CITY OF PALM BEACH GARDENS
10500 N. MILITARY TRAIL PALM BEACH GARDENS, FLORIDA 33410-4698

April 25, 2014

Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

The City of Palm Beach Gardens is actively monitoring the impacts, both positive and negative, of the All Aboard Florida (AAF) passenger rail project as well as the Florida East Coast Industries' (FECI) plan to increase freight trains traffic along its corridor. Our City Council is very concerned about these projects as we weigh the perceived effects to our community. Although passenger rail connectivity throughout the Palm Beach County area has been a topic for many years, never was the amount of potential rail traffic envisioned to be as great as what is proposed by various rail projects. Obviously, the main concerns are related to impacts to the quality of life for our residents and impediments to our business community.

The prospects of private rail company producing a positive economic engine for South Florida is inviting. However, concerns over traffic congestion, emergency response, and the increased risks inherent to a rail line running through the middle of a community have us questioning the quality of the project and FECI/AAF's concern for its local partners.

We are asking that before this project receives approvals from the Federal Rail Administration (FRA), the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT), and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), that these agencies develop mitigation strategies to ensure that FECI and AAF take the appropriate actions to address the impacts of their project. Specifically, the following should be requirements of the project through the proper jurisdictional entity or as stipulations to the RRIF loan:

- **Crossing & Pedestrian Safety**: *Require that the safety measures outlined in the "On-Site Engineering Field Report – Part 1," authored by Frank A. Frey, Gen. Engineer-HSR, dated March 20. 2014 are implemented.*

  All Aboard Florida has indicated that trains could be passing through our community at speeds up to 110 MPH. Our crossings are vital connections within the business community, and most are utilized five (5) days a week for the crossing of schoolchildren. It is unconscionable that All Aboard Florida is only committed to the required improvements and not the higher safety standard set by the FRA.

- **Emergency Response:** *Require that FECI and AAF provide a synchronized and predictable train schedule so that emergency response in our community is not impeded.*

Additionally, require that all rail entities work cooperatively with local 911 response agencies by providing live data on train movement so that "live" emergency response actions taken by our community can be routed with minimal impact from a closed crossing.

The impacts of the increased rail traffic in the corridor should not be left to each individual municipality to mitigate. FECI and AAF should be held accountable for their part in creating possible impediments to emergency response. We acknowledge that passenger trains will clear intersection in a timely manner. Nevertheless, those trains in combination with additional freight trains create a safety situation that has to be addressed. FECI and AAF should acknowledge that emergency response is both the rail companies *and* the City's obligation to our community, especially if an incident occurs on their rail line.

- **Noise and Community Impacts:** *Require that FECI and AAF commit to becoming fiscally & operationally responsible for all impacts of their rail line operation.*

  The introduction of rail many years ago created cities along Florida's east coast. As much as rail encouraged growth in Florida, the communities along the corridor have been the backbone to the rail line's business. To forget that these communities now exist in a dramatically different fashion than they did at the inception of FECI's company is a complete disregard for what is right for the communities versus what is best for the business.

  We implore FECI and AAF to work with us in finding ways to lessen the impact of noise and vibration to adjacent homeowners and businesses. Additionally, FECI and AAF business models should relieve our taxpayers of any fiscal obligation to support their rail enterprise. To continue to hold cities such as ours to outdated crossing agreements maintenance and quite zone infrastructure responsibility are business practices that should be amended.

The City of Palm Beach Gardens is committed to seeking the best possible resolution to the issues created by increased rail traffic. Although we cannot endorse the current plan, we wish to continue to work with the Legislators, Agencies, and FECI/AAF officials that are involved to mitigate community impacts for the greater good of both sides of this issue.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance with regard to this most important issue.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Premuroso, Mayor
City of Palm Beach Gardens

cc: Congressman Patrick Murphy, Florida Congressional District 18
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council