



SEFTC

Southeast Florida
Transportation Council

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA PASSENGER RAIL EVALUATION

July 23, 2012

FINAL AS APPROVED BY SEFTC

Southeast Florida Transportation Council

Southeast Florida Passenger Rail Evaluation

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Section 1 Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following section provides a high-level overview of the southeast Florida passenger rail evaluation conducted at the request of the Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC). Included herein is an overview of the evaluation purpose and process; identification of recent collaborative advancements; a summary of the technical assessment; and the findings and recommendations. While both the FDOT and SFRTA passenger rail approaches offer merit, SEFTC has indicated that a single, common, jointly supported approach is necessary for the region to be successful in advancing passenger rail. Accordingly, this evaluation identifies a range of structural changes among agency relationships for the region to develop a passenger rail plan with greater collaboration, inter-agency participation, transparency, and efficiency. The findings and recommendations contained in this report were approved unanimously by the SEFTC Board at its July 23, 2012 meeting.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

Pursuant to a request by the SEFTC Board at its January 23, 2012 meeting, an evaluation of two proposals to re-establish passenger service on the Florida East Coast (FEC) rail corridor was conducted by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and the SEFTC's regional consultant, Kittelson and Associates, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as the "evaluation team"). The proposals include the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) "South Florida East Coast Corridor" (SFCEC) Study and the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) "Fast Start" proposal. Both proposals are evaluating passenger rail alternatives to be developed in Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties, an area that is coterminous with the boundaries of the SFRTA and its operation of the Tri-Rail commuter rail system. It should be noted that SEFTC, created under Chapter 339.175 F.S., is comprised of the chair or designee of the Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) governing boards. SEFTC serves as a formal forum for policy consideration and communication to carry out regional initiatives agreed upon by the MPOs in the three counties, including the development and implementation of the regional long-range transportation plan.

The intent of the third party evaluation was two-fold. First and foremost, the evaluation team's purpose was to identify ways in which a more collaborative regional planning and decision-making process could be established, with greater transparency and clear agency roles. Second, the evaluation team was requested to identify the similarities and differences between the proposals, identify opportunities for collaboration, and further educate decision-makers to enable more informed decisions as to how to move forward as a region. It should be noted the evaluation's goal was not to recommend SEFTC proceed with either one or the other proposal. Rather, as indicated by SEFTC, the ultimate goal was to help identify the most appropriate, transparent and collaborative process for the region to advance with ideally a single, commonly-supported

passenger rail project that would be supported by both FDOT and SFRTA as well as the other regional transportation stakeholder agencies.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process was initiated in January 2012. Both the FDOT and SFRTA posted relevant project documents on an internal web-site solely created for the purpose of evaluation. The evaluation team conducted a preliminary due diligence review of the posted documents and held initial project meetings individually with each agency to describe the evaluation process and expectations. Additional data was requested from and provided by both agencies without delay. Subsequently, a series of project evaluation meetings were held with both agencies to gather additional information and share preliminary findings. In addition, the evaluation team has attended all of the SFECC Steering Committee meetings convened by FDOT since February 2012. A summary of the federal and state funding and environmental review processes will also be provided to SEFTC to help better inform decision-makers regarding these complex processes and clarify technical jargon.

RECENT EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The regional interagency dialogue has clearly improved since the passenger rail evaluation began. Regional meetings and work sessions regarding various aspects of passenger rail planning have begun to occur, with participation by FDOT, SFRTA, and the region's transportation stakeholder agencies. This collaboration has helped highlight opportunities to integrate the two passenger rail approaches into one. Several key examples are noted below.

- **SFECC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS:** During the execution of the SFECC Study from 2005 through 2010, FDOT regularly convened inter-agency "Steering Committee" meetings with regional transportation stakeholder agencies (e.g., MPOs, SFRTA, transit agencies, RPCs) to review the study progress and collaborate regarding next steps. These meetings were not scheduled in 2011, and concerns were raised due to a lack of participation and oversight by non-FDOT agencies. Since the inception of the evaluation, FDOT has reconvened these steering committee meetings, with five meetings held from February through June 2012. At its April 23, 2012 meeting, the SEFTC Board unanimously requested FDOT to reestablish the SFECC Steering Committee with a monthly meeting schedule, and FDOT has confirmed its commitment to comply with this recommendation.
- **INCLUSION OF "FAST START" PROPOSAL AS SFECC SCENARIO:** The regional transportation stakeholder agencies indicated a need for the SFRTA "Fast Start" proposal to be included in the SFECC study as one of the alternatives to be tested, and this action was requested by the SEFTC Board at its April 23, 2012 meeting. FDOT confirmed its commitment to comply

with this recommendation, and the two agencies have since met several times to review the SFECC ridership models, data needs, and assumptions. In early June, SFRTA provided the necessary data for an initial ridership model for the “Fast Start” proposal, and the agencies are working together to evaluate the associated ridership implications.

- **BLENDING OF PROPOSAL CONCEPTS:** At the most recent SFECC steering committee meeting, the SFECC project team indicated there were a number of potential modifications to the SFECC alternatives that integrated aspects of the Fast Start proposal. The discussion also included ways in which agency resources could be blended, including SFRTA train equipment and operational knowledge, to create greater efficiencies in the SFECC study. The agencies are continuing to work together to refine the model results and determine additional data needs.
- **NON-FDOT INVOLVEMENT IN TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS:** Due to concerns raised regarding lack of non-FDOT agency involvement in the technical aspects of the SFECC study, FDOT has convened several regional transportation meetings to discuss technical issues (e.g., Pompano Crossover, Miami Government Center station location, alternate land use and demographic scenarios for modeling, Fast Start modeling and operational assumptions).
- **FEDERAL & NON-FEDERAL FUNDING CONSIDERATION:** The evaluation team raised a concern regarding consideration of a state permitting process, as suggested by the SFRTA’s Fast Start proposal, that could potentially yield a faster delivery of an initial phase of service versus a Federal permitting approach (e.g., utilizing the Florida SEIR process versus the Federal NEPA process). This has expanded the dialogue regarding permitting processes and the associated available funding sources, and the current FDOT project documents now indicate consideration of either Federal or State funding for capital improvements.

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

In addition to evaluating the structural relationships between FDOT, SFRTA, and the other regional transportation agencies, SEFTC also requested a technical assessment of the proposals. This included the identification of similarities and differences between the proposals and a determination as to the reasonableness of the approaches. As summarized below and detailed in Section 3 of the memorandum, the two agency approaches differ significantly in scale, scope, cost, and timing.

The FDOT/SFECC Study is intended to develop a long-term strategy for passenger rail development with multiple implementation phases. The intended outcome of the study is the selection of a System Master Plan by the three MPOs to establish a long-term (20+ years) transportation strategy, which is proposed to be built in cost-effective segments phased in over time, and a “Locally Preferred

Alternative” (LPA) to represent the short-term project for which federal funds could be pursued initially. The FDOT/SFECC Study anticipates the use of federal, state, and local funding for capital improvements, but current project documents do not identify funding sources for operations. The SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal could be one of the alternatives evaluated in the SFECC Study.

The SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal is intended to be a short-term strategy that will be implemented by 2015/2017. It assumes the use of state funds for capital improvements and identifies fare box revenues and contribution by local governments for operational costs. This proposal entails changing the existing Tri-Rail service (funded in part by FTA) and re-allocating a portion of those resources (such as rail cars) for the proposed new service. Given prior federal funding secured for the Tri-Rail system, the proposed changes to the existing Tri-Rail service will require coordination with the FTA. If any short-term solution is implemented with state funds only, it may be prudent to coordinate these activities with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and obtain documentation that would allow the funds spent on this initial piece to act as non-federal match for the longer term implementation.

While both approaches offer merits, neither proposal is substantially complete. Both proposals require additional data regarding station locations, project costs, funding sources, rail improvements, freight and passenger capacity, and ridership projections. These data needs can be addressed with the greatest efficiency and accuracy with expanded regional collaboration.

During the course of this evaluation, FEC Industries introduced “All Aboard Florida,” a proposed privately-funded intercity passenger rail service designed to provide express service between southeast and central Florida. The new service proposes only four initial stations: Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Orlando. Discussions with FEC representatives indicate the company is evaluating ridership projections, infrastructure needs, and project costs, with results anticipated in mid-to-late 2012. While this private proposal was not appropriate for inclusion in this passenger rail evaluation, it nonetheless emphasizes the need for close coordination with FEC Industries and Flagler Development for any passenger rail proposal on the FEC rail corridor to be successful. “All Aboard Florida” further highlights SEFTC’s stated need for the public transportation agencies to closely coordinate activities regarding passenger rail, especially given the ultimate need for a public/private partnership to advance commuter rail on the corridor.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposals by FDOT and SFRTA are completely different in their scope, timing, cost-structure, and comprehensiveness. While FDOT’s SFECC Study is geared towards the development of a “System Master Plan,” which represents potentially a 20-year build-out for passenger rail services in the Region, the SFRTA’s Fast Start proposal is focused on a near-term single implementation phase of passenger service on the FEC rail corridor that is intended to be operational within five years.

The challenge set forth by SEFTC for this evaluation was to help identify ways in which the two proposals could be merged into a single passenger rail effort for the region. This evaluation was not tasked with identifying a specific proposal with which the region should proceed. Instead, the task was to provide a technical assessment of the proposals and identify ways in which the regional structure could be improved with broader, interagency participation and a higher degree of transparency to advance passenger rail.

For the first task, the two proposals were assessed from a technical standpoint, and while each agency's approach has merit, there remains substantial work necessary in both proposals regarding a host of critical decision points for a passenger rail project to be advanced. As indicated by the SFRTA in its discussion of the Fast Start proposal, the agency has invested limited resources in assembling this concept, which is designed to be integrated into the SFECC Study for a more thorough and complete evaluation. The SFECC Study has been underway for nearly eight years; however, prior to presentation of a Locally Preferred Alternative (currently anticipated in late 2012 in FDOT's schedule), there remains significant work necessary regarding modeling, ridership, costs, and engineering. Improved regional collaboration appears to be the best mechanism to address proposal deficiencies and develop a complete, integrated passenger rail proposal for southeast Florida. This will require the SFRTA to discontinue its efforts on a separate Fast Start proposal and for FDOT to fully integrate the SFRTA Fast Start proposal into the SFECC Study.

As to the second task, the need for better regional collaboration and the challenges thereto, has emerged as the key finding in this evaluation. While a strong legacy of interagency collaboration was established from 2005 through 2010, the regional communication network was interrupted after FDOT completed public hearings before the three MPOs in 2010 regarding the SFECC "Locally Preferred Alternative." The regular points of interagency interaction were abandoned. For example, the SFECC Steering Committee stopped meeting; the sharing of regional project data and modeling ended; and there was a breakdown of communications. As indicated by SEFTC, the region cannot advance with multiple public agency proposals for similar service on the FEC corridor. Therefore, the restoration of regional collaboration – for planning, evaluation, and ultimately implementation – appears to be the region's greatest challenge.

It should be noted that through the regional collaborative activities that have occurred since the inception of this evaluation, the two passenger rail plans appear to be converging. The SFECC Steering Committee meetings of the past five months have provided a positive venue for regional discussion regarding passenger rail service. At the most recent SFECC steering committee meeting (June 2012), after several FDOT/SFRTA work sessions regarding modeling, the SFECC project team had begun adjusting scenarios to incorporate various aspects of the Fast Start proposal. These are all steps in the right direction given SEFTC's ultimate goal of an integrated regional passenger rail plan.

This evaluation identifies a number of structural adjustments among the regional stakeholders for the advancement of passenger rail. SEFTC has already requested two actions (the reestablishment of regular SFECC steering committee meetings and for FDOT to test the SFRTA Fast Start proposal as one of the SFECC alternatives) which FDOT has already begun to implement. However, there are additional adjustments that will help restore regional collaboration, improve communications, clarify agency roles, and add predictability and transparency to the passenger rail development process. These structural recommendations focus on the SFECC Study as the broadest and most appropriate effort to establish the long-term passenger vision for the region.

It should be noted the focus of this evaluation is directed towards the **planning** of a future premium transit system for the region, and accordingly, the best arrangement of agency relationships and resources to accomplish the best plan for the region in an efficient, effective, and collaborative manner. However, the evaluation specifically does not provide recommendations regarding the future **operator** of that system. In its discussion of this report and its recommendations, the SEFTC Board reiterated this distinction clearly, emphasizing the immediate need for the region to re-align its agencies to complete a transit plan and establish a single, seamless public “face” for the necessary negotiations with the FEC to establish future transit service on the rail corridor. The SEFTC Board was in consensus that operations of that ultimate system should be the subject of future discussions, after a regional plan was established and adopted, and therefore, was not appropriate for SEFTC direction at this time.

- (1) RE-ESTABLISH SFECC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS WITH REGULAR SCHEDULE, COORDINATED WITH OTHER REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION MEETINGS WHERE POSSIBLE, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROTOCOL.
 - a. The SFECC Steering Committee should meet not less than bi-monthly, with meetings coordinated with other regularly scheduled regional transportation meetings. As discussed in the body of this evaluation memorandum, FDOT has already begun holding SFECC Steering Committee meetings, some of which have been coordinated with other regularly scheduled regional transportation meetings.
 - b. The membership and roles of the SFECC Steering Committee should be specified (e.g., FDOT, SFRTA, MPOs, transit agencies, RPCs, others). This will improve project awareness and more clearly communicate agency participation in the region.
 - c. Meeting agendas and background data should be provided to committee members a week in advance of the meetings to allow a more thorough review of materials, better informed discussion during the meetings, and improve the committee’s efficiency.

(2) ESTABLISH REGULAR PROJECT UPDATES BY SFECC TO VARIOUS AGENCIES

- a. The FDOT SFECC project team should provide regular project status updates regarding project development, timing, and other items of interest as follows:
 - SEFTC: Quarterly Updates
 - MPOs: Quarterly Updates
 - SFRTA: Quarterly Updates
 - RPCs: Semi-Annual Updates

This will help maintain project momentum and increase transparency.

(3) COORDINATE SFECC MODELING WITH RTTAC MODELING SUBCOMMITTEE

- a. The SFECC project team should collaborate with the RTTAC modeling subcommittee to improve regional coordination and the validity of data, assumptions, and projections.
- b. The SFECC project team should present all background data (including demographic data, ridership projections, and modeling assumptions) as well as model refinements not less than semi-annually as part of the RTTAC modeling committee meetings.

(4) SFECC COORDINATION WITH MPO STAFF

- a. The SFECC project team should distribute all background data (including demographic data, transit assumptions, and ridership projections) and modeling assumptions to MPO staff for review prior to utilization in SFECC modeling. This will increase efficiency and improve the transparency of the project.

(5) PRESENTATION OF LPA AS A “UNIFIED VOICE” AMONG FDOT AND SFRTA

- a. The SFECC project team should work with the SFRTA to enable presentation of a “unified” Locally Preferred Alternative to the MPOs for approval. Related agenda items and presentations should be presented with SFRTA involvement at the related MPO and other public hearings. This will improve regional collaboration and improve efficiency.
- b. The SFECC project team should work with the SFRTA to develop alternatives that fully integrate the SFRTA’s resources, including the use of Tri-Rail equipment

(existing and pending) and the SFRTA's knowledge and experience. This should include collaborative development of a first phase alternative that integrates components of the Fast Start proposal that are mutually determined to be the most beneficial for the region, require minimum infrastructure, and consider a non-Federal permitting process for faster implementation. This will improve regional collaboration and maximize utilization of the region's resources.

- c. By fully incorporating the Fast Start proposal analysis into the SFECC Study, the SFRTA should discontinue its efforts to advance a separate proposal and instead participate with FDOT as its partner in the SFECC Study. This will improve regional collaboration and reduce confusion regarding passenger rail development in the region.

(6) ADVANCE PASSENGER RAIL AS A "UNIFIED TEAM," INCLUDING BOTH FDOT AND SFRTA IN FEC DISCUSSIONS

- a. Discussions with the FEC related to the establishment of passenger rail on the corridor, including public/private partnerships, should occur with both FDOT and SFRTA acting as a "unified team." This will improve regional cohesiveness and streamline communications with FEC as a public/private partner.

(7) CONTINUED COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT PROVIDED BY THE MPOs, REPRESENTED BY SEFTC

- a. SEFTC should act as the regional oversight entity regarding the planning and implementation of passenger rail development in the region. This will improve regional collaboration and provide continued monitoring of passenger rail development in the region.
- b. Both FDOT and the SFRTA should participate equally in SEFTC discussions regarding passenger rail initiatives in the region. This will improve consistency and regional collaboration.
- c. The quarterly SFECC updates provided to SEFTC should include discussion of joint participation and progress by FDOT and SFRTA, as well as the other regional transportation stakeholder agencies, in the advancement of passenger rail in the region. This will help maintain regional collaboration and oversight of passenger rail development in the region.

Section 2 Evaluation Process Overview

EVALUATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

EVALUATION PURPOSE

Pursuant to a request by the SEFTC Board at its January 23, 2012 meeting, an evaluation of two proposals to re-establish passenger service on the Florida East Coast (FEC) rail corridor was conducted by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and the regional consultant, Kittelson and Associates, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as the “evaluation team”). The proposals include the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) “South Florida East Coast Corridor” (SFECC) Study and the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) “Fast Start” proposal. The intent of the third party evaluation was two-fold. First and foremost, the evaluation team’s purpose was to help reestablish a collaborative process with broad multi-agency participation and a high degree of transparency. Second, the evaluation team was to identify the similarities and differences between the proposals, determine the reasonableness of the approaches, and further educate decision-makers regarding the proposals. The ultimate goal indicated by SEFTC was for the evaluation to help identify a transparent and collaborative process that could help the region move forward ideally with a single passenger rail project that could be supported by both FDOT and SFRTA as well as the other regional transportation stakeholder agencies.

EVALUATION PROCESS

To enable the evaluation to occur, both the FDOT and SFRTA posted relevant project documents on an internal website solely created for the review of the proposals. The evaluation team conducted a preliminary due diligence review of the posted documents, with additional information requested of and received from the two agencies. Initial project meetings were held with each agency individually to describe the evaluation process and expectations. Subsequently, a series of project evaluation meetings were held with both agencies to gather additional information, share findings and determine collaboratively how to proceed forward as one region. Additionally, towards the beginning of the evaluation the SFECC Steering Committee Meetings re-commenced and were also used as a forum for discussing current activities on the project, predominantly on the FDOT side.

Given the complexity of the various permitting and funding options related to passenger rail development in the region, a non-technical summary of the federal and state funding and environmental review processes will also be provided to SEFTC to help better inform decision-makers and clarify technical jargon.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Based on the review of documents to date, it is clear the two proposals being advanced by FDOT and SFRTA are wholly different in their scope, timing, cost-structure, and comprehensiveness. While FDOT’s SFECC Study is geared towards the development of a “System Master Plan,” which represents potentially a 20-year build-out for passenger rail services in the Region, the SFRTA’s Fast Start proposal is focused on a near-term single implementation phase of passenger service on the FEC rail corridor that is intended to be operational within five years. Thus, an “apples-to-apples” comparison of these two approaches is inapplicable. Instead, a brief summary of the two proposals is presented below, and key points of each proposal are identified separately.

FDOT SFECC Study

The FDOT SFECC Study is detailed extensively on the project website. Accordingly, much of the information below has been taken directly from that source.

The SFECC Study is a large-scale, comprehensive analysis designed to produce a regional “System Master Plan” for integrated passenger services in southeast Florida. FDOT’s project information website indicates the study has been underway since 2006. The subject corridor encompasses 85 miles of the Florida East Coast (FEC) railroad corridor through three counties (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties ~ from Jupiter to Miami), including direct connections to Tri-Rail and other transit systems. The System Master Plan represents an ultimate, long-term vision for implementing reliable, high quality rail transit service in Southeast Florida (likely over a timeframe of twenty years or more).

Due in part to the high cost to build and operate the vision of the System Master Plan, the realities of the current economy, and to allow ridership to build over time, FDOT is working to refine the System

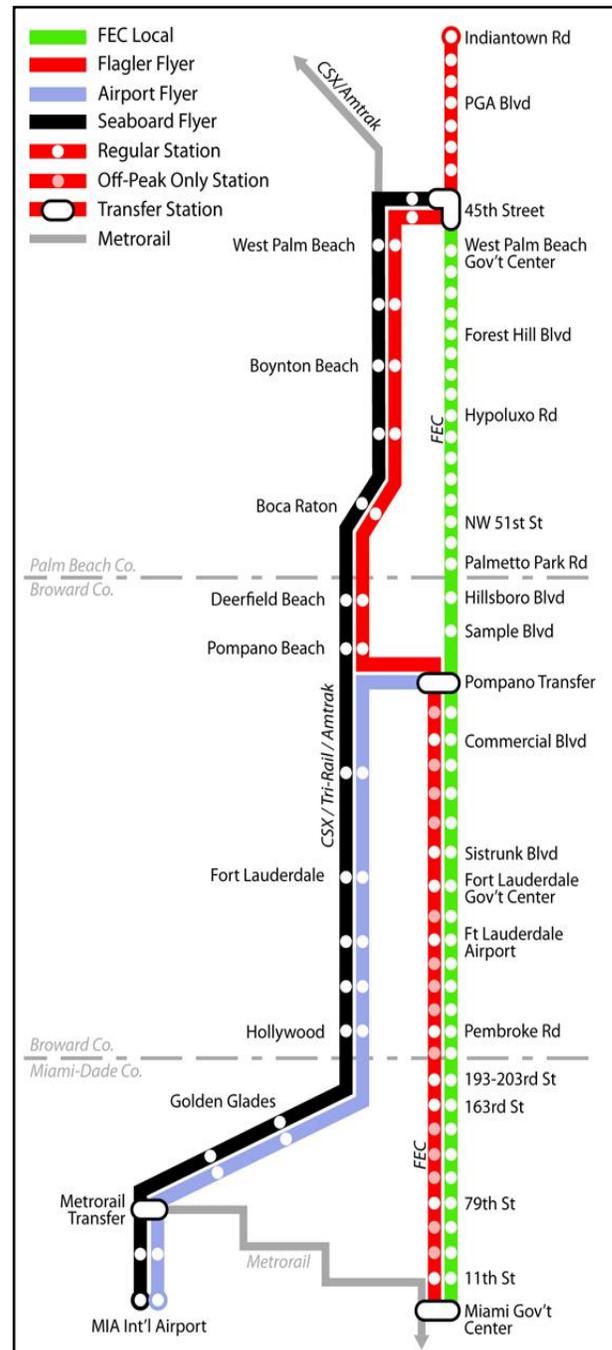


Figure 1: FDOT SFECC Master Plan

Master Plan and develop an implementation strategy based on various scenarios to implement the project in phases (e.g., Fort Lauderdale to Miami, Mangonia Park to Jupiter). Ongoing SFEECC technical work, including travel demand modeling and train simulation, is intended to support an informed determination of potential, cost-feasible initial phases within the 85-mile corridor. FDOT has indicated a goal for each individual phase to potentially represent a “minimum operable segment,” meaning the segment could be developed independently as funding becomes available.

The SFEECC study has consistently maintained a focus on the ability to secure Federal funding for all or part of the system. Consequently, the study is being conducted in accordance with all applicable Federal funding criteria, including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) as well as FDOT's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process and guidelines. Depending upon the structure of service and funding packages, FDOT indicates transit service along portions of the corridor could begin as early as 2017. The FDOT project website identifies several factors that could influence the timing of service, including whether or not a consensus is reached, if there is a local, dedicated source of funding (for the service), and if the project receives the appropriate federal or state funding approvals. Currently, there are no committed funding sources for engineering, construction, operations, or maintenance. The start of service depends on numerous factors including: meeting technical criteria, obtaining access to the FEC corridor, and securing funding. The FDOT website indicates the study is progressing, maintaining funding eligibility through a federal process that could enable revenue service in seven years, in a best-case scenario. Non-federal funding opportunities and a non-federal process could result in service in about 5 years.

The SFEECC Study is currently in its third “phase” of analysis. Upon completion of the second phase of the study in 2010, a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) was developed, which identified 52 potential station locations and an extensive array of service options on the FEC and CSX/SFRC rail corridors. The LPA was approved by the Palm Beach and Broward MPOs in September 2010. The Miami-Dade MPO, however, did not approve the LPA and raised questions regarding information presented by the FDOT project team. The ultimate “build-scenario” suggested up to 300 trains per day for the preferred rail alternatives, with capital costs of roughly \$2.5 Billion. The SFEECC Study had identified four potential project segments, including Mangonia Park to Jupiter; Pompano to West Palm Beach; Pompano to Miami; and Fort Lauderdale to Miami. Each of these individual project segments had estimated capital costs ranging from \$170M to \$390M, and using the SunRail system as a model, FDOT estimated annual operating costs for each segment to range from \$8M to \$25M per year. (All figures taken from FDOT Public Hearing Presentation, September 2010 and SFEECC Project Update, January 2012).

Following these hearings and input, FDOT began to refine the System Master Plan in 2011 to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Part of that effort includes revisions to ridership projections, costs, and travel times which will help inform refinements to station locations. For the refined LPA, FDOT has indicated it is refining station locations to reduce the number for an initial service. A selection

of stations will be identified as “primary,” while others identified as “secondary” or “infill.” The FDOT project website indicates status of various activities as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: FDOT SFECC Study - Schedule of Activities
(SOURCE: FDOT Project Website)

Phase 1: Alternatives Development & Screening (Freight Assessment, Conceptual Definition of Alternatives)		2005 – 2007
Phase 2: Detailed Screening of Alternatives (Detailed Definition of Alternatives, Regional Master Plan/LPA is Regional Rail)		2008 – 2010
1	Refine the System Master Plan	Ongoing (2012)
2	Continue Coordination with FTA and FEC	Ongoing (2012)
3	Develop preliminary phased implementation plan and phasing costs	Ongoing (2012)
4	Continue public outreach	Ongoing (2012)
5	Updates to Metropolitan Planning Organizations, SFRTA, and other stakeholders	Winter/Spring 2012
6	Identify funding strategies	Summer 2012
7	Request MPO endorsement of the refined System Master Plan / LPA	Fall 2012
8	Progress the implementation plan into the next phase of development	Fall 2012

With respect to construction and management of the new transit service, the FDOT project website indicates “that decision will be made in the future based on best practices drawn from examples around the country.”

SFRTA Fast Start Proposal

The SFRTA Fast Start proposal was introduced by the SFRTA in November 2011 and is designed for a three-to-five year implementation horizon. It should be noted that SFRTA was created by the Legislature in 2003 when the former Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority was transformed into the SFRTA with the express purpose of providing greater mobility in South Florida. Florida Statutes indicates the intent of the Legislature is for the SFRTA to have “overall authority to coordinate, develop, and operate a regional transportation system within the area served” (Ch. 343.54(1)(b), F.S.). The SFRTA is also assigned the duty to develop and adopt a plan for the operation, maintenance, and expansion of the transit system it operates (Ch. 343.54(4), F.S.).

Summary information presented below is taken from the SFRTA Board Presentation on the Fast Start Proposal (dated October 2011). The proposal suggests that SFRTA would initiate service on the 85-mile portion of FEC corridor from Jupiter to Miami as follows:

- Add six trains per day from Jupiter to downtown Miami
- Add 26 trains per day from Fort Lauderdale to downtown Miami
- Split the current Tri-Rail service at Pompano Beach, diverting 24 trains per day across a new rail interconnection onto the FEC (from Mangonia Park) into downtown Miami.
- Maintain 26 trains per day from Mangonia Park to the Miami Intermodal Center

The SFRTA suggests all components of the new service would occur in a single phase, with eighteen new stations along the FEC corridor and a new FEC/CSX rail interconnection in Pompano Beach. The SFRTA would operate the service and utilize train equipment the agency has already ordered in anticipation of service expansion. This proposal entails changing the existing service [funded in part by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)] and re-allocating these resources (such as rail cars) for the modified service; the proposed changes to the existing service will require coordination with FTA.

The proposal suggests capital costs of \$284 Million for rail infrastructure, and the service would utilize rail cars the SFRTA has already procured in anticipation of service expansion. Instead of Federal funding, the SFRTA proposal suggests all capital costs would be provided by the state. Operating costs would be offset by a combination of fare increases and local government contributions (proportionate to the level of new service received by those local governments), and SFRTA suggests the net increase of operating costs would be minimized as the Fast Start proposal would utilize the agency's existing administrative structure. If the short-term solution is implemented with state funds only, it may be prudent to coordinate these activities with FTA and obtain documentation that would allow the funds spent on this initial piece to act as non-federal match for the longer term implementation.



Figure 2: SFRTA Fast Start Proposal

Agency representatives have noted the proposal does not conflict with the FDOT SFECC Study. Rather, they have suggested the Fast Start proposal could become a first implementation phase of the SFECC project.

As indicated in the SFRTA Fast Start Project Overview Fact Sheet, the build-out timeframe for all components of the proposal is 2015/2017, commensurate with the initiation of the new service.

Technical Summary

Table 2 summarizes the technical data review findings for both proposals.

Table 2: Summary of Technical Data

Evaluation Topic	FDOT/SFECC Study	SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal
OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS	Long-term	Short-term
	Multiple implementation phases	Single implementation phase
	System Master Plan +/-or Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)	Could serve as potential first phase of System Master Plan or LPA
	New passenger rail service integrated with Tri-Rail service or stand-alone	New passenger rail service integrated with Tri-Rail service
TIMEFRAME	First phase potentially by 2017/2019 20-Year Build-out	Single phase by 2015/2017
<i>Is the projected time frame for implementation reasonable?</i>	<i>Yes, if funded</i>	<i>Yes, if funded</i>
DATA & METHODOLOGY	Reasonable for planning level	Reasonable for conceptual level
<i>What are the next steps to finalize analysis?</i>	Much more work necessary for LPA hearings in Fall of 2012	SFRTA suggests proposal be tested as part of FDOT/SFECC Study (underway as of June 2012)
ANTICIPATED CAPITAL FUNDING DISTRIBUTION	Likely Federal (50%), State (25%), Local (25%)	State (100%)
FUNDING SOURCES	Project designed to maintain Federal eligibility with Federal documentation	Need to determine ability to maintain Federal eligibility for current or new funding
<i>Federal Funding Issues</i>	No funding currently identified in FDOT 5-Year Work Program or beyond	No funding currently identified in FDOT 5-Year Work Program or beyond
<i>State Funding Issues</i>	State typically requires 25% local funding match for Federal funding	

Evaluation Topic	FDOT/SFECC Study	SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal
<p><i>Local Funding Issues</i></p>	<p>Consensus-building necessary to secure and document local funding for federal application</p>	<p>Project anticipates parking and enhanced station amenities to be provided by locals. Preliminary dialogue underway with locals regarding local funding.</p>
<p><i>Is funding for the project as described likely to be available?</i></p>	<p><i>Availability of funds unclear</i></p>	<p><i>Availability of funds unclear</i></p>
<p>CAPITAL COSTS</p>	<p>\$2.5 Billion (build-out estimate)</p>	<p>\$300 +/- Million (single implementation phase)</p>
	<p>Preliminary phasing segment costs range from \$170M - \$390M</p>	<p>(presumes use of additional SFRTA rail equipment the agency has already procured)</p>
<p><i>Are the projected capital costs reasonable?</i></p>	<p><i>More evaluation necessary to determine reasonableness</i></p>	<p><i>More evaluation necessary to determine reasonableness</i></p>
<p>RIDERSHIP MODELING</p>	<p>Ridership modeling & freight simulation currently underway</p>	<p>Modeling underway as part of FDOT/SFECC Study</p>
	<p>Inclusion of SFRTA/Fast Start as one of several alternative scenarios</p>	
<p><i>Could the service be operated given the other demands on the corridor?</i></p>	<p><i>TBD depending on ridership projections, future freight usage, and other potential passenger rail service by FEC (“All Aboard Florida”)</i></p>	<p><i>TBD depending on ridership projections, future freight usage, and other potential passenger rail service by FEC (“All Aboard Florida”)</i></p>
<p>OPERATING COSTS</p>	<p>Source of operating dollars unclear</p>	<p>Project documents indicate operating costs to include farebox revenue (with increased fares) and municipal contributions. SFRTA indicates use of existing agency administrative structure.</p>
		<p>Dialogue underway with local governments</p>
<p><i>Are the projected operating costs reasonable?</i></p>	<p><i>More evaluation necessary to determine reasonableness</i></p>	<p><i>More evaluation necessary to determine reasonableness</i></p>
<p>INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS</p>	<p>Additional data needed regarding Pompano Crossover, bridge clearance, impacts on street network & grade crossings</p>	<p>Additional data needed regarding Pompano Crossover, bridge clearance, impacts on street network & grade crossings</p>
<p>PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT</p>	<p>No reference to standard public involvement process, meeting schedule for stakeholder agencies, or project steering committee</p>	<p>No reference to standard public involvement process, meeting schedule for stakeholder agencies, or project steering committee</p>

Evaluation Topic	FDOT/SFECC Study	SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal
<p><i>What are the institutional barriers? (Who has to agree? How long would it take to get an agreement?)</i></p>	<p><i>Need to clarify role of MPOs, SEFTC, SFRTA & others; need to establish regular public & agency involvement process & schedule</i></p>	<p><i>Need to clarify role of MPOs, SEFTC, FDOT & others; need to establish regular public & agency involvement process & schedule</i></p>
	<p><i>Need to “humanize” jargon (e.g., NEPA, SEIR, Federal process, etc.)</i></p>	<p><i>Need to “humanize” jargon (e.g., NEPA, SEIR, Federal process, etc.)</i></p>

Section 3 Examples of Recent Inter-Agency Collaboration

EXAMPLES OF RECENT INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

Since the inception of the passenger rail evaluation and SEFTC’s heightened focus on the inter-agency environment surrounding passenger rail, there have been a number of collaborative activities that evidence the improved inter-agency relationship relative to passenger rail planning. These activities are summarized below:

- **SFECC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS:** During the execution of the SFECC Study from 2005 through 2010, FDOT regularly convened inter-agency “Steering Committee” meetings to review the project approach, methodology, data, and findings with regional transportation stakeholder agencies (e.g., MPOs, SFRTA, transit agencies, RPCs) and collaborate regarding next steps. However, FDOT stopped scheduling these meetings in late 2010, and none were held in 2011. As a result, concerns were raised due to a lack of participation and oversight by non-FDOT agencies. Since the inception of the passenger rail evaluation, these steering committee meetings have been restarted with participation by all regional transportation stakeholder agencies. Recent steering committee meetings were held on February 14, April 11, May 3, and June 28, 2012. At its April 23, 2012 meeting, the SEFTC Board unanimously requested FDOT reestablish the SFECC Steering Committee with a monthly meeting schedule, and FDOT has confirmed its commitment to comply with this recommendation.
- **INCLUSION OF “FAST START” PROPOSAL AS SFECC SCENARIO:** The regional transportation stakeholder agencies indicated a need for the SFRTA “Fast Start” proposal to be included in the SFECC study as one of the alternatives to be tested. A preliminary recommendation was made by the evaluation team to the SEFTC Board at its April 23, 2012 SEFTC meeting to request FDOT include the SFRTA’s “Fast Start” proposal to be evaluated as an alternative scenario as part of the SFECC project. The motion was carried unanimously, and FDOT confirmed its commitment to comply with this recommendation. FDOT and SFRTA have since met several times to review the SFECC ridership models, data needs, and assumptions. In early June, SFRTA provided the necessary data for an initial ridership model for the “Fast Start” proposal. The agencies are continuing to work together to evaluate the associated ridership implications.
- **BLENDING OF PASSENGER RAIL PROPOSALS:** At the most recent SFECC steering committee meeting, the SFECC project team indicated there were a number of potential modifications to the SFECC alternatives that integrated aspects of the Fast Start proposal. The discussion also included ways in which agency resources could be blended, including SFRTA train

equipment and operational knowledge, to create greater efficiencies in the SFECC study. The agencies are continuing to work together to refine the model results and determine additional data needs.

- **NON-FDOT INVOLVEMENT IN TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS:** Concerns were raised regarding lack of non-FDOT agency involvement in the technical aspects of the SFECC study. As a result, various meetings have been held to discuss technical issues such as the Pompano Crossover and Miami Government Center station location (March 1, 2012), alternate land use and demographic scenarios for modeling (March 29, 2012), and the Fast Start assumptions for SFECC modeling and operations simulation (May 2, 2012).
- **FEDERAL & NON-FEDERAL FUNDING CONSIDERATION:** The evaluation team raised a concern regarding consideration of a state permitting process, as suggested by the SFRTA's Fast Start proposal, that could potentially yield a faster delivery of an initial phase of service versus a Federal permitting approach (e.g., utilizing the Florida SEIR process versus the Federal NEPA process). This has expanded the dialogue regarding permitting processes and the associated available funding sources, and the current FDOT project documents now indicate consideration of either Federal or State funding for capital improvements.

Section 4 Technical Assessment

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

As noted earlier in this memorandum, SEFTC has articulated its desire for a common passenger rail plan with which the region can move forward. Although this evaluation is not tasked with developing the single plan, a technical assessment of the two proposals was a component of the evaluation. The similarities and differences between the FDOT SFECC Study and SFRTA Fast Start proposal were identified, and the reasonableness of the various approaches was indicated. To enable SEFTC to move towards the ultimate recommendation of a single (common) passenger rail proposal, this assessment of the two proposals is intended to better inform and educate regional decision-makers. The evaluation team utilized two national rail and transit experts to assist in the assessment and evaluation of this technical data. A summary of the technical data is presented below in Table 3. A summary of the federal and state planning, funding, permitting, and decision-making processes will also be provided to SEFTC to help clarify these processes. This summary will be developed with input from FDOT and SFRTA to help create common language to clarify communications in the future.

Table 3: Technical Assessment Summary of Proposals

Evaluation Topic	Evaluation Criteria	FDOT/SFECC Study	SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal	Comments
Overview of Conceptual Service	Number of Trains	The number of trains is related to the freight modeling and ridership projections; these are currently being developed.	<p>Mangonia Park to Miami Airport: 26 trains per day (weekday) serving 18 stations</p> <p>Mangonia Park to Downtown Miami: 24 trains per day (weekday) serving 20 stations</p> <p>Downtowns of Fort Lauderdale to Miami: 26 trains per day (weekday) serving 10 stations</p> <p>Jupiter to Downtown Miami: 6 trains per day (weekday) serving 18 stations</p>	<p>The number of passenger trains that can operate in the FEC corridor is directly related to the amount of freight that is assumed to be operating in this same corridor. The more freight that is operating, the fewer passenger trains can operate.</p> <p>Operating costs may be reduced by reducing the number of trains in the initial years in the FDOT proposal.</p>
	Number of Stations	A total of 52 initial stations evaluated and assigned to four categories: primary station, secondary station, future infill station, and eliminated station; FDOT narrowed list to 23 “primary stations” and 11 “secondary stations”.	A total of 18 new stations proposed along the FEC Corridor	The proposals do not discuss the impacts on ridership and the extent to which the riders will shift to a nearby station if a station is eliminated. Reducing the number of stations will also reduce capital costs. Additional study will be required in this area before funding applications are prepared.

Evaluation Topic	Evaluation Criteria	FDOT/SFECC Study	SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal	Comments
	Capacity of Single-Track vs. Double-Track Sections	Given the level of service proposed, double track will be required throughout. It is possible that 3 tracks could be required, depending upon the proposed level of freight service.	Proposal indicates double tracking to be limited to the Miami-Fort Lauderdale segment	If the SFRTA proposal is adopted with future extensions planned, the need for additional double track should be analyzed at the time specific service extensions are proposed. Additional analysis will be necessary if the FEC's "All Aboard Florida" service is developed.
	Initial Operating Segment, Build Out Scenario	Initial Operating Segment will be determined as part of the LPA (revised Long-term Master Plan).	Proposal indicates a single implementation phase (consisting of four components of service).	Beyond the initial segment, instituting additional segments should depend upon actual ridership on the initial segment and the availability of funding. While future expansions should not be established with announced specific dates, the order in which they will be established should be included in the overall plan.
	Ridership Projections and Capacity of Service	The 2035 No Build scenario shows strong increases in Tri-Rail ridership, from 13,001 to 24,239 (86%). The 2035 LRTP scenario shows a 39% decrease in Tri-Rail boardings compared to the 2035 No build scenario.	20,000 opening year weekday trips assumed to calculate fare box revenue. Projected weekday ridership totals are approximately 25,000 trips per day in Year 2025.	The assumptions for the 2035 No Build scenario should be verified. Any ridership forecasts must account for not only such factors as the detailed operating plan and the fare structure but also factors such as feeder bus services and the cost and availability of parking.
Overview of Capital Costs	Rail Improvements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A preliminary estimate of capital costs is provided. 2. The existing connections at Pompano Beach and Northwood will need improvements in order to meet commuter service requirements. 3. A new minor maintenance and cleaning facility near Mangonia Park 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Includes a limited layover facility at Jupiter 2. Pompano rail connection between CSX & FEC 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A more detailed cost analysis will be required for final plan and funding applications. 2. The area of <i>Grade Crossings</i> needs more study and analysis. 3. Coast Guard approval must be sought before any bridge designs are finalized.
	Station Location and Improvements	23 "primary stations" and 11 "secondary stations"; station costs estimated to be \$2.6 million/station	18 new stations; station costs estimated to be \$1.2 million/station	Additional review of the source figures for these estimates is necessary. Both entities indicate additional work with local governments to confirm station locations and financial participation is on-going.
	Equipment Costs	Cost estimates are based on recent Tri-Rail purchases as well as other operators	Proposal indicates SFRTA has already ordered equipment to operate 3 additional train sets	Reasonable for planning purposes

Evaluation Topic	Evaluation Criteria	FDOT/SFECC Study	SFRTA/Fast Start Proposal	Comments
	Integration with Freight	Preliminary design with objective of avoiding conflict with freight service provided	Preliminary design with objective of avoiding conflict with freight service provided	With track modifications as included in the proposals, there appears to be adequate capacity for either service.
	Source of Cost Figures	Cost figures from a variety of sources used, generally by averaging costs of several operators or drawing from the experience of the pending SunRail system	Uses FDOT figures in preparing estimates.	Reasonable for planning purposes
Overview of Operating Approach and Costs	Operating Approach	Little is said in the provided project documents regarding the agency that will operate the service	Project documents indicate SFRTA would operate the proposed service	As many functions can be absorbed by the existing management without additional staffing, many economic advantages may be realized by utilizing an existing organization to run the service as compared to creating a new organization
	Staffing	100% increase	64% increase	Reasonable for planning purposes
	Operations and Maintenance Costs	Annual Operating Cost: \$8M to \$25M per segment (based upon SunRail estimates)	Annual Operating Cost: \$ 15 million	Reasonable for planning purposes; however, far more detailed analysis necessary before the final funding program is prepared. SFRTA indicates reduced operating costs are possible through the use of the agency's existing administrative structure and advantageous contract pricing with its contract operator. FEC access fees could also vary operating costs significantly.
	Operating Cost Estimate	Prepared based on future SunRail project in Central Florida	Prepared largely based on Tri-Rail's experience	Reasonable for planning purposes
	Fare Box Estimates	Passenger revenues estimated using Tri-Rail's 2009 fare levels and projected passenger counts	Present Tri-Rail ridership and the revenue increased by one-third	The figures are too rudimentary to forecast revenues and are not adequate for evaluating the proposal.

The Technical Assessment relies on the project documents provided by FDOT and the SFRTA in the second quarter of 2012. Late in the second quarter, FEC industries announced plans for a privately funded intercity passenger rail service to connect southeastern Florida and central Florida. The service, named "All Aboard Florida," proposes four new stations: Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Orlando, with possible extensions to Tampa and Jacksonville in future phases. FEC representatives indicate the company is conducting a series of planning, engineering, environmental, ridership, and financial analyses to quickly determine project feasibility. The company has suggested it would double-track the corridor through the region to accommodate the new service, which creates a significant variance for other passenger rail operations.

While the “All Aboard Florida” proposal was not the subject of this passenger rail evaluation, it strongly emphasizes the need for the region’s public transportation agencies to closely coordinate with FEC Industries and Flagler Development for any future rail proposals that would utilize the FEC rail corridor. It further underscores the importance of SEFTC’s call for improved regional collaboration among the region’s transportation agencies and a common passenger rail vision that will create the greatest leverage for the region’s resources, maximize public investment, and develop the strongest public/private relationship between the FEC and public sector.

Section 5 Findings and Recommendations

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposals by FDOT and SFRTA are completely different in their scope, timing, cost-structure, and comprehensiveness. FDOT's SFECC Study is geared towards the development of a "System Master Plan," which represents potentially a 20-year build-out for passenger rail services in the Region, which would be built in cost-effective segments phased in over time. By contrast, the SFRTA's Fast Start proposal is focused on a near-term single implementation phase of passenger service on the FEC rail corridor that is intended to be operational within five years.

The challenge set forth by SEFTC for this evaluation was to help identify ways in which the two proposals could be merged into a single passenger rail planning effort for the region. This evaluation was not tasked with identifying a specific proposal with which the region should proceed. Instead, the task was to evaluate the technical aspects of the two proposals, identify their similarities and differences, and indicate the reasonableness of each to better inform decision-makers. Further, the evaluation was tasked with identifying ways in which a regional structure could be established with broad, interagency participation and a high degree of transparency to advance a common passenger rail approach once it was developed.

The technical assessment has been presented in the body of this evaluation memorandum for information purposes. As indicated, each agency's approach has merit; however, there remains substantial work necessary regarding a host of critical decision points for a passenger rail project to be advanced. Questions remain regarding station locations, project costs, funding sources, rail improvements, freight and passenger capacity, and ridership projections. Working collaboratively in the region, it can be surmised these questions can find answers over time for a complete passenger rail proposal to be presented, which leads to the second task in the evaluation.

Regional collaboration and the challenges thereto, have emerged as the key finding in this evaluation. As indicated by the subject agencies, the region's transportation stakeholder entities, including FDOT, SFRTA, SEFTC, the three MPOs, and the other regional transportation stakeholder entities had a strong history of collaboration on the SFECC Study from its inception (2005) through 2010. While the LPA was approved by the Palm Beach and Broward MPOs, the Miami-Dade MPO raised significant questions regarding the SFECC project's assumptions, ridership projections, and project costs that FDOT is continuing to analyze in 2012. Also, FDOT's contract with its initial project consulting team ended, and a new project team was selected, causing further project delay. As a result, the project shifted into somewhat of a holding pattern in late 2010, and the regular points of interagency interaction for the SFECC Study, including steering committee meetings and various technical workshops, were not scheduled in 2011. Continued communications between FDOT and FEC Industries led to discussions of potential Fort Lauderdale/Miami service operated by FEC, which motivated SFRTA to develop a counter-proposal (Fast Start). However, as directed by SEFTC, the region cannot advance with multiple public agency proposals for similar service on the

FEC corridor. Therefore, the restoration of regional collaboration – for planning, evaluation, and ultimately implementation – appears to be the region’s greatest challenge.

There are a variety of structural adjustments in the advancement of passenger rail in the region that could help restore regional collaboration per the SEFTC task in this evaluation. SEFTC has already begun to request related actions, including the reestablishment of regular SFECC steering committee meetings, and for FDOT to test the SFRTA Fast Start proposal as one of the SFECC alternatives. FDOT has already indicated its compliance with both requests, as discussed in the body of this evaluation memorandum, which is good evidence of improved collaboration in the region. However, there remains a lack of specificity regarding the roles of various agencies, including SEFTC, and the regularity of project updates. There also remains awkwardness in the relationship between FDOT and SFRTA regarding passenger rail development in the region. To this point, the legislative intent for the SFRTA indicates the SFRTA has the authority to “coordinate, develop, and operate a regional transportation system” as well as plan for its expansion (Ch. 343.54(1)(b) and (4), F.S.). The statutory implication suggests the SFRTA should be participating in the development of new or expanded regional passenger rail initiatives.

Accordingly, the following recommendations were adopted unanimously by the SEFTC Board at its July 23, 2012 meeting for transmittal to FDOT and SFRTA. They are not mutually exclusive, but rather, these actions collectively represent a range of structural changes that could help restore regional collaboration, improve communications, clarify agency roles, and add predictability and transparency to the passenger rail development process.

The FDOT SFECC Study is the broadest approach to the restoration of passenger rail service on the FEC corridor, and by its definition, it is designed to establish a twenty-year (or longer) vision for passenger rail service. The Study will include a series of “minimum operable segments” to accomplish the long-term vision, each of which is designed to be advanced as funding becomes available. SFRTA has indicated its continued support for the SFECC Study, and further, it has requested the Fast Start proposal be tested as an SFECC alternative, an action that is currently underway. Accordingly, the structural recommendations provided below use the SFECC Study as the basis for regional collaboration going forward as it has the broadest ability to integrate multiple agency interests. In addition, the recommendations request SFRTA discontinue the development of its independent Fast Start proposal, and instead, become a partner with FDOT in the SFECC Study.

It should be noted that through the regional collaborative activities that have occurred since the inception of this evaluation, the two passenger rail plans appear to be converging. At the most recent SFECC steering committee meeting (June 2012), after several FDOT/SFRTA work sessions regarding modeling, the SFECC project team had begun adjusting scenarios to incorporate various aspects of the Fast Start proposal. These collaborative efforts represent steps in the right direction given SEFTC’s ultimate goal of an integrated regional passenger rail plan.

In its review of this report and its recommendations, the SEFTC Board emphasized the need for the region to focus its immediate energy on the re-alignment of the agencies to produce a consistent, collaborative, single long-term regional transit plan. Further, the Board discussed the need for the public agencies, especially FDOT and SFRTA, to present a solidified public “face” for discussions and negotiations with FEC to establish service on its rail corridor. As a public/private partnership will ultimately be necessary for the introduction of any public transit on the corridor, the Board was insistent that the public agencies (specifically FDOT and SFRTA) be collaborative and synchronized in their discussions with FEC. However, the Board was clear that the discussion of the operator of that system was not appropriate at this time and should be left open until a plan was established and further dialogue with FEC had occurred.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) RE-ESTABLISH SFECC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS WITH REGULAR SCHEDULE, COORDINATED WITH OTHER REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION MEETINGS WHERE POSSIBLE, AND WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROTOCOL.

- a. The SFECC Steering Committee should meet not less than bi-monthly, with meetings coordinated with other regularly scheduled regional transportation meetings. As discussed in the body of this evaluation memorandum, FDOT has already begun holding SFECC Steering Committee meetings, several of which have been scheduled with other regularly scheduled regional transportation meetings.
- b. The membership and roles of the SFECC Steering Committee should be specified (e.g., FDOT, SFRTA, MPOs, transit agencies, RPCs, others). This will more clearly communicate agency participation in the region and improve project awareness.
- c. Meeting agendas and background data should be provided to committee members a week in advance of the meetings to allow a more thorough review of materials, better informed discussion during the meetings, and improve the committee’s efficiency.

(2) ESTABLISH REGULAR PROJECT UPDATES BY SFECC TO VARIOUS AGENCIES

- a. The FDOT SFECC project team should provide regular project status updates regarding project development, timing, and other items of interest as follows:
 - SEFTC: Quarterly Updates
 - MPOs: Quarterly Updates
 - SFRTA: Quarterly Updates
 - RPCs: Semi-Annual Updates

This will help maintain project momentum and increase its transparency.

(3) COORDINATE SFECC MODELING WITH RTTAC MODELING SUBCOMMITTEE

- a. The SFECC project team should collaborate with the RTTAC modeling subcommittee to improve regional coordination and the validity of data, assumptions, and projections.
- b. The SFECC project team should present all background data (including demographic data, ridership projections, and modeling assumptions) as well as model refinements not less than semi-annually as part of the RTTAC modeling committee meetings.

(4) SFECC COORDINATION WITH MPO STAFF

- a. The SFECC project team should distribute all background data (including demographic data, transit assumptions, and ridership projections) and modeling assumptions to MPO staff for review prior to utilization in SFECC modeling. This will increase efficiency and improve the transparency of the project.

(5) PRESENTATION OF LPA AS A “UNIFIED VOICE” AMONG FDOT AND SFRTA

- a. The SFECC project team should work with the SFRTA to enable presentation of a “unified” Locally Preferred Alternative to the MPOs for approval. Related agenda items and presentations should be presented with SFRTA involvement at the related MPO and other public hearings. This will improve regional collaboration and improve efficiency.
- b. The SFECC project team should work with the SFRTA to develop alternatives that fully integrate the SFRTA’s resources, including the use of Tri-Rail equipment (existing and pending) and the SFRTA’s knowledge and experience. This should include collaborative development of a first phase alternative that integrates components of the Fast Start proposal that are mutually determined to be the most beneficial for the region, require minimum infrastructure, and consider a non-Federal permitting process for faster implementation. This will improve regional collaboration and maximize utilization of the region’s resources.
- c. By fully incorporating the Fast Start proposal analysis into the SFECC Study, the SFRTA should discontinue its efforts to advance a separate proposal and instead participate with FDOT as a partner in the SFECC Study. This will improve regional collaboration and reduce confusion regarding passenger rail development in the region.

(6) ADVANCE PASSENGER RAIL AS A “UNIFIED TEAM,” INCLUDING BOTH FDOT AND SFRTA IN FEC DISCUSSIONS

- a. Discussions with the FEC related to the establishment of passenger rail on the corridor, including public/private partnerships, should occur with both FDOT and SFRTA acting as a “unified team.” This will improve regional cohesiveness and streamline communications with FEC as a public/private partner.

(7) CONTINUED COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT PROVIDED BY THE MPOs, REPRESENTED BY SEFTC

- a. SEFTC should act as the regional oversight entity regarding the planning and implementation of passenger rail development in the region. This will improve regional collaboration and provide continued monitoring of passenger rail development in the region.
- b. Both FDOT and the SFRTA should participate equally in SEFTC discussions regarding passenger rail initiatives. This will improve consistency and regional collaboration.
- c. The quarterly SFECC updates provided to SEFTC should include discussion of joint participation and progress by FDOT and SFRTA, as well as the other regional transportation stakeholder agencies, in the advancement of passenger rail in the region. This will help maintain regional collaboration and oversight of passenger rail development in the region.