



Info

Release

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All Aboard Florida could cost Martin County taxpayers \$7.7 million by 2030

According to a memo provided today to the Martin County Board of County Commissioners by county staff, projected costs of licenses, repairs/rehabilitation, and land leases associated with the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC), Flagler Development Corporation (Flagler) and the proposed All Aboard Florida (AAF) high speed rail project could total \$13.5 million by 2030 and \$31.2 million by 2040.

The bills are already coming in. For example, Martin County recently received a cost estimate for crossing maintenance work in 2016 from the FEC in the amount of \$540,475. If the AAF project moves forward, it is the County's understanding that these very same crossings will have to be reconstructed again in 2017, which is simply not fair to Martin County taxpayers.

The estimates show that AAF costs will significantly increase through the decades. Martin County taxpayers will be forced to bear these costs since AAF continues to refuse to contribute to the maintenance costs associated with this work.

"It is important that Martin County citizens understand the significant unfunded mandate that will be forced upon taxpayers should the AAF project move forward," said County Attorney Michael Durham. "In just five years, the AAF project could start costing the County an additional \$575,000 a year. Between 2020 and 2030, the County would have spent about \$7.7 million on costs that our citizens should not have to bear," Durham added.

By comparison, earlier this year, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners allocated \$1.4 million in an attempt to protect its citizens from what the County believes is a project that will cause long-lasting and irreparable harm to the community and its quality of life. "Beyond the clear financial cost to our taxpayers are all of the additional unknowns in terms of negative impacts to health and safety, maritime activity, impacts to environmental and cultural resources and the additional negative financial impact in terms of loss of property values," said Durham.

Part of the outstanding issue and confusion arises from the need for upgrades to the tracks to accommodate the new high speed trains and who should be paying for these

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upgrades. With trains that are expected to travel through Martin County at more than 100 mph in many areas (triple the speed of current freight trains), the Federal Railroad Administration is requiring AAF to build “Sealed Corridor Improvements” which are more stringent and safer than “Quiet Zones.”

In short, the AAF project brings with it the need for more sophisticated, complex safety devices due to the higher speed and frequency of the trains. As this need increases, so would the County’s anticipated annual costs.

Martin County’s estimates and projections were calculated using historic rehabilitation cycles, and historic rate increases as well as the following:

- Annual invoices on the 18 grade crossing licenses in Martin County, based on the number of flashing signals, gates and tracks at each crossing.
- Repair and rehabilitation costs for the crossings. Utilizing historic rehabilitation cycles and 8.23% annualized historic rehabilitation cost increase, the average total annual rehabilitation cost will increase to roughly \$773,000 in 2020, \$1.41 million in 2030, and \$2.579 million in 2040.
- Annual invoices from the Flagler Development Corporation (Flagler) for land leases for railroad properties, including landscaping, parking spaces, sidewalks and/or traffic signals located within the FEC right-of-way. Although these land leases exist whether or not the AAF project moves forward, Flagler/FEC/All Aboard Florida could opt to renegotiate in an effort to mitigate the negative impacts of AAF on Martin County.

Adding these AAF-specific costs to the current costs, the total estimated annual cost to Martin County taxpayers is expected to be:

- \$1.0 million in 2020
- \$1.7 million in 2030
- \$3.0 million in 2040

For more resources and information on the many local and regional issues of concern relating to the proposed AAF passenger rail project, including presentations, studies, letters of concern to state and federal agencies and more, visit www.martin.fl.us.

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