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TREASURE COAST
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

June 23, 2014

The Honorable MaryLynn Magar
Florida House of Representatives, District 82
11704 SE Dixie Highway
Hobe Sound, FL 33455

Dear Representative Magar,

Thank you for your letter of May 22. We appreciate the relationship we have formed with you and also agree with your comment that “expanding our transportation options is positive for a growing and vibrant state.” We are proud to bring to life a project as important and impactful as All Aboard Florida (AAF) will be for the entire State of Florida. Our private investment will create thousands of jobs and generate billions in economic impact that will flow throughout the entire state of Florida, including your district.

I understand that you met with FECI’s Rusty Roberts last week in your Hobe Sound office to discuss some of the questions raised in your letter. We welcome the opportunity to address and clarify the concerns listed in your letter, so that you may be able to share them with your constituents.

In the planning and development of this ground-breaking and 235-mile venture, we are very aware that this service will have impacts. No project of this size is without them. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process that is being led by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is designed to balance those impacts with the benefits the new infrastructure will provide. The Draft EIS document will, in our belief, allay a lot of the fears that have been created because some “facts” have been established without any supporting data. The Draft EIS is expected to be issued in the next several weeks, and I believe it will help set the record straight on many concerns raised, like safety, noise, and maritime impacts.

With regard to maritime issues, the U.S. Coast Guard is a cooperating agency with the FRA in the development of the Draft EIS. They are reviewing the schedule and other information we have provided to determine the impacts and mitigation measures for the three navigable waterways along our corridor. While the Draft EIS will more fully address impacts, I can tell you this: our interests are aligned with those of the boaters and we are aware of their frustration with the current bridge operations. We are making significant upgrades to each of the bridges in order to improve operations and ensure they are operating at maximum efficiencies and with minimum disruption for all users. That is why we are investing more than \$1.5 billion in the rail infrastructure alone. Significant funds will be spent on upgrades to bridges and rail infrastructure which will result in substantial operational improvements along the entire corridor, improvements that would not occur without the investments by AAF.

The addition of our passenger trains will not have a detrimental effect on traffic movement across the corridor. Each crossing will be closed for approximately 48 seconds. This translates to less than two minutes per hour. Put another way, any vehicle traveling in proximity of AAF will have an approximately 97 percent chance of not encountering a passenger train as it approaches the track. You also asked about emergency vehicles and contingency plans for moving trains from a crossing in the event of a mechanical failure. You will be pleased to know that each of our passenger trains will have two locomotives to insure that trains will continue to move in the unlikely event of the failure of one engine. In addition, AAF is subject to, and will comply with, Florida Statute 351.034, which addresses the issue of trains impeding the movement of emergency vehicles across railroad crossings.

The impact of a passenger train in terms of noise and vibration is considerably less than freight trains. They are shorter, lighter, better for the environment, and cause less vibration than freight trains. These improvements mean an overall less impact to local communities. Many cities in Martin and Palm Beach County are considering applying for Quiet Zone status at some crossings which, if approved, means both passenger and freight trains will not have to blow their horns at-grade crossing. We have pledged to work with local governments in realizing this goal. Again, this is a desired benefit that will be a direct result of AAF project since we will be paying for much of the cost as a result of the safety improvements required.

We expect the AAF system to have a positive economic impact for the entire State of Florida. A recently completed economic impact study by The Washington Economics Group shows that AAF will create on average 10,000 jobs annually during construction, including jobs in the Treasure Coast, resulting in \$2 billion in labor income over the next eight years and adding \$3.5 billion to Florida's GDP. Though there is no plan for additional stops during this initial phase, we look forward to eventually offering passenger rail service to many more communities. Were this project a publicly funded passenger system it would be reasonable to expect stops in just about every city along the route. You would also expect to be heavily subsidizing the system through your tax dollars just as Amtrak requires today. As a private system, we are constrained by budget and economics to plan and build this system in phases. So we appreciate the patience of these cities as we undertake this history making venture.

We share your view of the importance of consensus on important transportation projects, which, though this is a private sector driven project, is why we have taken extra steps to engage the public. Since the project was announced in March 2012, the All Aboard Florida team has conducted significant outreach throughout the entire corridor. At the beginning of the EIS process, the FRA held five public scoping meetings, all of which were advertised in advance and conducted during afternoon and evening hours to encourage attendance. More than 500 individuals attended those meetings, including many public officials. We have also participated in more than 600 other meetings, presentations and briefings, with members of the public, city and county commissions,



elected officials such as yourself, homeowner's associations and others who have relayed support or areas of concern. This outreach will continue as the project progresses.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation for your providing us the opportunity to remain engaged with you, not just to correct misinformation, but, in partnership to assuage concerns and ultimately help us build a system that will become a distinctive, irreplaceable part of this community. We truly believe All Aboard Florida will enhance Florida's quality of life through better transportation, more opportunity and a stronger economy.

Regards,



Don Robinson
President and Chief Operating Officer

cc: Michael Reininger, President, CDO, All Aboard Florida
Tom Bausch, Chairman, Martin MPO
Michael Buscha, Chairman, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
Kim Delany, SDC, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council ✓
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