

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members

AGENDA ITEM 14

From: Staff

Date: June 17, 2016 Council Meeting

Subject: All Aboard Florida Update

Introduction

The purpose of this item is to provide an update regarding activities related to the Florida East Coast Industries' (FECI) proposed All Aboard Florida (AAF) project. The project is intended to provide new high-speed intercity express service between Miami and Orlando on the Florida East Coast (FEC) rail corridor. Pursuant to the company's application for a Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing loan, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is processing an environmental impact statement.

Background

In 2012, FECI introduced the AAF project, which proposes new intercity express rail service between downtown Miami and Orlando, with additional stations in downtown Fort Lauderdale and downtown West Palm Beach. The project has been the subject of extensive Council, local government, and public discussion since its announcement. As currently proposed, the project would provide sixteen daily round-trip trains, totaling 32 additional trains on the corridor with maximum speeds of 79 MPH south of West Palm Beach, 110 MPH between West Palm Beach and Cocoa, and 125 MPH from Cocoa to Orlando. The company has indicated the FEC rail corridor will continue to carry freight service through Florida East Coast Railroad, which is projected to increase over time. Although the rail corridor is privately owned, it is included in the Florida Department of Transportation Strategic Intermodal System, which prioritizes it for statewide transportation funding to advance economic competitiveness and quality of life.

General Project Updates

Construction of Phase 1 Improvements

AAF construction activity is underway on the Phase 1 corridor, between 15th Street in West Palm Beach and Miami. Periodic grade crossing closures will occur for the installation of railroad track, safety and quiet zone improvements, sidewalks, and related infrastructure. AAF indicates all construction activity should be completed by the fourth quarter of 2016. Subsequently, it is anticipated local governments will publish Notices of Establishment for the creation of a

continuous quiet zone from West Palm Beach south to the Palm Beach County line. Similarly, a continuous quiet zone is also anticipated throughout all of Broward County.

The Palm Beach MPO is working with the FRA to review the safety improvements proposed by AAF for Phase 2 from 15th Street in West Palm Beach north to the northern Palm Beach County line. Identification of any additional infrastructure necessary for the establishment of quiet zones will be identified by the summer of 2016.

Marine Navigation

The Jupiter Inlet District has applied for a Florida Inland Navigational District grant to modify the bridge span at the Loxahatchee River railroad bridge. The improvements would increase the vertical clearance from 4 feet to 7.72 feet or greater above mean high water, thereby allowing the majority of vessel traffic to pass under the bridge when it is in the down and locked position. If funding is secured, construction is anticipated in 2017, with completion in 2018.

Grade Crossing Improvement Plans

AAF has provided final 100 percent plans to local governments in the region regarding planned grade crossing improvements to address requirements in the final environmental impact statement. Local governments are continuing to review plans and coordinate with AAF.

Recommendation

For information only.