



COMMISSION AGENDA:

9.29.09 #7

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Robert LaSala, County Administrator 

SUBJECT: High-Speed Rail Resolution

DATE: September 29, 2009

At the County Commission meeting of September 22, Commissioners Seel requested that the Board consider a resolution concerning the high-speed rail project for the State of Florida. Within the federal stimulus program, several billion dollars were allocated to fund high-speed rail transportation. Within that package, the State of Florida is recognized to be a serious candidate for this funding. The State has earlier approved a plan with a high-speed rail network with the first phase being Tampa Bay to Orlando and the second phase being Orlando to Miami. The State Department of Transportation has submitted a grant request to construct the first phase from Tampa Bay to Orlando and begin the design work for Orlando to Miami.

Commissioner Seel had indicated that Ed Turanchik had provided a copy of the resolution approved by the State Cabinet supporting this grant. The County staff has reworked that resolution to be a position more suited to Pinellas County; therefore, the resolution states the County supports the high-speed rail project and points out that same funding program allows for the funding of other intercity projects, which would include the crossing of Tampa Bay. It is recognized that we would not know at this point if we would prefer a light rail or a high-speed rail or some hybrid of this for a crossing. That will be the subject of the Alternatives Analysis that is going to be performed jointly by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), and Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA). However, once we have that defined, it is very likely we will be seeking funding in this category or any other opportunity.

The resolution has been approved by the County Attorney's office and is ready for Board action.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE FLORIDA HIGH-SPEED RAIL APPLICATION REQUEST FOR FEDERAL STIMULUS FUNDING.

WHEREAS, the President and Congress of the United States have enacted the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (“ARRA”) and the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 which will make at least \$13 billion available for high speed rail and intercity rail passenger service in the next five years, \$8 billion which is available under the ARRA for “shovel ready” high speed rail projects; and

WHEREAS, Florida has adopted a High-Speed Rail Transportation Plan connecting key destinations in the state with a high-speed rail network; and

WHEREAS, the State plan documents that phase 1 is the corridor from Tampa Bay to Orlando with phase 2 being the corridor from Orlando to Miami, and

WHEREAS, the Phase 1 corridor is divided into two parts, with part one being the corridor from Tampa to Orlando and part two being the Tampa Bay crossing corridor from St. Petersburg to Tampa, and

WHEREAS, the multicounty agency Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) has developed and adopted, in cooperation with local agencies, a Regional Rail Plan that has as a key component the Tampa Bay crossing; and

WHEREAS, the Tampa Bay Rail Crossing may either be a high-speed rail facility or a regional intercity rail facility based upon more in-depth alternative analysis that is presently being initiated by the Pinellas MPO, the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, and TBARTA in cooperation with FDOT; and

WHEREAS, the Pinellas and Hillsborough MPOs proposed to work with FDOT on an evaluation of the existing Howard Frankland I-275 Highway bridge with respect to the inclusion of rail in that future bridge improvement; and

WHEREAS, once these evaluations have been substantially completed the resulting project or projects would be considered within this Federal funding program; and

WHEREAS, such a Regional Rail Project, along with the other connecting regional rail projects, are an integral part of the State plan which includes not only the high-speed rail network but also intercity rail service, thereby providing comprehensive connectivity between St. Petersburg, Orlando, Jacksonville and Miami; and

WHEREAS, development of High Speed Rail in the Tampa Bay to Orlando corridor would connect a super-region with over 6.8 million citizens, two international airports with over 51 million passengers and tourist destinations that attract over 50 million

visitors annually, all of which are served principally and primarily by a single six lane highway; and

WHEREAS, it is understood that supporting intercity regional rail projects will also be considered as part of this State rail network plan and will be part of the current and future funding initiative with respect to both federal and state funds; and

WHEREAS, the combined projects establish a cost-effective foundation for commencing and developing high speed and inter-city rail service in Florida that would provide effective service to 14 million Floridians, or approximately 76% of Florida's residents; and

WHEREAS, the development of High Speed Rail and intercity rail in Florida will catalyze the development of strong regional and local rail and bus transit systems, reduce congestion and air pollution and will promote better growth management.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, in a regular session duly assembled on this 29th day of September 2009 hereby supports Florida's application for \$2.5 billion for design and construction of the Tampa Bay to Orlando High-Speed Rail Corridor and \$70 million for design and construction of the Jacksonville to Miami Amtrak inter-city service and further supports regional intercity rail projects identified in the state plan that are considered integral elements of this system,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board urges and requests that the Florida Legislature enthusiastically support Florida's high speed and inter-city rail state plan and take all reasonable and prudent steps to maximize Florida's ability to qualify for these federal funds.

This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

Commissioner _____ offered the forgoing Resolution and moved its adoption, which was seconded by Commissioner _____ and upon roll call the vote was:

AYES:

NAYS:

ABSENT AND NOT VOTING:

APPROVED AS TO FORM
OFFICE OF COUNTY ATTORNEY

By *David Herbert*
Attorney