

RSAC COMBINED DRAFT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction:

On September 30 and October 1, the Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee reviewed and commented on a series of policy recommendations statements that were created by Committee Members and grouped within the five goals of the current 2025 Florida Transportation Plan.

Staff revised and expanded upon the existing policy recommendations based on:

- Committee Members suggestions and recommendations;
- Review of existing statewide plans and programs including the 2025 Florida Transportation Plan, Strategic Intermodal System Plan, and 2006 Florida Rail Plan; and
- Existing and recently enacted (e.g. HR 2095 Railroad Safety Enhancement Act of 2008) as well as proposed (e.g. H.R 6003 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008) Federal Legislation.

Each statement below is followed by a designation in a () to indicate whether the proposed policy language reflects:

- Revisions by Committee Members captured during the September 30-October 1 meeting,
- Additional suggestions from Staff; and/or
- A cross reference to existing policy statements that remain unchanged. The roman numerals and letters within the () indicate where these statements were referenced in the September 30 – October 1 draft policy recommendations document.

Much of our time at the next RSAC meeting will focus on clarifying, refining and adding to these statements. Please review the combined statements and be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Does the statement capture the key concept? Does it need any clarification?
- For statements grouped together, do they address the same concept?
- If so, what is the key concept at the core of the statements?
- For each goal section as a whole, are any major concepts still missing?

You will also be given an opportunity to discuss the potential goal structure for your final report.

**RSAC COMBINED DRAFT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
BY 2025 FTP GOALS:**

- I. Safety and Security: A safer and more secure transportation system for residents, businesses, and visitors;**
- A. Continue to identify and support safety improvements at highway-rail crossings and monitor progress toward the reduction of highway-grade crossing accidents. (Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Consider grade separation where feasible for future facilities and land use (II-H)
 - b. Conduct highway-rail crossing studies to help identify those crossings that are candidates for closure. (Staff Suggestion)
 - c. Continue to identify and support crossing signal improvements. (Staff Suggestion)
 - B. Continue to identify and support track signal improvements. (Staff Suggestion)
 - C. Evaluate the impacts of positive train control on freight and passenger service shared used tracks (Committee Member's Discussion)
 - D. Evaluate the safety benefits from diverting traffic from highway to rail (Committee Members Discussion)
 - E. Conduct public education campaign (Committee Members Discussion)
 - a. Ensure public awareness (Staff Suggestion)
 - b. Continue Lifesaver Operation outreach (Committee Members Discussion)
 - c. Extend outreach to law enforcement agencies and community organizations to help reduce trespassing fatalities (e.g. work with organizations for the homeless). (Committee Members Discussion)
 - F. Identify a series of implementation steps to address rail safety during emergencies. (Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Develop a list of temporary highway-rail grade crossing closures in the event of hurricanes. (Staff Suggestion)
 - b. Identify alternative methods for loss of electricity at signalized rail grade crossings. (Staff Suggestion)
 - G. Continue to identify and implement security measures for railroads. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - a. Support new Federal rail security legislation. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - b. Coordinate with rail industry, Federal Railroad Administration, homeland security and law enforcement to develop rail security measures. (Staff Suggestion)

- c. Review American Association of Railroad, Commuter Rail, and Transit Security Plans. (Staff Suggestion)
 - d. Work with the rail industry to ensure new technologies are adopted in a timely fashion. (Committee Members Discussion)
- H. Identify Federal and public/private and public/public partnership opportunities to fund safety and security needs. (Committee Members Discussion)

II. Quality of Life and Environmental Stewardship: Enriched quality of life and responsible environmental stewardship;

Appropriate Land Use Decisions

- A. Develop a State vision for rail with compatible national and regional components. (II-A)
- a. At the national and statewide level. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - i. Integrate Florida's railroad system into the national transportation system. (Staff Suggestion)
 - ii. Integrate Florida's railroad system into the State's multimodal transportation system. (Staff Suggestion)
 - b. At the regional and local level. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - i. Integrate rail investment strategies with land use decisions. (II-I)
 - ii. Work with regional planning councils, regional transportation authorities, and metropolitan planning organizations to integrate regional and local plans and visions to create a cohesive comprehensive statewide rail plan. (II-F)
- B. Create a new model, structure, or forum to bring together policy makers and business and economic development leaders to constructively address mutual issues. (VI-B)
- a. Promote and support better communication between Florida Department of Transportation modal offices and districts, Regional Planning Councils, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, economic development organizations and other agencies to explore and respond to rail opportunities. (VI-B)
- C. Study the impacts of increased investment in rail on the quality of life. (Committee Members Discussion)
- a. Evaluate the positive and negative impacts of new rail facilities on local communities in terms of (II-H)
 - i. Transportation delay (Staff Suggestion)
 - ii. Noise pollution (Staff Suggestion)
 - iii. Air quality and carbon emissions (Staff Suggestion)
 - iv. Endangered species and preservation lands (Staff Suggestion)
 - v. Safety and security (Staff Suggestion)
 - vi. Sprawl/infill development (Staff Suggestion)

- D. Work with the Legislature and key State, regional, and local agencies to develop policies to better integrate transportation and land use decisions. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - a. Work with the Legislature and key partners including the Department of Community Affairs to develop statutory incentives to promote and support desirable land use patterns. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - i. Provide financial incentives to local governments for land use decisions that support Transit Oriented Development and urban infill. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - ii. Provide tax credits for freight and passenger rail investments that promote economic development or urban infill. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - iii. Encourage compact mixed use urban development at transit nodes to make passenger rail a feasible alternative mode of transportation. (Committee Members Discussion)

- E. Work with the Legislature and key partners including the Department of Community Affairs to reform the transportation concurrency system to allow greater flexibility to local governments to encourage consideration of alternative modes. The emphasis of the existing concurrency management system is primarily on highway Level of Service (LOS) (II-E))
 - a. Consider alternatives to the current concurrency system such as weighted concurrency credits, concurrency bonuses, or an alternative mobility fee, which is broadly assessed. (II-E)

- F. Emphasize the need to review and implement best practices from other states on integration of land use changes to enhance coordination between the various modes of transportation. (VI-E)

Environmental Sustainability

- H. Call for early coordination between the Florida Department of Transportation, State, regional and local partners and stakeholders to identify environmental issues before significant effort and costs are vested during the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM). (II-K)

- I. Expand the use of the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process for early coordination of rail project and corridor review to identify potential environmental issues. (II-J)

- J. Highlight the environmental benefits, including smaller environmental footprint, of rail when compared to highways. (II-L)
 - a. Use the environmental benefits of rail as explicit factors in the project assessment methodology. (II-O)

- b. These benefits should be described in ways that align with those identified at the Federal level, to maximize the eligibility of Florida projects for Federal funding. (II-L)
 - c. Evaluate the environmental benefits of investing in rail transportation both at the regional and project levels. (Committee Members Discussion)
- K. Use transfers of corridor ownership, corridor improvements, or other rail projects as opportunities to address existing environmental issues. (II-M)
- L. Inform the public and policy-makers about the environmental and other benefits of rail to increase understanding of and support for rail. (II-N)
- M. Ensure transportation, land use, and environmental decisions are coordinated and integrated into statewide, regional, and local planning processes. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - a. Regional Planning Councils, Metropolitan Organizations, the Florida Department of Transportation and other statewide, regional and local agencies and partners should make explicit in state and regional plans the environmental impacts of various different modal mixes in corridor and regional planning. (II-P and Committee Members Discussion)
- N. Work with the Legislature and key partners including the Department of Environmental Protection to use carbon and green tax credits to support rail investments that promote responsible environmental stewardship. (II-Q)

III. Maintenance and Preservation: Adequate and cost-efficient maintenance and preservation of Florida’s transportation assets;

- A. Continue to support maintenance of the rail system to enhance freight and passenger rail service, when public benefits to the State, residents and shippers can be demonstrated. Such support would include: (Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Continue to provide financial assistance to short-line railroads to achieve 286,000 pound rail car weight standards; and (Staff Suggestion)
- B. Continue to support the modernization of the rail system for better and more efficient service. (Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Promote the use of intelligent transportation and other system management strategies and technologies. (Committee Members Discussion)
- C. Ensure the long-term preservation of existing passenger and freight rail corridors and right of way for future use. (Committee Members Discussion)
- D. Continue to identify and support rail bridge replacements and improvements. (Staff Suggestion)

IV. Mobility and Economic Competitiveness: Stronger economy through enhanced mobility for people and freight; and

- A. Continue to support expansion of an interconnected multimodal system to enhance interstate and intrastate movement of freight and passengers, with rail playing a critical role when public benefits to the State, residents, and businesses can be demonstrated. (Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Ensure Florida's railroad system is integrated with and connected to the national railroad system. (Staff Suggestion)
 - b. Provide for smooth and efficient transfers for both people and freight between rail corridors and hubs and other transportation modes. (Staff)
 - i. Connect Florida's railroad system to the State's multimodal transportation system. (Staff Suggestion)
 - ii. Improve system integration between freight and passenger rail and connections with other modes of transportation. (VI-C)
 - iii. Provide for seamless connections of intra-city and inter-city rail to local transit systems. III-A)
- B. Continue to support better coordination and understanding of other ongoing statewide planning efforts including the Florida Transportation Plan, the Strategic Intermodal System Plan as well as the Freight, Seaports, and Airports Statewide Plans. (VI-C and Committee Members Discussion)
- C. Continue to coordinate the planning and design of new infrastructure to address the various users and future flows (segregated facilities, passing sidings, and impacts on communities). (VI-C)
- D. Foster regional and local coordination (VI-I)
 - a. Continue to support better coordination with regional and local transportation partners to ensure better consistency and integration with the State Rail Plan. (Staff Suggestion)
 - b. Florida Department of Transportation Districts should work with and between Regional Planning Councils and Metropolitan Planning Organizations to ensure better coordination of investment and planning for regional freight and passenger rail projects and opportunities. (VI-I)
 - c. Provide incentives for regional coordination on multimodal projects, including freight and passenger rail. (VI-J)
- E. Reduce delay on and improve reliability of rail facilities. (Staff Suggestion and Committee Members Discussion)
- F. Preserve new capacity on highway and rail right-of-way for future freight and passenger rail needs. (Staff Suggestion and Committee Members Discussion)

- G. Re-evaluate all abandoned corridors in terms of their possible future use. (Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Carefully consider the possible future reuse of unused rail corridors before allowing their use for “rail-to-trail” projects. (V-J)
- H. Strengthen coordination with economic development agencies to ensure that rail investments are supporting and spurring the desired economic growth. Rail investments should
 - a. Promote economic and industrial development at appropriate points along existing and new freight rail corridors. (Staff Suggestion and Committee Members Discussion)
 - b. Promote transit-oriented and mixed used developments, where feasible. (Staff Suggestion)
 - c. Connect the economic regions of the State, in coordination with regional and community visions. (Staff Suggestion)

V. Sustainable Investment: Sustainable transportation investments for Florida’s future.

- A. Establish public and political support for proposed key rail corridors and hubs during the early conceptual phase of rail projects. (VI-G)
 - a. Develop an initial screening process for identifying needs and evaluating the public support and political feasibility of a project. The process would be convened by an appropriate public entity such as the Florida Department of Transportation for inter-regional projects or a regional entity for a two or three county project. (VI-A)
- B. Encourage streamlined permitting processes. (VI-F)
- C. Intensify the effort to capture Federal dollars to match State dollars. As a donor state, Florida should work with the Federal government to receive more Federal funding. (VI – D)
- D. Ensure maximum flexibility in State plans and procedures to optimize opportunities to use Federal dollars. (VI-D)
- E. Review the policy for the distribution of Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) funds as it relates to highways, rail and other modes of transportation. Reevaluate the percentage allocation of transportation funds by mode. (V-A and Committee Members Discussions)
 - a. Support an increased emphasis on the role of rail in the transportation system by making additional components of the rail system eligible for SIS funds. (V-A)
 - b. Ensure that SIS investment criteria are comparable across modes. (V-A)

- c. Rail projects should be evaluated as part of an overall multi-modal transportation policy that looks at the potential benefits of all modes when looking for the best way to meet a particular need. (V-A)
- F. Encourage Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) funds to be spent on regional multimodal planning efforts. (V-E and Committee Members Discussion)
 - a. Ensure that TRIP investment criteria are comparable across modes. (V-A)
- G. Ensure project assessment methodology tools are used to help prioritize and rank projects eligible for funding. (V-B and Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Conduct cost-benefit analyses between modes and between project alternatives within the same mode to help make more informed investment decisions and prioritize projects. (V-B and Staff Suggestion)
 - b. Include the full range of quality of life, environmental and other important factors in the cost benefit analysis such as : (V-B and Staff Suggestion)
 - i. Private support (V-B)
 - ii. Partner support (V-B)
 - iii. Density (V-B)
 - iv. Impact on land use and the potential for shaping land use in desirable ways (V-B)
 - v. Impact on quality of life (V-B)
 - vi. Impact on air quality (V-B)
 - vii. Environmental impacts including emissions of harmful pollutants, such greenhouse gas emissions, preservation land, endangered species, etc. (V-B and Staff Suggestion)
 - viii. Larger, multi-jurisdictional impacts/benefits (V-B)
 - ix. Regional, as well as statewide needs (Staff Suggestion)
 - x. Cost per unit, both for passenger and freight projects (V-B)
 - xi. Return on investment (both financial and non-financial implications) (V-B)
 - xii. Cost of “doing nothing” (V-B)
- H. Promote the benefits of regional coordination such as additional funding opportunities through Federal programs. (VI-J)
- I. Achieve broad public support for investing in rail at the regional and local levels. (V-C)
 - a. Promote understanding of the economic benefits of rail. (V-C)
 - b. Develop or disseminate information on studies demonstrating the return on investment (both financial and non-financial returns) of transportation projects. (V-C)
 - c. Support alternative studies to help the public better understand the Department’s investment decisions and the value/cost of investing in a wide variety of projects. (V-C)

- d. Inform the public on the impacts and benefits of public-private partnerships. (Committee Members Discussion)
 - e. Pursue initiatives for transparency in the Department's decision making process. Include alternatives considered in the final decision. (V-C)
- J. Identify new and innovative ways for communities to more easily afford rail projects. This can be achieved through legislative action as needed by (V-D and Staff Suggestion):
- a. Providing incentives to rail projects that reduce delay and improve connectivity between modes, promote environmental stewardship, encourage desirable land use patterns, and promote economic growth. (V-D and Staff Suggestion)
 - b. Reducing disincentives. (V-D)
 - c. Encouraging funding rail needs through additional resources including: (V-D)
 - i. Bonds; (V-D)
 - ii. Local option sources; (V-D)
 - 1. The Legislature should make it easier for local governments to exercise local options by removing the requirement for supermajority approval. (V-D)
 - 2. Rename the Charter County Transit System Surtax option and expand it to all counties. Currently this tax funds both capital and operation and maintenance projects for all modes. (V-E)
 - iii. Additional State gas tax; (V-D)
 - iv. Tax credits; (V-D)
 - v. Tax incrementing financing; and (V-D)
 - vi. Other resources as deemed appropriate. (V-D)
 - d. Ensuring no on-going diversion of Transportation Trust Fund dollars. (V-I and Committee Members Discussion)

Public-Private Partnerships

- K. Develop a mechanism to reserve public funds to rapidly respond to opportunities involving public-private partnerships. Develop a mechanism to disseminate information about available public funds to potential private partners. (V-G and Committee Members Discussion)
- L. Develop clear processes for negotiating public-private partnerships that are efficient, effective, and respect legitimate concerns for confidentiality and public concerns for disclosure. (V-L)
- M. Ensure a balance between public planning and programming processes and private sector investment needs. (V-M and Staff Suggestion).
- N. Evaluate the impacts and benefits of public-private partnerships during the early conceptual stages of rail projects. (Staff Suggestion)
 - a. Clearly inform the public of the positive and negative impacts of public-private partnerships. (V-N and Staff Suggestion)