

TOWN OF JUPITER ISLAND

2 BRIDGE ROAD
HOBE SOUND, FLORIDA 33455

TELEPHONE
(772) 545-0100

FAX
(772) 545-0188

May 19, 2014

Honorable Anthony Foxx, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 S.E. New Jersey Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx,

By now, you are no doubt well acquainted with the concerns that citizens, industry leaders and elected officials across the Treasure Coast have raised about All Aboard Florida's proposal to deliver high-speed passenger rail service from Miami to Orlando.

Upon first learning of the proposal, the Town of Jupiter Island conducted a careful, comprehensive examination of all aspects involved. Our extensive research – which also included hosting a presentation by an All Aboard Florida executive – leads us to concur with many of the concerns already on record by others as well as underscore our own unique set of concerns.

As we await the forthcoming Aboard Florida Environmental Impact Statement and continue our search for more answers, we can only conclude that this project will substantially impact our community negatively.

Located on a barrier island, the Town has a single northern roadway to access the mainland – and that roadway crosses Florida East Coast's rail at S.E. Dixie Highway and Bridge Road, less than one-half mile from the Town's limits.

When you combine All Aboard Florida's plans for 32 high-speed passenger trains per day with the projected increases in freight trains – many of which stretch two miles long – gridlock poses concerns beyond convenience. Traffic backups from such lengthy and frequent rail delays could significantly delay EMS and fire emergency response times, shaving precious moments from the famed "golden hour" where expert treatment of a traumatic injury is most likely to save lives.

Furthermore, should an accident occur along the half-mile stretch of Bridge Road when the draw bridge was raised and a freight train was passing through, the victims would be stranded.

Within a few hundred feet of the rail crossing sit a daycare, two elementary schools, a high school and a college where limited parking and peak school arrival and pick-up times presently create congestion and cause traffic snarls daily while in session. This active school zone is also alive with pedestrians and bicyclists. Drastic increases in rail activity will surely heighten safety hazards to children and adults alike. Additionally, this community would suffer the same fate of being isolated from EMS, fire and police response during times when freight trains block access to the local crossing.

The Town is concerned with how elevated noise pollution from the increased speeds and more frequent train activity will diminish the Town's quality of life and subsequent effects upon property values. Town residents are drawn to the tranquil atmosphere the island provides as a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of metropolitan areas across south Florida, an appeal that explains why the Town maintains some of the highest property values in the county. Any impact causing compromise to those property values could create a measurable ripple effect on Martin County's ad valorem budget and levels of service, potentially impacting many county residents.

All Aboard Florida introduced the concept of upgrading specific crossings as "Quiet Zones" to minimize neighborhood noise concerns. However, who pays for the maintenance of these areas and shoulders the liability – the further impacted local residents, of course.

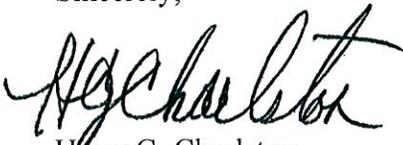
Moreover, even though All Aboard Florida is a private enterprise, federal taxpayers could be tapped to provide nearly \$2 billion in grant funding to help launch the project. Although the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Grant is a loan requiring repayment, passenger rail service in general inspires little confidence of ever operating independently. In fact, no passenger rail service in the United States operates free of government subsidies. Consider, for comparison, Amtrak, which in 2012 reported \$2.88 billion in revenues – and \$4.03 billion in expenses.

All Aboard Florida is simply too costly – to our tax dollars, to our quality of life, and to our personal safety.

We appreciate your careful review of all the impacts involved and your consideration of our concerns. We also wish you well in your sincere and thorough effort to arrive at solutions that benefit the local community and the entire region.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry G. Charlston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "C".

Harry G. Charlston
Mayor