

February 7, 2022

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Public Record

Dear Surface Transportation Board:

I am reaching out to support the Gulf Coast Service expansion and would like to participate in the Surface Transportation Board public hearing on February 15 regarding Docket No. FD 36496.

I was hoping to have 2-3 minutes to speak as a passenger rail supporter.

This will be an economic driver for the Gulf Coast communities served by the expansion that will create jobs and benefit the tourism, retail, and restaurant industries along the Gulf Coast.

Gulf Coast Service will provide access to equitable transportation between Mobile and New Orleans:

- The expansion will reduce traffic and auto travel times on our highways
- It is more environmentally friendly and sustainable than car travel
- The expansion will also increase productivity for riders that choose passenger rail to commute

Blocking this critical first expansion jeopardizes all other proposed expansions around the country. We are depending on future expansion in North Florida to improve traffic and our environment, increase worker productivity and drive economic expansion. Amtrak's investment in expanded routes and service will create skilled labor jobs in our communities.

Sincerely,

T. Michael Hines

T. MICHAEL HINES

16 April 2021

**The Honorable Kevin J. Thibault, P.E.
Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary
605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450**

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION
VIA FACSIMILE
VIA USPS**

**Subject: North Florida Passenger Rail and Multimodal Development Organization
(NFPRMDO)**

Florida Membership in and Participation with Southern Rail Commission (SRC).

Supplemental FSU Team Task Work Order for Master University Agreement

Dear Secretary Thibault:

When you and I first met over 3 years ago, we had several lengthy discussions primarily with regards to the Restoration of Passenger Rail Service in North Florida along the Gulf Coast (i.e., the Sunset Limited Corridor). These discussions concluded with the execution of an FSU/DURP Task Work Order for the Master University Agreement. The study, as called for in the FSU/DURP Task Work Order, was formally submitted to the FDOT in November 2020.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and the inability to conduct field meetings and research, the Study was severely restrictive and failed to produce the details and analysis we were hoping to generate.

With the pending approval of the 2021 Federal Infrastructure Bill and announced proposed AMTRAK funding (\$85 Billion), the subject issues must be addressed and approvals to proceed granted by the FDOT so that the necessary efforts can be undertaken to build support for and articulate the design parameters regarding advanced and financially self-sufficient North Florida Passenger Rail and Multimodal Development System improvements.

The time for review, reflection, study and decision-making has now passed if North Florida and the entire State of Florida are going to receive the federal funding and expedited AMTRAK decision to restore the Gulf Coast service and optimize infrastructure repair, maintenance, service and improvements along the Pensacola to Jacksonville/Orlando rail corridor and link Florida to the New Orleans, LA to Mobile, Alabama corridor.

We cannot overlook and forget the economic devastation caused to people's lives, businesses, homes and livelihoods throughout the Florida Panhandle over the past 7 years due primarily to severe storm damages and the lack of any meaningful infrastructure repairs and rebuilding of roads, bridges and rail facilities. Passenger rail restoration between Pensacola and Jacksonville/Orlando will have a tremendously powerful and positive impact on the lives, businesses and industry of North Florida by establishing a

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modern multimodal system of transportation as is necessary for financial and economic growth.

In my discussion with Assistant Secretary Brad Thoburn this week there appears to be general agreement with the goals but very little final decision-making at FDOT. I do not detect organizational determination on responsibility, planning and timeline. With the Florida Legislature now in session and the pending approval and authorization of the 2021 Federal Infrastructure Act and release of funding to AMTRAK and states the decisions required on Subject issues cannot be delayed any longer. Essential actions must be taken now. I cannot imagine anything but positive reaction from the Florida Legislature and Governor Ron DeSantis as well as the affected Counties and Cities across North Florida and the Gulf Coast. To date I see no positive State or FDOT movement that would benefit cities and counties across North Florida and the Gulf Coast.

This Letter will be transmitted to you both by mail and electronic transmission. The electronic copies will include all studies, reports and correspondence sent to and shared with you and FDOT since the 2015 AMTRAK Report to Congress and the SRC Report to Congress in 2017/2018. As discussed with Assistant Secretary Thoburn, electronic copies will also be shared with Governor Ron DeSantis, Members of Florida Legislature Executive Leadership, Florida Congressional Delegation representing North Florida and Gulf Coast Counties and Cities. As discussed with Assistant Secretary Thoburn, it is vitally important that the general public be made aware of the extraordinary opportunities North Florida and the Gulf Coast communities have for funding the restoration of Passenger Rail Service and Multimodal Development. I sincerely hope the public, elected and appointed officials across North Florida will speak out loudly through their local officials and news media so that these opportunities will not be wasted.

Per actions taken by you since we first met, I believe all of these issues now rest with and are vested in the Assistant Secretary Strategic Development and those reporting directly to him including the Office of Freight, Logistics and Passenger Rail Operations, Kenyatta Lee and the Office of the Chief Planner, Huiwei Shen, and the Office of Policy Planning, Alison Stettner. It should now be a matter of administrative directive that the Assistant Secretary Strategic Development develop a master plan for development and implementation of all subject matters within the next 90 days. The only exception timewise is the deadline of 12 July 2021 for submittal of applications for the 2021 RAISE Grant funding which can and should be utilized in conjunction with Subject issues for Multimodal Development purposes across North Florida and the Gulf Coast. This will most likely require a Master Grant Application by FDOT representing the impacted North Florida and Gulf Coast Counties and Cities and could be included in the Supplemental FSU Teams Task Work Order.

Mr. Secretary, as we have discussed, there exists a deep-rooted culture within the State bureaucracy that resists accepting the fact that modern technology and community designs, being used all over the world, can successfully be incorporated into Florida planning efforts to address these North Florida Passenger Rail and Multimodal Development opportunities. FDOT's approach to such opportunities are antiquated and inadequate given the advent of: i) zero greenhouse gas emissions by hydrogen and electric passenger rail alternatives to diesel electric propulsion; ii) dual track improvements for

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The Honorable Kevin J. Thibault, P.E.

the more advanced, higher speed, passenger rail service; iii) private interest in rail operations; iv) proposed freight, rapid electric transit, service and emergency modal corridors; v) proposed pedestrian-oriented, last-mile corridors configured as smart complete streets that provide large-scale access to transit and passenger rail stations; vi) smart, low speed, zero emissions, demand responsive, community transit; vii) advanced intermodal and multimodal station designs.

Such alternative technologies, designs, partnerships and initiatives can substantially reduce operating costs and provide convenient and economical enhanced access to passenger and freight rail service statewide including the existing rail operations, both traditional and high speed, in central and south Florida.

Further, these more modern and advanced approaches, when properly capitalized through available discretionary federal funding, can be used to reduce and possibly eliminate operative subsidies from passenger rail operations and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are otherwise associated with economic development.

Over the past 5 years it has been my pleasure to work not only with you and your leadership team at FDOT but John Spain, past chairman of the SRC, the Office of Senator Roger Wicker and his staff while Chairman of the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, the Office of Florida Senator Marco Rubio, John Robert Smith, Chairman of the Transportation 4 America Office and most of the County Administrators and City Managers across North Florida and the Gulf Coast. Also, the staff and offices of the Florida Association of Counties and the Florida League of Cities. I would very much like to continue my work with all parties if I can continue to be of assistance in any way. Please review these proposals and advise as to your decisions at your earliest convenience.

Very Respectfully,



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cc: Honorable Marco Rubio, US Senator, Florida
Honorable Rick Scott, US Senator, Florida
Honorable Roger Wicker, US Senator, Mississippi
Honorable John Spain, SRC
Honorable John Robert Smith, T4A
Honorable Ron DeSantis, Governor, Florida

T. MICHAEL HINES

26 August 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Secretary Kevin Thibault

FROM: T. Michael Hines

**SUBJECT: NORTH FLORIDA PASSENGER RAIL AND MULTIMODAL
ORGANIZATION (NFPRMO)**

**MULTIMODAL MOBILITY IN NORTH FLORIDA: EXPERT
PANEL**

As a result of the Multimodal Mobility In North Florida Expert Panel Meeting and discussions held today, I am recommending that we work with you on establishing a North Florida Passenger Rail And Multimodal Organization (NFPRMO) this year and that this entity be funded through an appropriations line item budget request to the 2021 Florida Legislature. The NFPRMO will be guided by a "Mission Statement" that will be developed by FDOT in conjunction with prospective members of the NFPRMO. This organization will advocate for a North Florida Passenger Rail and Multimodal System (NFPRMS)

The NFPRMO shall incorporate into its mission statement that the NFPRMO will pursue:

- 1. The latest electric or hydrogen powered passenger rail equipment and renewable power generating and transmission systems that can be made operational on existing rail lines in North Florida as improved or altered for a NFPRMS such that more numerous and more frequent passenger rail stops can be planned and implemented over time throughout mostly all the communities and populations of North Florida.**

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- 2. Passenger rail stops at pedestrian-oriented mixed-use downtowns and/or malls that involve at least three city blocks of walkable community design on each side of the railroad tracks.**
- 3. Multimodal community transit and county or regional bus services that terminate service at the passenger rail stop from all significant destinations as are arrayed in all directions from the passenger rail stop.**
- 4. Any other means to reduce operating costs and increase operational revenues.**

The NFPRMO mission statement should also state that the NFPRMO will advocate for multimodal access to be provided to all North Florida counties, cities, communities and businesses that have members serving on the NFPRMO and NFPRMO membership shall be open to all entities supporting the NFPRMO mission statement and who will pay membership dues as set by the NFPRMO. The mission statement should also make reference to all Florida railroads and short lines for consideration and study. See <https://www.fdot.gov/rail/links.shtm>.

The FDOT should agree to provide initial organizational support and funding for the NFPRMO based on a commitment to 100% match funding to augment funds raised by NFPRMO from dues or otherwise paid to and collected by NFPRMO until a successor North Florida Passenger Rail and Multi-mobility Commission (NFPRMC) is created and it's operations funded by the Florida Legislature in an appropriations bill approved by the Governor that includes funds sufficient for initial NFPRMS operational costs.

TMH
(850) 510-8646

OPINION

Florida Legislature must act on passenger rail service to ensure prosperity | Opinion

T. Michael Hines, Your Turn Published 9:11 p.m. ET March 14, 2019



I was speaking the other day with a nationally recognized academic from Florida State University and a former Speaker of the House of Representatives regarding how to help the Northern Gulf Coast counties recover from the recent devastation to their communities inflicted by Hurricane Michael.

I concluded that an appeal to the new leadership in Tallahassee was required if we are to achieve a prosperous tomorrow.

Mobility is central to economic productivity. Increased mobility will be essential for maintaining our economic competitiveness in the 21st century.

I would like to offer a suggestion to reinvent multimodal transportation so we can take a more innovative approach to economic recovery and continued prosperity.

T. Michael Hines (Photo: Your Turn)

Over the next few weeks, the Florida Legislature will be addressing Florida's newest problems with the best of its old ideas. While we might all agree that something new is required, I would like to suggest what are those new

recommendations might be:

1. Purchase CSX railroad right-of-way between Jacksonville and Pensacola.
2. Acquire from Bay Line Railroads, LLC, the use of the railroad tracks between Panama City and Cottondale for passenger train services, and make similar inquiries with other short line railroad companies.
3. Negotiate with Amtrak, CSX, Florida East Coast Railway, Brightline/Virgin Trains USA, and others to determine:
 - Who might be the best operator of passenger train services between Jacksonville and Pensacola.
 - How we might best establish and improve passenger train services between New Orleans, Mobile, Tallahassee, Panama City, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Miami, and elsewhere.
4. Assemble a task force of academics, who are inventive experts in transportation solutions, at least one member being selected by each of the seven FDOT district secretaries and by the Florida's turnpike enterprise director, to guide the FDOT and its community partners as they pursue every federal discretionary grant that might come into play to:
 - Reinvent multimodal transportation by providing for: first and last mile slow transit services to rapid transit and passenger rail services within the context of pedestrian-oriented urbanized communities and fast specialized transport between major regional destinations.
 - Rebuild communities devastated by Hurricane Michael.
 - Develop resilient, sustainable and prosperous communities throughout the state.

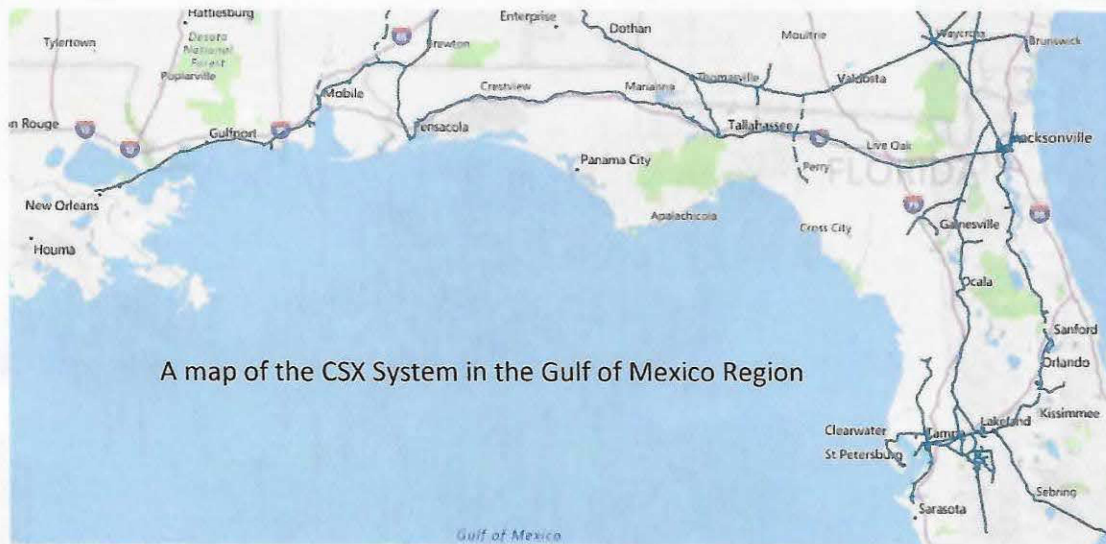
5. Identify how to build over time a safe, efficient, demand responsive, zero emission, and electric transportation system which is: fully (or at least to some degree) autonomous; powered by renewable energy; and arranged such that some elements go fast, and some elements go slow. Collectively these transportation system characteristics will allow Floridians to:

- Optimize pedestrian movements and the use of bicycles, personal travel devices, passenger trains and transit services.
- Enhance transportation safety.
- Eliminate the need for operating subsidies.
- Secure adequate transportation revenues from pedestrian-oriented land development, fuel and other transportation related taxes and fees, and vehicle miles traveled fare calculations and collection.
- Pursue all federal discretionary grants that might come into play to reinvent multimodal transportation

The properly structured restoration of passenger rail services is the key to economic recovery and continued prosperity across North Florida. Time is of the essence. History will judge us if we do nothing.

T. Michael Hines is a Tallahassee businessman and investor. Reach him at t.michaelhines48@gmail.com.

Read or Share this story: <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/opinion/2019/03/14/florida-legislature-must-act-rail-service-ensure-prosperity/3162290002/>



North Florida Rail Organization (NFRO)

Initial General Organizational Meeting

Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park
3076 95th Dr., Live Oak, FL 32060

Wednesday, May 30, 2018 at 11:00 AM to 1:00 AM

(an informal lunch hosted by Suwannee County Economic Development Office will follow this meeting)

AGENDA

1. Welcome, Introductions and Calling to Order the Initial General Organizational Meeting of the NFRO
2. Southern Rail Commission (SRC) Presentation regarding the resumption of AMTRAK Passenger Rail Services in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama
3. Establishing a North Florida passenger rail service with connections to other destinations in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and destinations throughout North America
4. Options to establish a North Florida Rail Organization and actions to be taken
5. Closing Remarks and Next Meeting Announcement (i.e., the 2nd NFRO General Organizational Meeting)

The Amtrak System



April 20, 2018 Draft Agenda and suggested actions taken

North Florida Rail Organization (NFRO)
Initial General Organizational Meeting

Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park
3076 95th Dr., Live Oak, FL 32060

AGENDA

- 1) Welcome and Introductions
- 2) Southern Rail Commission (SRC) Presentation regarding the resumption of AMTRAK Passenger Rail Services
- 3) Establishing a North Florida passenger rail service with connections to other destinations in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas.
- 4) Actions required. Options for Formalizing the North Florida Rail Organization.
- 5) Next Meeting Announcement (I.e., the 2nd NFRO General Organizational Meeting)

(For discussion purposes only)

A MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF WHAT WE MIGHT WANT TO OCCUR AS ACTIONS TAKEN BASED ON THE ABOVE DRAFT AGENDA; FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION BETWEEN NOW AND MAY 28.

- 1) Dr. Alvin Jackson calls the initial NFRO General Organizational Meeting to order and invites attendees to introduce themselves and who they represent and in what capacity or who work for and their employment position. All attendees should sign in at the front desk at the meeting venue entry if they have not already done so. Dr. Jackson introduces Gil Ziffer as the League of Cities President who makes the opening remarks to help set out expectations [if Gil agrees] and Gil and Alvin then introduce Mike Hines and request he act as chair for the meeting if there is no objections. Dr. Jackson will secure official recorder for minutes.
- 2) Mike Hines announces the purpose of the initial NFRO General Organizational Meeting and in the appropriate order, the presenters of the agenda topics:
 - a) A presentation from the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) regarding efforts being put forth to resume Amtrak passenger rail service between New Orleans, LA to Mobile, Alabama; ii) efforts to initiate more frequent corridor train services between those destinations; iii) federal funding being pursued to that end (e.g.,

CRISI and REG grants); and, iv) an overview of SRC's interaction with Florida parties who have expressed an interest in extending service to Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa and elsewhere

- b) A presentation by Tom Gustafson regarding: his reflections on passenger rail service in Florida; and, federal grants and other financial strategies that could be helpful to establish a stronger marketplace for Florida passenger rail service in the near and long term (e.g., BUILD, INFRA and others)
- c) Comments and Motions from attendees who ask to be recognized by the Chair as to what might be done to better position Florida communities to secure in the near term passenger rail service linked to passenger rail services being planned as between New Orleans, LA and Mobile, AL hopefully including but not limited to the suggestions that:
 - i) A North Florida Rail Organization (NFRO) shall be created to plan and facilitate the resumption of passenger rail operations in Northern Florida and to destinations elsewhere in Florida and to the other states that adjoin the Gulf of Mexico; if proposed as a motion, it will hopefully be approved by a majority of those attending this initial NFRC General Organizational Meeting
 - ii) A Committee shall be formed to report back to this group within 30 days as to how such an Organization might be formed; if proposed as a motion, it will hopefully be approved by a majority of those attending this initial NFRC General Organizational Meeting
 - iii) Individuals who are willing to serve on this NFRO Formation Committee to suggest how to form a fully functioning NFRO shall be suggested; if proposed as a motion, it will hopefully be approved by a majority of those attending the NFRC General Organizational Meeting
 - iv) A date, time and place when these NFRC General Organizational Meeting attendees might meet again (i.e., a 2nd NFRO General Organizational Meeting) to discuss next steps that ought to be taken to establish passenger rail service in North Florida and to other destinations shall be suggested; if proposed as a motion, it will hopefully be approved by a majority of those attending NFRC General Organizational Meeting
 - v) Someone be agreed upon to Chair the 2nd NFRO General Organizational Meeting; if such a person is proposed as a motion, it will hopefully be approved by a majority of those attending NFRC General Organizational Meeting

24 April 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: Secretary Kevin Thibault

FROM: T. Michael Hines

SUBJECT: FASTMIST DEMONSTRATION PROJECT: TALLAHASSEE/LEON COUNTY

Will FDOT lead an effort to pursue federal discretionary grants to fund Fast and Slow Transformative multimodal and Intermodal Smart Transportation (FASTMIST) demonstration projects in Tallahassee and Leon County if the projects are designed such that over time there will be no need to subsidize downtown, county and regional transit or a proposed passenger rail services operating between Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Pensacola?

Such FASTMIST planning and development of grant proposals for the Capital City Region will assume that transit and passenger rails services are:

- 1) Powered using renewable energy generated electricity**
- 2) Stop at Advanced Intermodal and Multimodal Stations (AIMS)**

An AIMS would provide very enhanced access to significant regional or county destinations, the many Multimodal Transportation District (MMTD) destinations in Tallahassee and cities accessible by current or proposed passenger rail services via:

A) Informed Traveler Program and Applications or an improvement thereto (ITPA) which includes a vehicle miles traveled fare calculation and collection system

B) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Freight, Regional Electric Transit, Services and Emergency Modality (FRETSEM) Corridors

C) Traditional Transit

D) Community Transit

E) Smart Complete Streets (SCS) that facilitate large-scale associated pedestrian, bicycle and ITPA-enabled Automatic Vehicles (ITPA AVs) trips

F) Common Carriers

Also see https://www.edie.net/blog/The-trends-transforming-mobilitys-future/6098634&utm_source=dailynewsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=blog&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter?utm_source=edie+daily+newsletter&utm_campaign=3bb475b02a-dailynewsletter_COPY_525&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1c2be3283e-3bb475b02a-101875229&mc_cid=3bb475b02a&mc_eid=fb57bb269c.

The MMTD overall goal reads as follows:

Overall Goal (EFF. 12/15/11)

Establish a safe, energy efficient multi-modal transportation system that provides mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motorized vehicle users, users of rail and aviation facilities, supports public health through active living, and is sensitive to the cultural and environmental amenities of Tallahassee and Leon County.

https://www.talgov.com/Uploads/Public/Documents/place/comp_plan/tlc-cp02-mobi.pdf

As to the MMTD map, it is quite comprehensive in its reach, but I suggest that we need to initially focus on just:

- A network of Smart Complete Street (SCS) connecting the bus stations at Adams and Tennessee (i.e., Greyhound and StarMetro bus stations) and a railroad station at Gaines Street with FSU, FAMU, the Convention Center, and the other major destinations within the: urban district administered by the Tallahassee Downtown Improvement Authority; the Greater Frenchtown/Southwest Community Redevelopment Area; and, the Downtown District Redevelopment Area; the railroad station needs to be configured as an Advanced Intermodal and Multimodal Station (AIMS) which is strategically located between FSU, FAMU, the Convention Center. [USDOT BUILD Grant] can help to fund this along with other grants and funding strategies; see <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/about>
- Informed Traveler Program and Application or an improvement thereof including vehicles miles traveled fare calculation and collections systems (ITPA) that could be paired with an slow moving (e.g., 15 miles per hour or so) Automatic Vehicles (AVs) such that an ITPA-enabled AV (ITPA AVs) operate as an horizontal elevator-like service on the SCS (i.e., these three components - ITPA, ITPA AVs, and SCS - collectively constitute a transit greenway system providing optimized first and last mile access to rapid transit, passenger rail service, and traditional transit services); the ITPA AVs are safe, demand responsive, pedestrian-oriented, slow and steady, zero emission, electric vehicles that are powered by renewable energy: i) generated by solar, wind, or hydro electrical power generating facilities; ii) transmitted via a smart resilient micro-grid (SRM) established under the

sidewalk elements of the SCS; and, iii) stored in battery arrays established at locations along the SCS and at Smart Multipurpose Transit Stops (SMTS) [FDOT Service Development Grants] can help to fund this along with other grants and funding strategies;

see <https://www.fdot.gov/transit/currentpages/navigation/aboutus.shtm> and the attached FY2019-2020 SDG proposal by UTMA (2nd attachment) and the attached presentation materials as to how these ideas might apply to the Dolphin Station in Miami-Dade County (3rd and 4th attachment)]

- Freight, Regional Electric Transit, Services, and Emergency Modalities (FRETSEM) Corridors that could connect AIMS with strategic destinations distant from the downtown urban area via elevated and limited access two-lane corridors likely to operate as toll facilities

[USDOT INFRA grants] can help to fund these improvements along with other grants and funding strategies;

see <https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/infragrants> and the attached INFRA proposal for Tallahassee from September 5, 2017 (5th attachment). Note the \$1.5 billion in INFRA funds announced as proposed awards by US DOT for the FY2017-2018

at <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/policy-initiatives/buildamerica/311246/infra-proposed-awards-final-652018.pdf> included a small project grant to Miami-Dade County in the amount of \$7 million for Port Miami Truck Gate Innovation and nothing more for any project in Florida.]

- The resumption of passenger rail service between Jacksonville and Pensacola with redeveloped downtowns where train stations are designed as an AIMS that facilitate access to regional and county rapid bus transit, traditional transit, community transit, ITPA AVs services on SCS, and passenger rail services (or other rapid transport) to the following destinations:
 1. Mobile, Alabama and cities served by the resumption of Amtrak service between Mobile and New Orleans, LA
 2. Orlando, Tampa, West Palm Beach Fort Lauderdale, Miami and any communities serviced by passenger rail today and with the ongoing capacity to in fact generate significant passenger rail customers and customer revenues to reduce or eliminate operating subsidies

[USDOT CRISI Grants] can help to fund these improvements along with other grants and funding strategies;

see <https://www.progressiverailroading.com/mow/news/FRA-issues-CRISI-grants-for-18-rail-projects--56733>.]

If you are familiar with the vision articulated by Elon Musk

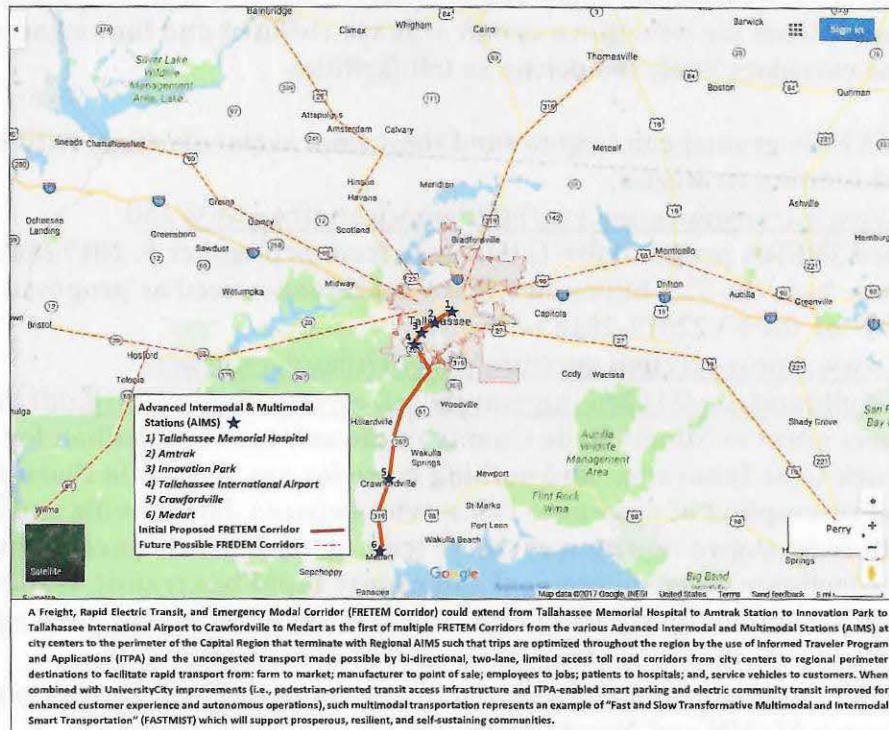
at <https://cleantechnica.com/2019/04/07/teslas-vision-of-an-ev-solar-battery-storage-now-becoming-industry-norm/>, this FASTMIST proposal is but an extension of his thought process as it might be applied to all kinds of shared transport (e.g., passenger rail service, public transportation services, and ITPA AVs and other community transit services, instead of just continuing to focus on the use of private

passenger automotive vehicles) which can provide access to multimodal transportation opportunities at airports, seaports and other intermodal facilities.

s/TMH

09/05/2017 TFG

FRETEM Corridor & AIMS within the Florida Capital Region



Proposed toll expansion

