

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members

AGENDA ITEM 9

From: Staff

Date: December 13, 2013 Council Meeting

Subject: Resolution to Advance the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Commuter Rail Project – Presentation by Florida Department of Transportation and South Florida Regional Transportation Authority

Introduction

The reintroduction of passenger rail service on the Florida East Coast (FEC) rail corridor has been a long-standing Council priority for more than two decades. Since 2005, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), along with the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional planning councils (RPCs), and others have been working together on a comprehensive master plan for premium transit service in Southeast Florida. FDOT has served as the lead agency to manage the Tri-Rail Coastal Link (TRCL) project, which was formerly known as the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis Study. This project is envisioned as a long-term, multi-phase approach to expand the transit system in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide an update regarding the TRCL project and request approval of a resolution encouraging the project be moved forward into the next phase of study. This update and resolution request is being presented to the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils along with the Broward County, Miami-Dade County and Palm Beach MPOs, the Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC), and the SFRTA. Together, these agencies along with FDOT form the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Partnership. The presentation will address the status of the TRCL planning study, its refined service plan, and anticipated project benefits and costs.

In May 2013, Council entered into an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the TRCL project with seven additional partner agencies, including the FDOT, SFRTA, the three regional MPOs, SEFTC, and the South Florida Regional Planning Council. The MOU described the roles and responsibilities of the partner agencies for the planning, financing, construction, and operation of the future commuter rail service. One key responsibility is for the partner agencies to formally review project actions at various stages of the project. The attached resolution represents one such opportunity for Council to review the project, and subsequently, document its support for the project to be advanced into the “Project Development Phase,” which is a time-limited planning and evaluation phase for transit projects that may be submitted for

federal funding. Also, pursuant to the MOU, formal negotiations have commenced with Florida East Coast Industries regarding access to the FEC rail corridor and related issues.

The accompanying resolution requests support from Council to encourage FDOT and SFRTA to commence a two-year Project Development phase under Federal Transit Administration guidelines. During this phase, the TCRL project will be further defined and evaluated, including financing, station locations, phasing, and operations. A “Locally Preferred Alternative” will be defined and proposed for inclusion in each MPO’s Long Range Transportation Plan. A financial plan will also be developed in cooperation with the regional agencies, local governments, and stakeholders.

Recommendation

Council should approve the resolution encouraging the Florida Department of Transportation and the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority to transmit a letter requesting the Tri-Rail Coastal Link project be advanced into the Project Development Phase.

Attachment

RESOLUTION # 13-05

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, PALM BEACH, AND ST. LUCIE SUPPORTING THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S REQUEST, ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTHEAST FLORIDA REGION, TO THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION FOR THE TRI-RAIL COASTAL LINK SERVICE TO ENTER INTO THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PHASE

WHEREAS, the reintroduction of passenger rail service on the FEC rail corridor, as part of a multi-modal transportation network, has been a priority of Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council for more than two decades; and

WHEREAS, future population growth is expected to outpace highway system expansion, which will dramatically worsen congestion levels and travel times within Southeast Florida; and

WHEREAS, there is a critical need to develop adequate transit services to provide enhanced mobility along a major corridor of regional significance; and

WHEREAS, the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) operates the Tri-Rail commuter rail service in Miami, Broward, and Palm Beach counties on the CSX rail corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Florida East Coast (FEC) railroad corridor right-of-way represents an important and strategic transportation corridor that currently provides vital freight rail service to and from Southeast Florida; and

WHEREAS, since 2005, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has examined various transit alternatives, alignments, and technologies along this 85-mile corridor from Jupiter to Miami in an effort to establish new rapid transit services; and

WHEREAS, the Florida East Coast Industries, Inc. (FECI) is expected to implement, in 2015, All Aboard Florida, a new inter-city rail passenger service between Miami and Orlando with intermediate stops in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach; and

WHEREAS, an eight-party Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Service was executed, which establishes the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Partnership including FDOT, SFRTA, Miami-Dade MPO, Broward MPO, Palm Beach MPO, Southeast Florida Transportation Council, and the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils; and

WHEREAS, the MOU delineates the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies with respect to project development and implementation; and

WHEREAS, negotiations with the FECI have begun in accordance with the MOU to provide access and inclusion of Tri-Rail Coastal Link Service within the FEC rail corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Service MOU requires the project obtain concurrence from the Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach MPOs at major project milestones; and

WHEREAS, through these efforts an integrated, complementary system of transit services will be provided for existing and future travel markets along the densely developed FEC corridor.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL THAT:

SECTION 1. Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council supports a joint SFRTA/FDOT request to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), on behalf of the Southeast Florida region and the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Partnership, for the Tri-Rail Coastal Link project to enter into the Project Development phase.

SECTION 2. FDOT completes the Project Development effort within two years, consistent with federal guidelines.

SECTION 3. FDOT returns to the Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach MPO Governing Boards for the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative, which will include details as to project financing, during the Project Development phase as per the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Service MOU.

SECTION 4. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its passage and adoption.

DULY ADOPTED by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council this 13th day of December, 2013.

Peter O'Bryan
Chairman

Michael J. Busha
Executive Director