by DPZ.

Mr. Albert Green, an American Airlines Arena employee and MDT Night Owl service user, asked if MDT is going to retrofit their buses to run on rails. Mr. Hickey responded that, technically, it could be done but there are FRA Compliance issues that would have to be worked out. Mr. Green followed up with the question of whether service could be implemented on the Port of Miami spur. Mr. Hickey responded "Yes" but that special connector services between airports and seaports were a secondary consideration for Tier 2 after base, line-haul services were identified.

An unidentified speaker mentioned that he has heard that 6 tracks could be built in the corridor. Mr. Hickey responded that six tracks would be the hypothetically possible but a combined passenger/freight service would only need 2 or 3 tracks if they can share tracks, or typically 3 to 4 tracks if passenger and freight tracks are kept on separate tracks with some areas of 5 tracks where freight customers may have special needs.

An unidentified speaker asked if there was any rational reason why some or all of the FEC freight could not be moved to the CSX/Tri-Rail tracks. Mr. Hickey responded by saying that the consultant team is looking at that. Mr. Seeburger added that the fact that there are a number of local customers and the Ports served by the railway prevents this project from putting *all* of the FEC freight on the CSX. One of the alternatives under study also looks at ramping up more Tri-Rail service which would conflict with additional freight service on CSX.

Mr. Bob Powers, Palm Grove Neighborhood Association, stated that if a train were to be placed in service on the FEC tomorrow, everyone would take it. He also suggested Mr. Tom Gustafson as someone who could help with arranging funding for this project.

An unidentified speaker asked why the study team was considering US-1 since it was so congested. Mr. Hickey indicated the need for completeness in the FTA process. Mr. Seeburger asked for a "straw vote" of who favored the FEC alignment and no one voted for US-1.

Mr. Jim Reeder suggested that if Miami-Dade County could get another half-cent sales tax more could be done. He also recommended that a service demonstration program be done by putting a train in service on the FEC line. Mr. Hickey responded that caution

must be exercised when conducting a demonstration program or implementing experimental service on a short-term basis. Such demonstrations are rarely sufficient to provide a realistic demonstration of service and can be misconstrued as proof service would not work, Mr. Reeder mentioned that there were a few (light rail or DMU) vehicles purchased by the State around the I-4 area. Mr. Seeburger responded that he wasn't aware of any such purchase.

An unidentified speaker inquired about the cost differential between at-grade versus elevated construction. Mr. Hickey responded that it is a lot more expensive to build elevated. Mr. Seeburger added that elevated heavy rail construction used to be \$100 million per mile and now it may be closer to \$200 million. At-grade construction of additional tracks for passenger service runs about \$20 million per mile.

This speaker also asked about land for maintenance facilities. Mr. Hickey responded that 20 acres of land would be appropriate for a central maintenance facility.

An unidentified speaker suggested that it would be nice to have an overlay that shows all of the old FEC stations.

Mr. Wayne Sutton inquired about the area depicted on one of the displays showing a station at William Lehman Causeway and why not Aventura instead. Mr. Hickey responded that the rationale for a station area centered near the causeway is to offer some opportunities for access to the corridor from the east but emphasized that all areas depicted are preliminary.

An **unidentified speaker** asked whether some of the study work included surveying people. Mr. Seeburger responded by explaining that there were two types of surveys conducted as a part of this study. An on-board transit survey conducted on buses throughout the study area, and an origin-destination study conducting by photographing license plates and sending surveys to randomly-selected samples of vehicle owners.

Mr. Brian Wade, Miami Shores, asked whether a pilot service demonstration program could be done and whether one has ever been done in this country. Mr. Hickey responded that some systems have tried the approach but generally they have not resulted in a successful service. The problem lies in getting sufficient funding to get a realistic demonstration service implemented. Platforms, parking and other service necessities are all needed. Demonstrations typically start with limited service and operate for too short a duration to attract meaningful changes in commute travel. It takes two to three years for ridership to stabilize on a new service, so a short, limited service demonstration can backfire if it achieves low ridership.

There being no further questions or comments this workshop adjourned at 8:55 PM.