



Project Fact Sheet

Phase 1B - IRIS Northeast (NE) Connection

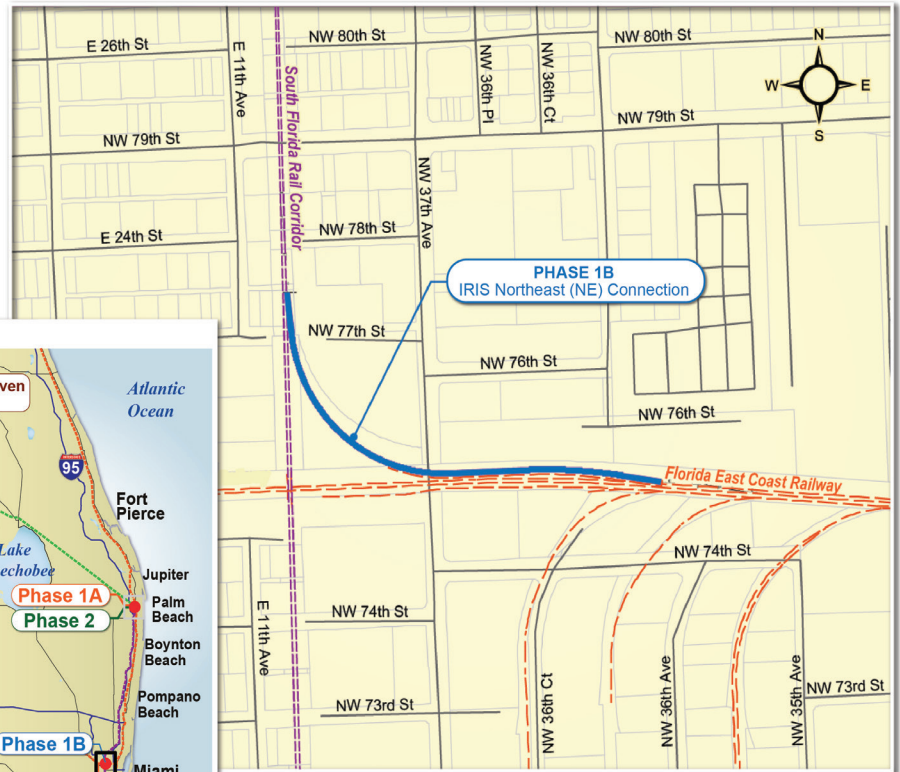
FPID:433514-1 | Miami-Dade County, Florida

Project Introduction

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is conducting an environmental study in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate a new rail connection (called the **IRIS NE Connection**) between the existing South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC) and Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway in northern Miami-Dade County. The IRIS NE Connection is one of three *South Florida Freight and Passenger Rail Enhancement* projects proposed to enhance freight connectivity between the SFRC and FEC Railway. The rail projects will accommodate existing freight traffic and the projected growth in freight rail operations following the Panama Canal expansion and freight intermodal improvements at the Port of Palm Beach, Port Everglades, and PortMiami.

The three interrelated and independent projects being studied concurrently include the following improved rail connections:

- Phase 1A: Rehabilitate Existing Northwood Connection, Financial Project Number: 434948-1; ETDM Number: N/A; Palm Beach County, Florida
- Phase 1B: IRIS Northeast Connection, Financial Project Number: 433514-1; Miami-Dade County, Florida
- Phase 2: New Northwood Connection, Financial Project Number: 434948-2; ETDM: 14093; Palm Beach County, Florida



Project Location

The existing IRIS junction, at the intersection of the SFRC and FEC Railway, is located in the City of Hialeah in Miami-Dade County just south of the existing Tri-Rail/CSX Transportation (CSXT) Hialeah maintenance facility (adjacent to the SFRC). The existing IRIS junction is located approximately 4.5 miles west of the FEC along the existing FEC Little River Connection. The Little River Connection track originates at the FEC mainline near 71st Street and primarily supports southwest access to FEC freight industry customers and intermodal centers to the southwest including the FEC Hialeah Intermodal yard and the South Florida Logistics Center adjacent to Miami International Airport.

Goals of the Project

- Enhance connection between the two major freight rail corridors
- Improve freight mobility
- Provide rail access to the Hialeah maintenance facility from the east
- Maximize utilization of the existing railroads
- Enhance capacity on roadway network due to freight efficiency
- Avoid and minimize impacts to property owners and surrounding community
- Avoid and minimize impacts to sensitive environmental resources
- Facilitate potential passenger rail service
- Opportunity for increased construction jobs

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a direct connection between the existing SFRC and FEC railroads to improve freight mobility. Integrating these rail corridors will facilitate improved intermodal connectivity to the major intermodal centers within the region. The IRIS NE Connection will provide access to the Hialeah maintenance facility and to the north while creating freight connectivity from PortMiami. Providing this integral connection will enhance freight and passenger rail mobility in South Florida and improve statewide freight connectivity to central Florida, northern Florida, and the Atlantic Seaboard.

What proposed improvements are included?

The proposed action for the IRIS NE Connection involves the construction of a new single track rail connection (approximately 1,700 feet) between the SFRC and FEC Railway within existing FDOT right-of-way. The proposed improvements include modifying the existing public roadway grade crossing at NW 37th Avenue/FEC Railway to accommodate the new track.

How many trains will be coming through this area every day?

The existing SFRC and FEC Railway serve CSXT and FEC freight traffic in the existing condition. It is anticipated that up to six trains daily per direction would use the proposed IRIS NE connection to facilitate freight mobility from Jacksonville/Cocoa to PortMiami. The total train traffic on the SFRC and FEC Railway at the IRIS junction is not anticipated to increase above historical freight levels. The freight trains would be traveling at low speeds (15 mph) on the proposed connection. The freight operations are expected to occur in evening hours (after 7 p.m.) to minimize travel delays.

Will there be any more noise?

Based on the ongoing noise analysis conducted as part of this study which involved existing noise monitoring, noise impacts are not anticipated due to the proposed project.

What other studies are going on in this area?

The IRIS NE Connection would also facilitate future passenger rail service proposed as part of separate, ongoing regional studies. The project would provide access to the Hialeah maintenance facility for the Tri-Rail Coastal Link proposed commuter rail service (www.Tri-RailCoastalLink.com). Additionally, the project would increase freight efficiency on the FEC Railway which supports the proposed All Aboard Florida (www.allaboardflorida.com) intercity rail service.

When will construction begin?

The environmental study began in August 2013 and is expected to be complete in January 2014. The design phase is scheduled to begin in January 2014. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2014 and be complete in 2015.

Who is funding the project?

The funding partners included FDOT, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), FEC Railway and CSXT. A U.S. Department of Transportation \$13.75 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant was recently awarded for the project to provide the remaining funds needed for construction.

What happens next?

The environmental studies are being completed and will be submitted to FRA for approval in late 2013. Agency coordination and public involvement is ongoing.

Contact Us

Si necesita la información de este folleto traducida, por favor comuníquese con el gerente del proyecto de FDOT, Robert Bostian, al teléfono (954) 777-4427.

For more information, please visit our webpage at: www.railprogress.com. Comments may be submitted on this webpage. For additional information, please contact the FDOT Project Manager, Robert Bostian at: Robert.Bostian@dot.state.fl.us or at (954) 777-4427.

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status.