TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

INDIAN RIVER - MARTIN - PALM BEACH - ST. LUCIE

July 16, 2008

Ms. Stephanie C. Kopelousos, Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

Subject: Amtrak Service for the Florida East Coast Railway Corridor

Dear Secretary Kopelousos:

Mobility and access are critical issues for Floridians, especially with rising energy costs. Although Florida is largely automobile-dependent, it has great potential for passenger transit along its well-established rail lines, an opportunity recognized in the State Rail Plan. Along Florida's east coast, the FEC Corridor has presented a desirable alignment for passenger transit for decades, and Amtrak would be well-suited to provide regional rail service from Jacksonville to Miami. Amtrak service on this corridor would expand economic potential, reduce energy costs and fuel consumption, and improve the State's environmental outlook.

Within the past decade, Amtrak initiated a concept to reintroduce regional passenger service along the FEC Corridor from Jacksonville to West Palm Beach. Negotiations were initiated between Amtrak and FDOT, and thirteen preliminary stations were identified along the coast. However, in 2002, the Federal government directed Amtrak to suspend negotiations pending revisions to Amtrak's budget and debt structure. Recent discussions with Amtrak representatives indicate the Federal loan provisions have been satisfied, and Amtrak once again has the ability to investigate new service alignments.

There is precedent for Amtrak to initiate a passenger service evaluation when requested by a state governor. This sort of evaluation is required for Amtrak to establish a new service corridor. Accordingly, Council has adopted Resolution 08-02 which requests the Secretary's assistance to initiate discussions with Amtrak and request Amtrak take the first step by conducting the required passenger service evaluation. A new Amtrak service could interconnect job centers, airports, seaports, and visitor destinations along the east coast, complementing the existing Tri-Rail system. Amtrak service could also be designed to integrate with other anticipated systems, such as the FEC service anticipated in southeast Florida or commuter rail in central Florida.

421 S.W. Camden Avenue - Stuart, Florida 34994
Phone (772) 221-4060 - Fax (772) 221-4067 - www.tcrpc.org

Council looks forward to working with your office to help move this important project forward. If there is anything the Council can do to assist in crafting the request to Amtrak please call.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Busha, AICP
Executive Director

Attachment

cc: James Wolfe, FDOT
Gerard O'Reilly, FDOT
Gustavo Schmidt, FDOT
Nancy Ziegler, FDOT
Nazih Haddad, FDOT
Scott Seeburger, FDOT

RESOLUTION 08-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, PALM BEACH, AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES, FLORIDA, IN SUPPORT OF AN AMTRAK PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS AND RIDERSHIP FORECAST FOR PASSENGER SERVICE ALONG FLORIDA'S EAST COAST.

WHEREAS, the Florida East Coast Rail Corridor was historically operated as a passenger rail line along Florida's east coast, traversing the Treasure Coast Region; and

WHEREAS, cities along Florida's east coast historically developed around train stations along the FEC railroad; and

WHEREAS, modern cities along Florida's east coast are currently implementing programs to redevelop historic downtowns built around train stations; and

WHEREAS, improved mobility is highly desired in the Treasure Coast Region and throughout the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, transit, including rail transit, is a key component of improved mobility, especially between cities and throughout the Region; and

WHEREAS, the 2006 Florida Rail Plan identifies passenger transit along the Florida East Coast corridor as a potential "Coastal Route" for new passenger rail service in the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak is well-suited to provide passenger rail service along Florida's east coast; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak contains the expertise and knowledge to conduct a preliminary feasibility study and ridership forecast for new passenger rail service along Florida's east coast, including the Treasure Coast Region;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council requests the assistance of Governor Crist; Transportation Secretary Kopelousos; Congressman Dave Weldon, District 15; Congressman Tim Mahoney, District 16; Congressman Robert Wexler, District 19; Congressman Ron Klein, District 22; and Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, District 23 to initiate a formal request to Amtrak for the preliminary feasibility analysis and ridership forecast for passenger rail service on the Florida East Coast Rail Corridor along Florida's east coast, specifically including Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River Counties.

The Chair declared the Resolution duly passed and adopted this 18th day of April 2008.

Michael J. Busha, Executive Director

Susan Hershey, Chairman

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

INDIAN RIVER - MARTIN - PALM BEACH & ST. LUCIE

Transportation
DOT

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
CITIZEN SERVICES
08 JUL 14 PM 2:27

July 9, 2008

The Honorable Charlie Crist, Governor
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Subject: Amtrak Service for the Florida East Coast Railway Corridor

Dear Governor Crist:

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Sincerely,

Michael J. Busha, AICP
Executive Director

Attachment

cc: Pat Gleason, Director of Cabinet Affairs
Diana Sawaya-Crane, Deputy Director of Cabinet Affairs
David Foy, Policy Director
Eileen Halloran, Deputy Policy Director

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