

Surface Transportation Board

Incoming Correspondence Record

#EI-20873

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*Name of Sender:	James and Mary Walsh	Letter Type:	Letter
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Attention Of:			
*Date Received:	12/31/2014	NEPA Type:	Scoping
Date of Letter:	12/13/2014	In Public Docket?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Group's Address:	3530 Sunset Rdige Drive		
		Phone Number:	
Group's City:	Merritt Island	Email Address:	
Group's State:	FL	Group's Zip Code:	32953-

Submitter's Comments

STB's Comments

Image Attachment(s)
An attachment has not been added.

E1-20873
Received 12/31/14

December 13, 2014

Dear Mr. Navecky and Associates,

We live at 3530 Sunset Ridge Drive, Merritt Island; very close proximity to the proposed rail extension.

It's hard to believe that anyone would even consider inflicting this devastating blow to the fragile environment on the National Wild Life Refuge. Here we have the most pristine lagoon in Florida, and perhaps in the nation. This clean and undisturbed lagoon has an abundance of several species of seagrass, and is a home to dolphins and one of the largest concentrations of manatees. This is also the only place left in the lagoon system where Red Fish and Sea Trout also thrive without pollutants present, and can breed and survive in numbers. The shallow water grasslands provide a home for crabs, worms, clams, and fish which attract animals higher in the food chain. Building a 2 mile causeway (dam), trestle and more dam thus disrupting the natural flow of this delicate lagoon would be a death blow and unimaginable.

Scrub is another habitat unique to Florida, and one of the most important habitats for endangered species in the state. The Refuge manages habitat for over 500 species of wildlife. The habitats support one of the highest numbers of endangered species found within the National Wildlife system. This vast variety of habitats support more than 350 species of birds, 31 species of mammals, 117 species of fish, 68 species of amphibians and reptiles, and over 1000 species of plants. The area proposed for the rail has one of three populations of the threatened Florida Scrub Jay, Gopher Tortoise, and Indigo Snake.

Additionally, to emphasize how important this area of the Refuge is we bring to your attention that the Brevard County EEL (Endangered Environmental Land) purchased acreage joining the Refuge just west of the proposed Rail. What does this evidence tell you? The Tax payers paid for the Refuge to be preserved and maintained for future generations in its natural state, not for Railroads to impact a serious negative environmental blow to this pristine Refuge.

We are already well positioned for Ports in Florida, one in the south (Miami) and one north, (Jacksonville). Two industries have indicated they may be able to add a few jobs. Optimum wording here is 'may be able to'. What few jobs the Port itself may add might very well have a negative impact at the other two ports.

The allegations made by John E. Walsh, CEO, and Canaveral Port Authority of 5,000 to 10,000 jobs appear to be numbers he's pulling out of his hat. How and where did these numbers come from? We previously read that 167 jobs were going to be created. Are you familiar with the economic benefits derived from the Indian River lagoon? The five county areas bordering the Indian River Lagoon receive tremendous benefits from its presence. The IRL support approximately 19,000 jobs and generates over \$250 million dollars in annual income. As stated by Rep. Steve Crisafulli of Merritt

Island, "The Indian River Lagoon is a priceless resource to our communities and its ecological health is critical to the Space Coast economy and our quality of life".

When they talk about Safety and Security, how does the Rail line that already exist on the Air Force side deny use for the Port Rail on the basis of Safety and Security, while NASA turns a blind eye to this factor? Route 3 which once passed through NASA is closed to the public for security reasons. Concerning safety is there any concern for the residential areas that are nearby. Is the safety and well being of these neighborhoods not to be considered in the event of a catastrophic happening? The impact would be horrific.

The noise and vibrations from such a Rail Line would surely seriously affect the health and well being of the nearby residents, especially the many seniors in these areas. How do they survive under such conditions? Are you familiar with how close this rail line is to residential areas? I understand that vibration testing was/will be performed to ensure future railroad operations will not affect launch vehicle processing at the center. Will these test include the residential areas just west of the proposed rail lines?

Why is the Canaveral Lock system not a viable option for heavy cargo? The lock is the largest navigation lock in Florida, designed to allow passage of the huge Saturn rocket boosters for the moon bound Apollo program and for the past 30 years, the shuttle's external tanks from Louisiana, and the retrieved solid rocket boosters passed through the locks on the way to KSC. Look at: Canaveral Port Authority Multimedia Logistic Center, Phase 1, Part 1. Report on: Rail Car carrying barge operations, environmental feasibility and security evaluation and requirements, Dated November 2013. This Barge rail operation from the Port Canaveral would enter the main line rails at Port St. John.

The proposed route through the National Wildlife refuge is to have a speed limit of 10 miles per hour. How is that to be monitored? Do you realize that at that rate the twenty eight miles would take almost three hours to reach the main line? And 4 trips a week? How is this controlled?

The three main water bodies - the Mosquito Lagoon, Banana River Lagoon, and the Indian River Lagoon – as well as their associated tributaries, of the Indian River Lagoon system is considered the most diverse estuarine ecosystem in North America.

Could it be that there is more to this than just the rail line? The Canaveral Port Authority compared pollutants from diesel engines versus trucking; trucking being another option. However the CPA purchased 150 acres approximately 10 miles from the Port and additional lands adjacent to the Tyco Airport, approximately 15 miles from the Port. We understand these are to be for auto imports and container storage areas. These areas are not rail accessible and would require trucking to service them. From the EPA, October 2012, "The cleaner diesel fuel program significantly reduces sulfur content, creating immediate health benefits, and allowing engine manufacturers to begin using advanced emissions control systems that further reduce harmful emissions". Trucking from Port Canaveral is easy,

as four lane Interstates begin at Cape Canaveral. These highways are not heavily traveled and could easily handle the cargo indicated for the rails. In fact hauling by truck to a rail depot or to its ultimate destination also makes sense.

As we listened to the hearings addressing NASA's Underutilized Real Property Assets at the Kennedy Space Center, there was no mention of the Port Canaveral rail by any of the witnesses' testimony, but rather to the unused and empty buildings that exist there, for which it was stated that there is over 300. Not until Mr. Walsh spoke did the rail issue surface. Mr. Posey, our Florida Congressman, condones the rail system, but failed to submit viable alternatives as to its location. It is not as if we are opposed to progress, but feel it has to be done in a responsible manner. Destroying the environment is not what we consider responsible, and that is exactly what will happen if it proceeds through the Banana River Lagoon and over the National Wildlife Refuge scrub and wetlands.

We implore you to deny this Railroad in its current form for the many reasons stated, but particularly for the devastation it would impose on the Refuge, for which we must be more cognizant of and concerned, to protect the environment now and for generations to come.

We have only one chance to save it, and it's now.




