Mayor
City Commission

City of Stuart

121 S.W. Flagler Avenue • Stuart • Florida • 34994

Telephone: (772) 288-5312

March 24, 2014

The Honorable Patrick E. Murphy
1517 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Representative Murphy:

Your upcoming meeting with Secretary Anthony Foxx regarding passenger rail service may be critical to the Treasure Coast of Florida. The Stuart City Commission fully understands the All Aboard Florida project is a substantial undertaking for a private company, even with additional public funding, and we support the effort to restore passenger train service to the east coast of Florida. Passenger rail service on the east coast of Florida has been sought by the City and many other local governments ever since the Florida East Coast Railway abandoned passenger service in 1968.

The City of Stuart has worked with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council for almost fifteen years to obtain Amtrak passenger rail service for Stuart. The City of Stuart remains very interested in having Amtrak service.

Nonetheless, today we also have substantial and significant maritime interests in our community. Within the past few years, the City has approved, or been responsible for developing approximately 500 new deep water boats 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 also 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. With the advent of 32 new passenger trains crossing the St. Lucie River, each of which will require the trestle bridge to close, we view this with some trepidation, particularly because All Aboard Florida (AAF) and FECI have been largely silent as to the preparations they are making regarding their own right of way, and the ultimate effects of the train service.

One suggestion that has recently evolved, and which seems to have some merit, is to explore the shifting by FECI of freight to the CSX tracks west of the Treasure Coast. This requires a negotiation between CSX and FECI, and perhaps intervention, by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

A second issue for Stuart and Martin County is the possible intervention of the US Coast Guard regarding the potential damage to navigation by the increase in train traffic. As we understand it, maritime traffic has legal priority over all other traffic... train or roadway, on the federal Okeechobee Waterway. We have been searching for ways to make passenger train traffic "easier" for the boating community, and one of the ways may be to require a bridge attendant to be physically located at the St. Lucie River crossing to assure that the bridge is rotated down and up in a timely manner, and as rapidly as can safely be done.

A third issue for Stuart is the desire for a station, and the ultimate need for passenger service in Stuart. The City has long made the point to FECI that since the AAF trains would be slowing down to about 25-30 mph to cross the trestle and negotiate the sharp curves just north of the River, they might as well stop. We believe that FECI understands the logic of this, but we still have not heard anything from them regarding this matter. We understand their stated position of wanting to get the project "up and running" first, but Stuart wants to be the very first of the second tier of stations. We also believe that not every train needs to stop in Stuart, and that 2 or 3 each way per day will suffice, in the beginning. However, a difficulty with a station platform is the need to provide for two (2) different boarding heights (AAF and Amtrak trains are different). I suppose we are looking at some sort of hydraulic leveling (if such exists).

Fourth is the issue of the crossing gates and structures required by the FRA for "Positive Train Control" which we understand will be required based upon the travel speeds. We also acknowledge those improvements needed for "Quiet Zones" may be different, even though many cities, including Stuart, would like to have, but don't want to fund them. As we understand it, the FRA could require a high enough level of safety at each railroad crossing so that "Quiet Zone" improvements would be achieved, but at the expense of AAF.

Fifth is the increased cost of maintenance of the roadway crossings. Historically, every 8-10 years, FEC has made major renovations and restorations to their roadway crossings. The cost of this maintenance work is borne by the jurisdiction which controls the road right of way (usually a city or county). Typically, the cost is around $20k to $25k per crossing. With double tracking, we anticipate those costs to almost double. This is being done, with no new funding source to pay for the maintenance. It is a classic "unfunded mandate," even though it comes from a private corporation, not a state or federal government.

Sixth is the issue of "leased" parking and landscape within the FEC Right of Way. Many cities, including Stuart have leases with FECI... or really Flagler Realty, which are unilaterally terminable by Flagler upon 30 days' notice. As you can imagine, this is not

nearly enough time for a city to react or to provide alternate parking or even to relocate expensive landscape which was provided to the FEC at no cost to them. However, without active participation and information from AAF and FECI, it is impossible to plan this out properly. It would be appropriate for Flagler Realty to make every reasonable effort to accommodate existing governmental uses of the railroad right of way by local jurisdictions. Again, some intervention into this process by FRA would be welcome.

If Secretary Foxx will direct the FRA to be aware of these issues and to condition some of its grant-funding or permitting, based upon rectifying some or all of these issues, we would have achieved most of our near term goals in dealing with AAF.

In the long run, complete grade separation of road and rail crossings, and an elevated, double-tracked bridge over the St. Lucie River, will be critical to achieving the operating speeds and safety required for successful passenger train operations along the east coast of Florida.

As always, thank you for your kind attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

TROY A. McDONALD
Mayor

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

March 24, 2014
The Honorable Patrick E. Murphy

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

Summary Points

1. City of Stuart supports All Aboard Florida and Amtrak service, but not their adverse impacts.
2. Maritime interests are paramount to the City of Stuart, because we are a coastal boating community with an inlet to the Atlantic Ocean, and are crisscrossed by the federal Okeechobee Waterway and the federal Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.
3. The US Coast Guard should be made aware of the environmental and maritime navigation impacts of the future AAF rail traffic.
4. It may be possible to relocate some or all of the existing or future FEC freight rail traffic from the FEC tracks to the inland CSX tracks, without causing an adverse impact on other cities.
5. A passenger rail station in Stuart makes sense from an economic and logistical standpoint for AAF, since the AAF trains must slow down to cross the St. Lucie River on the existing trestle bridge. It makes sense from the City's perspective as a means of transit to Miami and Orlando, and as a smaller destination along the way.
6. The platform heights needed for AAF and Amtrak are different, and this should be resolved, prior to purchase of train sets by AAF.
7. Roadway crossings constructed by AAF (at their expense) should include enough safety measures to qualify them as "Quiet Zones" under FRA guidelines.
8. Additional future maintenance costs for double-tracking of roadway crossings should not be borne solely by local jurisdictions
9. Properties leased from Flagler Realty by local jurisdictions should be given every reasonable opportunity to remain, or provided an adequate lead-time for termination.
10. Ultimately, grade separation of roads and rails is critical to the success of passenger rail service along the east coast of Florida