



City of Stuart

121 S.W. FLAGLER AVENUE • STUART, FLORIDA 34994



May 2, 2014

Rear Admiral John H. Korn, Commander
US Coast Guard, Seventh District
Brickell Plaza Federal Building
909 SE First Avenue
Miami, FL 33131-3050

RECEIVED
MAY 05 2014
TREASURE COAST
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

Subject: "All Aboard Florida" Passenger Rail Service on the Florida East Coast

Dear Admiral Korn:

As you may be aware, the All Aboard Florida (AAF) passenger rail project has received broad federal and state financial support, while at the same time has garnered broad citizen and local government concerns all along the Treasure Coast of Florida.

Many of our constituents are concerned about potential severely adverse impacts that double-tracking the entire Florida East Coast Railway corridor from Miami to Cocoa will have on public safety, business, and property values. These issues are related by the public as additional noise pollution, traffic congestion, increased freight rail traffic, and other environmental impacts, removal of parking leased from FEC, increased roadway crossing maintenance costs, potentially lower property values, difficulty getting to medical services, and a whole host of maritime issues mostly stemming from too many bridge closings over the St. Lucie River.

In essence, the public has cited many potential impacts with no accompanying benefits, and surprisingly with no real answers from AAF.

As publicly stated many times, the Stuart City Commission has supported efforts to restore passenger train service to the east coast of Florida ever since the Florida East Coast Railway abandoned passenger service in 1968. We have led the way to bring an Amtrak stop to our community. However, the AAF trains that are planned to pass through Stuart, without stopping, do not satisfy that restoration effort.

At this point, many of those constituents who were ambivalent about AAF are now either more concerned or against the project. The Stuart City Commission believes much of the confusion and speculation about the adverse effects of the project stem from the lack of communication and lack of information coming from AAF and Florida East Coast Industries. The City Commissioners have taken prudent steps to stay in contact with AAF officials to discuss the impacts to our City, and have not yet received clear answers to any of the issues that concern us most.

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AAF has submitted its proposed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the federal agencies for approval. At this time, we particularly call upon the U.S. Coast Guard to enter the fray, and for the Coast Guard and Federal Railroad Administration to require complete answers regarding the AAF plans for the existing trestle bridge (built in 1905) across the St. Lucie River. It is the one place on the entire FEC rail system that can routinely have a severe adverse effect on the public depending on the amount of time the trestle bridge is actually in the "down" position.

Because AAF has applied for a "Railroad Rehabilitation Improvement Financing" loan, the project is subject to meeting National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requirements, as well as Executive Order 12898 {DOT Order 5610.2(a)}, Environmental Justice (EJ). The EJ Order requires meaningful public involvement along with identification of low income and minority communities. We have identified two critical aspects of this project that require careful study and detailed analyses: potential adverse impacts to community redevelopment areas (CRAs) and impacts to the marine industry.

Within the past few years, the City has approved, or been responsible for developing approximately 500 new deep water boat slips and mooring balls within a few hundred feet of the FEC trestle bridge across the St. Lucie River. These slips have created the genesis of a "Stuart Harbor" development. The slips serve sport-fishing, cruising, and "live-aboard" communities, but they are also important to commercial boat operators, and to the maritime industries which support all of the boating communities.

The City Commission has been informed that maritime navigation on a federal waterway such as the Okeechobee Waterway has certain legal priority over either road or rail crossings. We have been searching for ways to make passenger train traffic more reasonable for the boating community, and one of the ways is to assure the bridge is rotated down and up as few times, and as rapidly, as can be safely done.

The Stuart City Commission believes in transparency when federal and state tax dollars are being spent or loaned. In this case it's over \$2 billion in total. We are hoping that you will be able to get some answers from AAF regarding our questions, and those of our constituents.

Thank you for your kind attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,



TROY A. McDONALD
Mayor

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TAMcD/PJN/al

cc: Senator Bill Nelson
Senator Mario Rubio
Governor Rick Scott
Senator Don Gaetz, President of the Florida Senate
Senator Joe Negron, FL Senate District 32
Representative Will Weatherford, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives
Representative Gayle Harrell, FL House District 83
Representative MaryLynn Magar, FL House District 82
Representative Debbie Mayfield, FL House District 54
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
Martin County Board of County Commissioners
Mayor, Town of Sewall's Point
Mayor, Town of Jupiter Island
Mayor, Town of Ocean Breeze Park