



Project Fact Sheet

Phase 1A - Rehabilitate Existing Northwood Connection Phase 2 - New Northwood Connection

FPID: 434948-1, FPID: 434948-2 ■ ETDM: 14093
Palm Beach County, Florida

Project Introduction

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is conducting the preliminary design phase for three interrelated and independent rail connections between the existing South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC) and Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway in Southeast Florida. The three *South Florida Freight and Passenger Rail Enhancement* projects propose to enhance freight connectivity between the SFRC and FEC Railway. The rail projects will accommodate existing freight traffic, potential future passenger service, and the projected growth in freight rail operations following the expansion of the Panama Canal and freight intermodal improvements at the Port of Palm Beach, Port Everglades, and PortMiami.

The *South Florida Freight and Passenger Rail Enhancement* projects being developed 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

This fact sheet describes the Phase 1A and Phase 2 projects.

Project Location

The existing Northwood Connection is located in the Northwood community north of downtown West Palm Beach. Historically, this connection served freight rail industry customers. The existing connection provides direct connections to the SFRC on the west (northbound and southbound) and a direct connection to FEC southbound. The existing railway is orientated in a northwest/southeast direction between the two existing railroads and is located parallel to 27th Street. The existing rail connection is in poor condition and in a state of disuse limiting freight mobility.

Goals of the Project

- Enhance connection between the two major freight rail corridors
- Restore former freight connectivity
- Improve freight mobility
- 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

Regional Map



Phase 2 (New Northwood Connection) involves a new alignment connecting northbound FEC Railway to the southbound SFRC. The proposed alignment is located within the existing Northwood Industrial District approximately 500 feet to the south of the existing Northwood Connection generally north of 25th Street. An alternative to provide the missing northern connector track by rebuilding the existing Northwood Connection was evaluated; however, it would result in impacts to the Evergreen Cemetery and was eliminated from further study. Both projects are shown on the project location map above.

Purpose and Need

The projects will provide enhanced connectivity between the existing SFRC and FEC railroads to improve freight mobility. Providing these integral connections will enhance rail mobility in South Florida and improve statewide freight connectivity to central Florida, northern Florida, and the Atlantic Seaboard. **Phase 1A** - This project will restore former freight routes and provide needed rail connectivity to the three major regional seaports and existing or planned intermodal facilities located inland including Orlando, Winter Haven, and Tampa. The Northwood Connection will provide the Northwood Industrial District with improved freight mobility. **Phase 2** - Even with the rehabilitation of the existing Northwood Connection, no direct northeast to southwest connection would be provided between the SFRC and FEC to facilitate efficient freight operations. The New Northwood Connection will allow both northbound and southbound freight to move efficiently between northern/central Florida and PortMiami and support potential passenger service to the south.

FAQs

What proposed improvements are included?

Phase 1A involves the rehabilitation of the existing single track Northwood Connection on the existing alignment within FDOT right-of-way. The existing public roadway grade crossings will be rehabilitated to include new signal equipment. Phase 2 involves the construction of a single track connection on a new alignment between the SFRC and FEC (approximately 3,000 feet long) and five new public roadway grade crossings along with appropriate signal and safety equipment. Minimal right-of-way (approximately 2.4 acres) is anticipated to be acquired to construct Phase 2. FDOT is conducting a right-of-way and relocation program for the project.

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 New Northwood Connection to facilitate freight mobility from Jacksonville/Cocoa to PortMiami. Until Phase 2 is built, these trains will operate on the existing Northwood Connection. After the New Northwood Connection is operational, the existing Northwood Connection is anticipated to serve one train per direction. The freight traffic on the Northwood Connection is not anticipated to increase significantly above historical freight levels and is expected to result in up to two additional trains per direction. The freight trains would be traveling at low speeds (15 mph) on each connection. The freight operations are expected to occur in evening hours (after 7 p.m.) to minimize travel delays. Any proposed passenger rail service would be studied as part of a separate project.

Will there be any more noise?

A noise and vibration study was presented to the public during the previous Northwood Public Workshop held on December 5, 2013. No significant noise impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed project. As the freight traffic is not increasing significantly, the noise and vibration levels are anticipated to be similar to historical conditions.

What other studies are going on in this area?

The New Northwood Connection would also facilitate future passenger rail service proposed as part of separate, ongoing regional studies. The project would support potential future commuter rail service being studied as part of Tri-Rail Coastal Link project (www.Tri-RailCoastalLink.com) and potential Amtrak service between Jacksonville and West Palm Beach previously studied as part of the FEC Amtrak Passenger Rail Study. 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 preliminary design phase was initiated in June 2014 after the environmental study was completed. The design plans will be finalized after public input is received. Phase 1A construction of the rehabilitated Northwood Connection is anticipated to begin in September 2015 and be complete in 2016. The Phase 2 right-of-way phase was initiated in August 2014 and is anticipated to be complete in 2017. Phase 2 construction would begin after the right-of-way acquisition phase and is anticipated to be complete in 2018.

Who is funding the project?

The funding partners include 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 awarded for the project to provide the remaining funds needed for construction.

Contact Us

Si necesita la información de este folleto traducida, por favor comuníquese con el gerente del proyecto de FDOT, Marjorie Hilaire, al teléfono (954) 777-4662.

For more information, please visit our webpage at: www.railprogress.com. Comments may be submitted on the webpage. For additional information, please contact the FDOT Project Manager, Marjorie Hilaire at: Marjorie.Hilaire@dot.state.fl.us or at (954) 777-4662.

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