Central Florida Commuter Rail Transit – Initial Operating Segment

Orlando, Florida

(November 2007)

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is proposing to construct a new commuter rail system along the existing CSX "A" line Corridor from Volusia County through Lake County and Seminole County, to Orange County and downtown Orlando. The Central Florida Commuter Rail Transit (CFCRT) project would operate entirely at-grade, sharing track with existing freight and Amtrak services. The project includes the purchase of 10 Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) vehicles and construction of 12 stations and approximately 1,900 parking spaces. Service would operate every 15 minutes in the peak period and every 30 minutes during the off-peak. Evening and weekend service would operate every 60 minutes.

The CFCRT runs parallel to Interstate 4 (I-4) and US 17-92, the region's primary north-south travel routes and the location of much of the region's population and employment. Interstate 4 is scheduled for reconstruction, and the proposed project is intended to serve as a congestion mitigation measure, as well as more broadly provide a high capacity transit alternative to north-south travel in the corridor.

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Commuter Rail 31 Miles 12 Stations
Total Capital Cost ($YOE):	$416.67 Million (includes $0.87 million in finance charges)
Section 5309 New Starts Share ($YOE):	$208.34 Million (50.0%)
Annual Forecast Year Operating Cost:	$51.3 Million
Ridership Forecast (2030):	7,400 Average Weekday Boardings
	3,700 Daily New Riders
Opening Year Ridership Forecast (2010):	Not Available
FY 2009 Local Financial Commitment Rating:	**Medium-High**
FY 2009 Project Justification Rating:	**Medium**
FY 2009 Overall Project Rating:	**Medium-High**

Project Development History and Current Status

FDOT completed an alternatives analysis on a 61-mile corridor in May 2004. It was assumed the corridor would be implemented in three phases: Phase I would run for a length of 31 miles, Phase II would run for a length of 18 miles, and Phase III would run for a length of 12 miles. While Phases I and II were adopted as the locally preferred alternative (LPA) at the conclusion of the alternatives analysis, a subsequent Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for the entire 61-mile corridor in May 2006, with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) signed by FTA in April 2007. Due to changes to the project scope occurring since the FONSI was signed, a supplemental EA is being prepared.

FTA approved the 54-mile LPA (Phases I and II) into preliminary engineering in March 2007. FDOT expects to request entry into final design, and immediately thereafter pursue a Full Funding Grant Agreement, only for the 31-mile Phase I project (also known as the Initial Operating Segment or IOS) in early 2008. Hence this report reflects evaluation and rating of only the IOS.

At this stage of project development, the project scope and cost are considered reasonable, but there are concerns with the aggressive project schedule. The project anticipates purchase of a low-floor DMU vehicle, which requires a new design since no such vehicle has ever been built. The project schedule allows for only 22 months for design, manufacture, and delivery of the vehicles, which is considered aggressive because it is a new prototype.

Project Justification Rating: Medium

The project is rated *Medium* for project justification based on a *Medium-Low* rating for cost effectiveness and a *Medium* rating for transit-supportive land use. The rating for the project's *Making the Case* document was not factored into the project justification rating for FY 2009.

Making the Case Rating: Low

The CFRCT project would result in a new rail transit line running north-south parallel to I-4 and through downtown Orlando. The "case" for the project provides no discussion of travel patterns within this corridor. While travel time comparisons between rail, bus, and private vehicle were presented for three origin-destination pairs, there was no explanation of why these pairs are highlighted. I-4 is described as congested and getting worse, but the "case" for the project provides no justification that it will effectively serve I-4 travel markets, or why a significant investment in rail operating at 15-minute peak frequencies is necessary in a corridor in which existing bus transit service is described as "limited."

Cost Effectiveness Rating: Medium-Low

The *Medium-Low* cost effectiveness rating reflects the level of travel-time benefits (5,100 hours each weekday) relative to the project's annualized costs. Due to the unique nature of the project, its travel forecast carries significant uncertainty.

Cost Effectiveness	
	New Start vs. Baseline
Cost per Hour of Transportation System User Benefit	$29.16*
Incremental Cost per Incremental Trip	$34.88

* Indicates that measure is a component of Cost Effectiveness rating.

Transit-Supportive Land Use Rating: Medium

The *Medium* rating is based upon the average of the ratings assigned to the subfactors below, each of which contribute one-third to the land use rating.

Existing Land Use: Medium-Low

- Population density within _-mile of the station areas is approximately 2,130 persons per square mile. The project has approximately 78,700 jobs within _-mile of the proposed stations. The project provides direct service to the central business district (CBD), which contains approximately 729,700 jobs.
- The stations in the City of Orlando and Winter Park can be considered destination stations, with significant levels of development within walking distance and a pedestrian-friendly character. Development levels within walking distance of the remaining suburban stations are low and land use is highly auto-oriented.
- Parking supplies in the corridor are high, even at stations within the City of Orlando, although parking rates at garages in downtown are high.

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- The State of Florida Growth Management Act (SB 360) establishes growth management laws to ensure critical transportation infrastructure and services are in place to accommodate future urban growth and redevelopment. The act promotes regional planning through an incentive program and provides funding for transportation investments that support growth management.
- The City of Orlando's downtown redevelopment plan coordinates transportation and other public infrastructure improvements with private development, embodies "new urbanism" as a guiding principle, and emphasizes mixed land use, pedestrian connectivity, strong neighborhoods, and transit. The only other community along the corridor that has a specific development plan for the station area is Lake Mary, where a master plan has been developed for a small suburban town center. The comprehensive plans for several other corridor communities identify sections of the station areas for development at higher densities, with a varying degree of transit-supportive characteristics.
- Zoning in the downtown Orlando and Winter Park station areas requires higher development densities and transit-supportive character, including mixed uses and pedestrian-friendly design. Several other municipalities in the corridor have zoning provisions allowing reduced parking in activity centers or areas with high levels of transit service.
- Many efforts have been made to reach out to stakeholders. The project sponsor has coordinated station planning and design with major property and facility owners in station areas, including hospitals and utility companies.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- Major redevelopment is occurring in downtown Orlando. Although they are subject to the policies incorporated in the downtown revitalization plan, many of the projects and proposals include substantial new parking supplies and thus are not strongly transit-supportive.
- Transit-supportive development at stations beyond Orlando and Winter Park has been minimal.

Other Project Justification Criteria

Mobility Improvements Rating: Medium-Low	
	New Start vs. Baseline
Transportation System User Benefits Per Passenger Mile (Minutes)	3.5
Number of Transit Dependents Using the Project	1,364
Transit Dependent User Benefits per Passenger Mile (Minutes)	2.9
Share of User Benefits Received by Transit Dependents Compared to Share of Transit Dependents in the Region	66.9%

Environmental Benefits Rating: Medium	
Criteria Pollutant Status	**EPA Designation** Maintenance or Attainment for all Pollutants

Local Financial Commitment Rating: Medium-High

The *Medium-High* local financial commitment rating is based on the *Medium-High* ratings for the capital and operating finance plans and the *Medium* rating for the New Starts share of project costs.

Section 5309 New Starts Share of Total Project Costs: 50%
Rating: Medium

FDOT is requesting a 50 percent New Starts share of total project costs, which results in a *Medium* rating for this measure.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
Source of Funds	**Total Funds ($million)**	**Percent of Total**
Federal: Section 5309 New Starts	$208.34	50.0%
State: Florida New Starts Transit Program	$104.17	25.0%
Local: Volusia County Seminole County City of Orlando Orange County	 $7.70 $53.09 $15.74 $27.64	 1.8% 12.7% 3.8% 6.6%
Total:	**$416.67**	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

Capital Finance Plan Rating: Medium-High

The capital finance plan is rated *Medium-High* based upon the weighted average of the ratings assigned to each of the subfactors listed below. The agency capital condition is weighted 25 percent, the commitment of capital funds is weighted 25 percent, and the capital cost estimate, planning assumptions and capital funding capacity subfactor is weighted 50 percent.

Agency Capital Condition: High

- FDOT does not have a bus fleet.
- FDOT's General Obligation bonds are rated as follows: Standard & Poor's Corporation AAA, Moody's Investor Service Aa1, and Fitch AA+.

Commitment of Capital Funds: High

- All of the non-New Starts funding is committed. The non-New Starts share will be covered by state transportation trust funds and funds from Volusia, Seminole, and Orange counties and the City of Orlando.

Capital Cost Estimate, Planning Assumptions, and Financial Capacity: Medium

- Assumptions in the capital plan are reasonable.
- The current project cost estimate is considered reasonable at this stage of development. The implementation schedule is aggressive.

Operating Finance Plan Rating: Medium-High

The operating finance plan is rated *Medium-High* based upon the weighted average of the ratings assigned to each of the subfactors listed below. The agency operating condition is weighted 25 percent, the commitment of operating funds is weighted 25 percent, and the operating cost estimates, planning assumptions and operating funding capacity subfactor is weighted 50 percent.

Agency Operating Condition: High

- The current ratio of assets to liabilities as reported for the State Government Transportation Fund in its most recent audited financial statement is 2.33.

Commitment of Operating Funds: High

- All operating funding is committed. For the initial seven years of operation, FDOT will fund all operating subsidies through its Strategic Intermodal System program using revenues from the State Transportation Trust Fund. Thereafter, operating subsidies will be provided by Volusia, Seminole, and Orange counties and the City of Orlando.

Operating Cost Estimates, Planning Assumptions, and Financial Capacity: Medium-Low

- Operating and maintenance costs have been lowered from those assumed last year and appear optimistic compared to other commuter rail systems around the country.
- Inflation assumptions are reasonable compared to historic trends.
- The financial plan shows a balanced budget throughout the 20-year plan.

Map