



MARTIN MPO

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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March 6, 2014

Mr. Gene Stratton, Bridge Management Specialist
United States Coast Guard District Seven
Bridge Administration Branch
Brickell Plaza Federal Building
909 SE First Avenue
Miami, FL 33131-3050

RE: All Aboard Florida Project and the Obstruction of Navigable Waterways

Dear Mr. Stratton:

At the February 24, 2014 Martin Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board meeting, there was extensive discussion related to the Florida East Coast Industry's (FECI) All Aboard Florida (AAF) passenger rail project. The MPO Board is extremely concerned about the project's effect on the navigable waters, particularly the St. Lucie River and the Okeechobee Waterway which connects the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Okeechobee and the west coast of Florida.

In Martin County, the railroad draw bridge on Dixie Highway over the St. Lucie River will not be double tracked. FECI has stated that as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the engineers will look for ways to improve the functionality of the draw bridge and the scheduling of the trains to reduce the impacts to boaters. However, they confirmed that this bridge will remain single tracked. The estimated two passenger trains per hour, the time it takes to raise and lower the draw bridge and the lead time that the draw bridge needs to be down as the train approaches, with the already existing freight trains will have a significant impact on the region's marine industry. At the Board meeting, an owner of a local marina spoke during public comment and expressed his concerns about how this type of delay could affect his business. He stated that with the additional number of bridge openings, it could discourage boaters from taking this route and ultimately put him "out of business."

At the time of this letter, we are awaiting to learn specifics regarding the permitting process. Based upon discussions with FECI, the bridge permit may be packaged with the EIS which is already underway. However, it is our understanding that the Coast Guard may require FECI to apply for a separate bridge permit because of the volume of trains on this corridor and the additional obstruction to the navigable waterways.

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Including the Martin MPO's comments and concerns in the official record of the EIS and permitting process is critical to the survival of the area's marine industry.

Please notify the Martin MPO when the permitting process has been defined, and we will provide you with our official comments.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding this very important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Bausch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Bausch, Chairman
Martin MPO

cc: Martin MPO Policy Board
Donald J. Cuzzo, Martin County FIND Commissioner
Mark Crosley, Executive Director, FIND
Evelyn Smart, Bridge Permit Section U.S. Coast Guard District Seven
Taryn Kryzda, Martin County Administrator
Paul Nicoletti, Stuart City Manager
Rusty Roberts, Vice President – Corporate Development FECI
Ali Soule, Public Affairs Manager All Aboard Florida