



TOWN OF JUPITER

March 26, 2014

Representative Patrick Murphy
18th District, Florida
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: All Aboard Florida Project

Dear Representative Murphy:

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Town of Jupiter's concerns with you regarding the *All Aboard Florida (AAF)* Project as proposed by Florida East Coast Industries (FECI).

In general, the Jupiter Town Council has looked favorably on passenger rail services as a means to facilitate regional transportation and enhance the ability to promote business development and job creation, provided that public safety and other adverse impacts are adequately mitigated by the design and construction of required infrastructure improvements and the implementation of appropriate operational practices. The Council has not taken a formal position on *AAF* to date, but is now planning to do so. The Town has been in the process of obtaining factual information and considering the benefits of *AAF* to the state as well as the adverse impacts on the Town specifically.

While once generally supportive of *AAF* in concept, emerging information has led to concerns that Jupiter citizens and businesses are being asked to accept negative impacts with limited, if any, benefit to community. The effort to obtain information has been hampered by the *AAF*'s inability, or perhaps reluctance, to provide precise information on issues of importance.

Specifically, the Town Council has raised a variety of concerns regarding the *AAF* Project including ***safety at the bridge and road crossings, provisions for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle rail crossings*** and the ***responsibility for the costs associated with making necessary infrastructure enhancements***. At a minimum, Feci needs to address the following:

Safety Enhancements:

To date, funding sources and the standards for safety improvements have not been finalized. This is a significant concern, because it indicates to us that public safety is not being given the appropriate priority by *AAF* and those advocating on their behalf. We understand that, in some locations in Town, train speeds could reach or exceed 110 MPH. The obviously creates concerns for the safety of pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

In order to best prevent vehicular and/or pedestrian conflicts, **the Feci should be required to**

install the highest degree of safety improvements at and between crossings with no funding to be provided by Jupiter. Improvements should be to a level that would qualify them for designations as Quiet Zones.

Further, we understand that the areas in which the trains will exceed 110 MPH will be required to have the highest level of safety measures installed to establish a “sealed corridor”. While the Town is supportive of the “sealing” concept, **the Town, and other municipalities, need to understand what “sealing” will entail, what infrastructure will be used, the aesthetic impacts on the community or how this relates to the establishment of the Quiet Zones.**

Additionally, with the corridor being sealed between crossings, it is imperative that improvements at the few locations in Town include adequate pedestrian features. These are critical safety improvements as residents within the surrounding neighborhoods have obviously been crossing the corridor as evidenced by the worn pathways across the FEC right of way.

Loxahatchee River Bridge:

The height of the Loxahatchee River Bridge is very low -- about 6’ at high tide. Basically, all boats require an open bridge to navigate through the area. The length of time the bridge will be down to allow additional train traffic is a significant concern. Currently, there are conflicts between the bridge downtime provided by *AFF* and that which is anecdotally reported by members of the community. This may be leading to a lack of urgency on *AAF*’s part as there doesn’t seem to be recognition of the length of time the bridge is down as experienced by local boaters and the dangers of attempting to queue boats up at a location with strong currents.

The Loxahatchee River Bridge, while perhaps having some useful remaining life for the primary structure, is antiquated and requires modernization. The operating mechanisms seem to be beyond useful life due to the frequency of mechanical breakdowns that have been occurring. **A new bridge design should be pursued that include components and an operational plan that will mitigate the impact on boating traffic on the Loxahatchee River as existing plans and anticipated closing cycles will create hazardous conditions for marine traffic.**

The bridge’s “cranky” (as described by nearby residents) mechanical mechanisms also seem to be causing an increasing amount of events where the bridge is stuck open causing freight trains to back up and block roadway crossings for excessive amounts of time. The status quo reliability of the bridge’s mechanical mechanisms is simply not acceptable.

Volume of Train Traffic:

Passenger rail service will involve shorter train lengths and faster speeds which will have less impact on vehicular traffic movement throughout Town than the existing freight trains on a per train event basis. However, having passenger rail (an additional 32 trains per day) combined with existing freight will undoubtedly increase the negative impacts on traffic flow and the delivery of public safety services throughout Town. **Because of this, the Town urges the reallocation of freight trains away from the coastal route and onto the CSX’s, or other inland route, to reduce traffic impacts and bridge closures.** The Town remains very concerned about the lack of attention paid to this strategy throughout the *AAF* discussion to date. This is a strategy that must be pursued.

While there exist several benefits to having passenger rail service on the existing FEC corridor, **there are too many questions about safety, impacts on mobility and costs to Jupiter taxpayers that have not been adequately addressed by *All Aboard Florida*.** As it stands today, it is likely that the Town of Jupiter may be one of the most adversely impacted communities along the entire corridor. While passenger rail, when properly implemented, may someday provide future benefits to the Town, failure to adequately address the preceding concerns will ultimately lead to opposition from the Town against the project.

On behalf of the Mayor and members of the Jupiter Town Council, I want to thank you once again for the opportunity to share the Town's concerns about the proposed *All Aboard Florida* project with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew D. Lukasik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew D. Lukasik
Town Manager