

# TOWN OF JUPITER ISLAND

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May 19, 2014

Rear Admiral John H. Korn, Commander  
U.S. Coast Guard, Seventh District  
Brickell Plaza Federal Building  
909 S.E. First Ave.  
Miami, FL 33131-3050

Dear Admiral Korn,

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 you prepare to review the forthcoming Environmental Impact Statement on All Aboard Florida, we hope our observations provide additional clarity on how substantially this undertaking will impact our community in what we view as profoundly negative. While we've raised objections at the specter of noise disruptions and diminished overall quality of life, the main concern we want to bring to your attention is public safety.

The 30-plus high-speed passenger trains All Aboard Florida projects as traversing the region each day pose only part of the problem. The stated intent of double-tracking the Florida East Coast (FEC) railway corridor to also accommodate increased freight trains – many of which can stretch as long as two miles – all but guarantees regular, and potentially dangerous, gridlock. Traffic backups caused by train delays could present a significant challenge for both motorists and boaters at Hobe Sound Bridge – the only bridge that connects our barrier island from the north to mainland Martin County. The Hobe Sound Bridge is less than a half-mile from FEC's rail crossing.

The Stuart City Commission, the Marine Industries Association of the Treasure Coast, the Guardians of Martin County and the Realtors Association of Martin County, among many, many others, have pointed out that increased train activity will impact boaters crossing under Stuart's rail span over the St. Lucie River. Some estimates predict the rail bridge being tied up a minimum of nine hours per day. In our area, Hobe Sound Bridge enjoys a higher elevation than the Stuart rail bridge. The inconvenience to boaters is minimized, but the risk to motorists –

which may seem unlikely at first until the full impact of all this train activity is further contemplated – bears serious consideration.

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. Such a “worst-case scenario” could occur even today, though the odds are less likely. When you add the daily 32 passenger trains with the spike in freight trains, those odds increase significantly. Within a few hundred feet east 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.

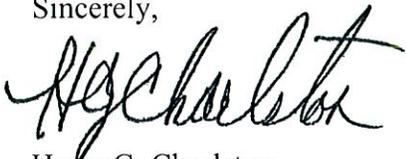
Even without both the bridge and the rail being blocked at the same time, traffic backups due to massively multiplied rail activity could severely hinder the ability of sheriff vehicles, ambulances and fire engines to rapidly respond to a life-threatening event. Precious seconds of the famed “golden hour” – where expert treatment of a traumatic injury is most likely to save lives – could be lost.

As a federal agency that conducts tens of thousands of search-and-rescue missions each year, we know the Coast Guard understands all too well the fragility of the human condition and the vital necessity of rapid emergency response.

As an island community, we are indeed grateful for your dedicated service and appreciate your consideration of our – as well as all others’ – concerns raised about how detrimental this transformative proposal could be to public safety and everyday life on Jupiter Island.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. G. Charlston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent initial "H".

Harry G. Charlston  
Mayor