



Secretary Ananth Prasad
Florida Department of Transportation
Remarks on SunRail
July 1, 2011
As Prepared

Good morning, thank you for joining me today.

As you all know, SunRail is a project that the Department, previous governors, legislatures, local elected officials, and tens of thousands of Floridians have spent years working on to move forward.

At the federal level, Florida Congressman John Mica chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, has been the most vocal champion of SunRail and commuter rail in Central Florida for nearly twenty years. He has supported this project by securing funding and he has held numerous hearings and public meetings throughout Florida and in Washington.

Most recently, on Tuesday I spent the day meeting with citizens across Central Florida and the five major SunRail funding partners to discuss the framework of the SunRail project.

I laid out the details of the project and I asked them all if there were any new facts or information about SunRail - since they last voted on the project - which they felt should have a bearing on the decision of whether or not to proceed.

This was important because SunRail is a partnership between local, state and federal governments - along with private sector entities - and it has been years in the making.

With longtime advocates in Congress and the Florida Legislature, it has been championed as a much-needed transportation alternative in Central Florida.

The state's participation in this contractual partnership has been contingent on local government commitments, federal appropriations, and promises by private sector companies.

My recent tour of Central Florida provided an opportunity for any of these groups to explain if they no longer intended to live up to these promises.

They did not, and I have reported this back to Governor Scott.

The partners told me they still support the commuter rail system, and they clearly understand that the local governments will participate in covering any cost overruns.

I spent most of my time listening. I listened to the elected officials, but, most importantly, I listened to the public comments.

I listened to all sides of this debate, and I must tell you that the overwhelming majority of opinion expressed in each of the meetings I attended was in favor of moving forward.

This was extremely helpful and I want to again state that I appreciate everyone's participation in the meetings this week.

I then spent nearly two hours with Governor Scott on Wednesday to brief him on the meetings and to once again review the history and legal framework of SunRail.

This was the latest in ongoing meetings with the Governor and his staff to present research and opinions from a wide variety of experts.

As many of you know, the SunRail agreement was approved by a previous legislature.

At the conclusion of the 2009 Special Session on the SunRail project, the Florida House voted 84 to 25 to create the current framework of the project. In the Florida Senate the vote was 27 to 10.

These votes, cast by legislators from all across Florida, include affirmative votes by current House Speaker Dean Cannon, Senate President Mike Haridopolos, and CFO Jeff Atwater who presided over the Senate at that time.

SunRail was also supported by former Governors Bush and Crist.

Money from both the federal government and here in Florida has already been appropriated for the project.

Details of those appropriations are in the additional information packets that will be made available after my remarks.

Included is a letter from Chairman John Mica, of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, dated just days ago, reaffirming the federal commitment to have funding immediately available for SunRail.

With all due diligence complete, it is time for a decision.

Because of all these previous actions and legal commitments spanning several years, today I am announcing that the Governor has authorized the Department on behalf of the State of Florida to sign the pending Full Funding Grant Agreement.

This will culminate in SunRail's construction and operation.

This decision was made after a long deliberative process, and the result is that all stakeholders and partners will be held accountable as the project moves forward.

As I mentioned, the SunRail project includes a number of specific commitments from private sector supporters.

The additional information packet has a more complete listing of these entities and their promised actions, but here are a few examples:

- In exchange for the purchase of rail track, CSX has committed to investments in railways all over the state. These investments will support other infrastructure such as helping make Florida's ports more accessible for trade.
- Walt Disney World has committed to partially subsidize Commuter Bus Transit Service throughout Central Florida to its property.
- Florida Hospital has committed to pay \$3.5 million for its own rail stop and to market and subsidize ridership for all its 17,000 employees.
- Tupperware Brands Corporation has committed to donate 10 acres of land to serve as the site for the proposed Osceola Parkway station and to establish a shuttle service to carry employees and others to encourage ridership.

In conclusion, today I will call Peter Rogoff – the Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration – and tell him we will sign the Full Funding Grant Agreement once it clears the 60-day review period in Congress and is transmitted to the State.

I will now take your questions.

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