



## MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members AGENDA ITEM 13

From: Staff

Date: October 12, 2018 Joint Council Meeting

Subject: Regional Passenger Rail Update – Anthony Catalina, Ph.D., Director of Planning and Capital Development, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority

### Introduction

Southeast Florida's economy, mobility, and quality of life are dependent upon a reliable, multimodal transportation network. The Strategic Regional Policy Plans of both regional planning councils place a high priority on the continued operation and expansion of passenger rail service as a component of the larger transportation network. The purpose of this item is to provide an update regarding current and proposed passenger rail service in southeast Florida.

### Background

Southeast Florida includes three passenger rail systems operating today:

- (1) Tri-Rail commuter rail service has been operating since 1989 on the South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC), which is the former CSX rail corridor, between Mangonia Park and Miami International Airport. For more than ten years, Tri-Rail has been working with the two regional planning councils, local governments, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), metropolitan planning organizations, and others to extend service onto the Florida East Coast (FEC) rail corridor. Referred to as the Tri-Rail Coastal Link (TRCL), the FEC service is organized with four segments, listed below in order of likely phasing (see map included as Attachment A):
  - a. Downtown Miami-Link will begin operation in late 2019 and provide service from the SFRC corridor into Brightline's Miami Central Station on the FEC rail corridor, with possible service extending to Midtown in Miami. The SFRTA led negotiations among seven public partners to establish an access agreement with FEC Railway and Florida East Coast Industries (FECI), which operates the Brightline rail service.

**DRAFT**  
**Subject to Modifications**

- b. Northeast Corridor Link would provide service on the FEC rail corridor from Miami Central (or possibly Midtown) to Aventura. FDOT, Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and Miami-Dade Department of Public Works are leading efforts to advance this segment.
  - c. Jupiter Extension would provide service from the SFRC corridor onto the FEC rail corridor from West Palm Beach to Jupiter using the Northwood Connection currently under construction. The Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency is leading efforts to advance this segment.
  - d. Central Segment would provide service on the FEC rail corridor from Aventura to West Palm Beach. This segment could ultimately be broken into smaller segments due to its length and infrastructure demands. FDOT will be leading efforts to advance this segment as part of the larger TRCL service once access and a local finance plan for operation and maintenance are resolved.
- (2) FECI's Brightline high-speed passenger rail service has been operating on the FEC rail corridor since January 2018.
- a. Phase 1 began operating from West Palm Beach to Fort Lauderdale in January 2018 and was extended to Miami in May 2018.
  - b. Phase 2 from West Palm Beach to Orlando International Airport is scheduled to begin construction in early 2019. This segment will eventually include an additional station in Cocoa as well as potential stations in Stuart, Fort Pierce, Vero Beach, and/or Sebastian.
  - c. Phase 3 would provide service from Orlando International Airport to downtown Tampa.
  - d. Phase 4 would provide service from Orlando (or Cocoa) to Jacksonville.
- (3) Amtrak's long distance inter-city rail service has been operating on the CSX/SFRC rail corridor since the formation of Amtrak in 1971. There are four daily trains through the region (two northbound and two southbound) providing service between Miami and New York with numerous intermediate stops including Tampa, Orlando, and Jacksonville. However, it is not possible to purchase tickets for travel that begins and ends between Miami and West Palm Beach to avoid duplicating any of the Tri-Rail service since Amtrak and Tri-Rail both receive Federal support.

Analysis

The extension of TRCL service on the FEC rail corridor will require significant coordination among local governments, transportation agencies, FEC Railway, FECI/Brightline, and other public agencies. Among the many challenges to be addressed, the negotiation of an access fee between SFRTA and FECI/Brightline is perhaps the most critical. Access fee negotiations for the

Northeast Corridor Link are being led by the Miami-Dade TPO and Department of Public Works, which could inform a fee structure for the balance of access needed for the remaining TRCL segments.

In addition, another major challenge is the need to create a local finance plan for the operation and maintenance costs of the TRCL.

Conclusion

The continued operation and expansion of passenger rail service is a critical component of the regional multimodal transportation network. Continued dialogue between public agencies and FECI/Brightline is essential to enable the extension of additional passenger service through the region.

Recommendation

For informational and discussion purposes only.

Attachment

