



MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM #III.C.1

DATE: DECEMBER 1, 2014

TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: STAFF

SUBJECT: ALL ABOARD FLORIDA INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (DEIS) AND SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION (IGR #14-0918)

The US Department of Transportation Federal Railway Administration (FRA) has undertaken this environmental review because All Aboard Florida LLC (AAF) is proposing to construct and operate an intercity passenger rail between Miami and Orlando, Florida. FRA is undertaking the review because AAF has applied for \$1.6 billion in federal financial assistance (loans and loan guarantees) from the Railway Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program. Media reports indicate that AAF is also considering alternative private financing mechanisms.

AAF proposes to implement the project through a phased approach. Phase I would provide rail service from Miami to West Palm Beach while Phase II would extend service to Orlando. Phase I has already been approved by the FRA through an environmental review in 2012/13 and AAF is proceeding to construction stations in Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Given operations will cover the full corridor from Miami to Orlando this Phase II DEIS analyzes the cumulative effects of completing both phases of the project.

General Comments

The proposed Intercity Passenger Rail Project can be consistent with and further the following plans and policies of the South Florida Regional Planning Council, if actions are taken in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to address specific impacts.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) for South Florida (2012-17)

- Action Plans for the Region
Promote a Southeast Florida intermodal transportation plan connecting activity centers, airports, sea ports, rail, managed highway lanes, dedicated bus lanes, pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

Under the CED's Infrastructure and Growth Leadership Pillar the Plan states:

- Support the implementation of All Aboard Florida, inter regional, passenger service between Miami and Orlando.

The Seven50 Regional Prosperity Plan prepared by the South Florida and the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils with support of a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Sustainable Communities Program. The Plan calls for regional cooperation on all levels of transportation. During the Seven50 Planning process state and regional planning organizations worked with Florida East Coast Industries to explore options for reintroducing commuter and express passenger rail service on the FEC Rail Corridor

Strategic Regional Policy Plan of South Florida

Goal 8: Enhance the Regions mobility,, efficiency, safety, quality of life and economic health through improvements to road, ports, and public transportation infrastructure.

Policy 8.8 Ensure the safety of the transportation system by implementing measures to reduce vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle crashes and increase the safety of commercial vehicle operations.

Goal 9.7 Assess impacts of global climate change and sea-level rise in South Florida’s resources and land uses.

Goal 17 Maintain a competitive diversified and sustainable regional economy.

Policy 17.10 Protect marine related industries through innovative comprehensive planning and zoning regulations that provide incentives such as mixed use in areas that can sustain both residential and non-residential water dependent use.

Goal 18 Ensure regional coordination, preparation, and response to emergencies.

Policy 18.8 Public agencies and private businesses should develop continuity plans in order to safely resume and maintain operations to the maximum extent possible following an emergency.

The proposed Phase II DEIS, supplementing the 2012 Environmental Assessment, substantially addresses any negative impacts caused by the project in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. Our Region will gain access to new passenger service while benefitting from improved mobility, air quality, economic expansion and job creation. However, during the Public Information Meetings on the project conducted by FRA, and additional meeting conducted by the US Coast Guard, issues have been raised by representatives of the marine industry in South Florida about the projects’ impacts to the marine industry west of the New River rail bridge in Fort Lauderdale.

Specific Impacts

While adopted policy of the SFRPC supports implementation of proposed Intercity service, specific impacts from the passenger service, in conjunction with increased freight traffic, have been identified to the built and natural environments of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties and the remainder of the proposed Intercity Corridor.

1. Land Use and Transportation

Comments provided by Miami-Dade Transit (Attachment 1) indicate AAF Miami Station is located in the Rapid Transit Zone and downtown Intermodal Terminal Area. The co-location provides an opportunity to develop a state-of-the-art Downtown Intermodal Terminal area that will integrate all forms of mobility. Broward County's comments (Attachment II) references several deficiencies in the DEIS concerning inadequate assessment of direct, secondary and cumulative impacts of the proposed project on existing traffic circulation especially the proposed crossing closure of SW 2nd Street. Extensive comments by the TCRPC for areas in the northern Counties need to be addressed in order to ensure an interconnected intercity service where benefits are shared and impacts addressed (see TCRPC Agenda Item 9, November 21, 2014).

Recommendation

The FRA, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) should utilize the existing TriRail Coastal Link Steering Committee, created to coordinate the introduction of regional premium transit on the FEC corridor, to coordinate the mitigation measures needed to address the impacts identified as part of the DEIS. AAF should become active participants in the Steering Committee.

2. Marine Navigation

The marine industry is a major economic source in South Florida. A recent economic study by the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF) indicates the following statistics:

- 136,465 jobs regional
- Over \$11.5 billion in gross output
- Nearly \$4.1 billion on wages

The MIASF (Attachment III) and a "Coalition of Concerned Fort Lauderdale Area Property Owners, Boaters and Directly Affected Marine Industry Businesses" (Attachment IV) are concerned that critical operation of the rail bridge at the New River will create significant negative impacts to recreational vessel repair facilities up river of the New River rail bridge used by AAF. The industry has requested that the New River Bridge remain open 40 minutes of each hour throughout each day. Resolving operational uses around the New River Bridge area and other bridge openings along the entire corridor must be addressed in the FEIS.

Recommendation

An updated marine navigation of study should be conducted utilizing the most up to date data. The FEIS should update data describing the economic benefit of marine industries in South Florida. Operational measures to mitigate impacts should not jeopardize the viability and the projected growth of the industry. Consideration should be given to using an ongoing coordination mechanism to address future bridge operations and improvements. The Miami River Commission serves that purpose in coordinating the replacement of bascular road bridges and their operations during peak hour traffic in downtown Miami.

3. Climate Change Adaptation

South Florida is highly vulnerable area to the impacts of rising seas from high tides, storm surge and sea level rise. These events dramatically increase normal impacts created by precipitation events. Broward County has identified area of concern regarding data on flood plain maps used in the DEIS. The County

adopted new flood plain maps on August 18, 2014. The County also recommends better documentation of how future operations and rail improvements will adjust to sea level rise.

Recommendation

The FEIS should reflect the most recent data in flood elevations. The FRA should request that AAF maintain continuous coordination with the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact to insure future use of best available data

4. Public Safety

The introduction of 32 high speed trains, coupled with increased freight traffic, poses significant impacts to public safety. Both Broward County and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council raise significant issues concerning data used in the DEIS for traffic movements and safety improvements. Specific comments raise concerns about emergency response and care facilities. Former SFRPC member (then Broward County Commissioner Suzanne Gunzburger) identified the issue of train traffic delaying access to emergency and trauma care facilities.

Recommendation

The FEIS should include an emergency response analysis, including a detailed analysis of impacts on emergency vehicle trips, route data, access to hospitals and critical infrastructure and key roadways and intersections to maintain timely emergency response. The FRA should consider using the three Local Emergency Planning Committees for Regions 11, 10, and 6 as a venue for resolving potential impacts from increased rail operation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council should approve attached report and authorize transmittal to the Federal Railroad Administration.

Attachments

