

SOUTH FLORIDA  
**FREIGHT &  
PASSENGER**



• RAIL ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

**Phase 2 · New Northwood Connection**

Categorical Exclusion  
Worksheet - FINAL  
May 2014



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Federal Railroad Administration**



**Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)  
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION WORKSHEET**

The purpose of this worksheet is to assist Project sponsors in gathering and organizing materials for environmental analysis required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), particularly for projects that may qualify as Categorical Exclusions. Categorical Exclusions are categories of actions (i.e. types of projects) that the FRA has determined, based on its experience, typically do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which generally do not require the preparation of either an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). Decisions to prepare EAs and EISs are made by FRA.

*Submission of the worksheet by itself does not meet NEPA requirements. FRA must concur in writing with the Categorical Exclusion recommendation for NEPA requirements to be met.*

The Project sponsor is responsible for providing FRA with a sufficient level of documentation and analysis to help inform FRA's determination that a Categorical Exclusion is the appropriate NEPA class of action. Documentation and analysis may include background research, results of record searches, field investigations, field surveys, and any past planning or studies.

Instructions for completing this worksheet are available on the FRA website at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L02708>. Please complete this worksheet using compatible word processing software and submit and transmit the completed form in MS Word electronic format.

*The following documents must be submitted along with this worksheet:*

1. Include maps or diagram of the Project area that identifies locations of critical resource areas, wetlands, potential historic sites, or sensitive noise receptors such as schools, hospitals, and residences.
2. Include maps or diagrams of the proposed modifications to existing railways, roadways, and parking facilities.
3. Copies of all agency correspondence particularly with permitting agencies.
4. Representative photographs of the Project area.

**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

<b>Project Sponsor</b> Florida Department of Transportation	<b>Date Submitted to FRA</b> 11/21/2013	<b>FRA Funding (TIGER, HSIPR, Rail Line Relocation, RRIF, etc.) or other FRA Action</b> 2013 TIGER Grant
<b>Contact Person</b> Mr. Robert Bostian	<b>Phone</b> 954-777-4427	<b>E-mail address</b> Robert.Bostian@dot.state.fl.us
<b>Proposed Project Title</b> Phase 2 New Northwood Connection; FPID: 434948-2		
<b>Location (Include Street Address, City or Township, County, and State)</b> City of West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, FL Refer to Exhibit 1 Project Location Map, Exhibit 2 Quadrangle Map and Exhibit 8 for Photographs		
<b>NEPA Contact</b> Ms. Ann Broadwell	<b>Phone</b> 954-777-4325	<b>E-mail Address</b> Ann.Broadwell@dot.state.fl.us

**Description of Proposed Action (Project):** Fully describe the Project including specifics that may be of environmental concern such as: *widening an embankment to stabilize roadbed; repairing or replacing bridge pier foundations, extending culverts, including adding rip-rap in a waterway; earthwork and altering natural (existing) drainage patterns and creating a new water discharge; contaminated water needing treatment; building a new or adding on to a shop building; fueling or collection of fuel or oil and contaminated water; building or extending a siding; and building or adding on to a yard. Where applicable fully describe the operational characteristics of the facility to be improved by the proposed action and any anticipated operational changes that may result.*

The proposed action of the New Northwood Connection involves the construction of a single track connection on a new alignment connecting the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway (north) to the existing Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)-owned South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC) (south). The proposed action will provide access to inland multimodal facilities from FEC to South Florida Logistics Center/Miami International Airport and will provide freight connectivity to southeast Florida. The proposed project will accommodate existing freight traffic and projected growth in freight rail operations following the expansion of the Panama Canal and freight intermodal improvements at Port of Palm Beach, Port Everglades and PortMiami. For more information supporting independent utility, refer to Attachment 4.

The new connection will be a minor rail addition involving construction of a short connection between existing rail lines. The New Northwood Connection will include the following proposed improvements: Trackwork - 3,150 linear feet of new track and special trackwork including new turnouts at the points of connections along the FEC and SFRC, new crossovers for mainline flexibility, a crossing diamond to maintain the rehabilitated existing connection identified in Phase 1A (as part of a separate proposed action); Grade Crossing Improvements - Up to four new public grade crossings with signal and safety equipment, including new gate systems and one new grade crossing on a private access road. This will include concrete crossing panels and active or passive warning as warranted. The proposed action assumes the following rail operations on the new connection: (1) Freight trains traveling at 15 miles per hour (mph) (maximum speed limited due to track geometry); 12,000 feet to 14,000 feet in length; between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.; (2) Up to 6 trains in each direction (12 trains daily) by 2035: Up to 4 trains in each direction (8 trains daily) from Jacksonville/Cocoa to PortMiami; plus up to 2 additional trains in each direction (4 trains daily) after the FEC intermodal transfer at PortMiami is operational.

FEC proposes freight service on the new connection involving the relocation of existing FEC freight from the FEC Railway between Northwood in West Palm Beach and northern Miami-Dade County to improve freight mobility from Jacksonville/Cocoa to PortMiami. FEC does not propose to increase historical freight levels on the FEC and SFRC due to the proposed project. For more information on the proposed freight service on the new connection, refer to Attachment 4.

Drainage construction will include linear swales within proposed right-of-way. Refer to Attachment 3, Drainage Technical Memorandum.

Minimal right-of-way acquisition (a maximum of 4 acres) will be required involving up to 15 parcels zoned as light industrial. Most of these property impacts will involve partial acquisition and only four parcels are anticipated to involve relocations. Refer to Section J, Property Acquisition, for more detailed information. The entire project is within the West Palm Beach Downtown Northwood - Pleasant City Community Redevelopment Agency Area. Restoring freight connectivity in this area is consistent with the existing industrial zoning.

Refer to Attachment 4 for additional information.

**Purpose and Need of Proposed Action (Project).**

Project Purpose: The purpose of the proposed project is to construct the New Northwood Connection between the SFRC and FEC Railway in order to provide enhanced freight connectivity for existing freight traffic as well as the projected growth in freight rail operations in the region. Integrating these rail corridors will facilitate improved intermodal connectivity to the major intermodal freight centers and multi-modal centers within the region. The New Northwood Connection will allow trains to travel from the FEC to South Florida Logistics Center/Miami International Airport and from the FEC to PortMiami via the FEC Little River Connection. The proposed improvements will also provide the larger Northwood Industrial District with improved freight mobility. The project will improve rail connectivity to intermodal freight facilities at the three major regional seaports (Port of Palm Beach, Port Everglades and PortMiami) and existing or planned intermodal facilities located inland, including those in Orlando, Winter Haven and Tampa.

The proposed New Northwood Connection will prepare the rail network for increased passenger service in the area by allowing for some freight traffic on the FEC corridor to be realigned to the SFRC, opening up capacity on the FEC and allowing potential restoration of historical passenger rail service.

By adding this new rail connection, FDOT will be creating additional track capacity and routing options. Dispatchers will gain the needed flexibility to transfer from one rail to the other. This will reduce congestion, improve operational consistency, support emergency detours, drive improvements in on-time performance, and support the future projected growth of freight traffic along Florida's East Coast.

Project Need: There is no direct connection between the FEC and the SFRC to efficiently serve freight connectivity from the ports and existing freight industry customers.

Because of the anticipated growth of cargo shipments into the ports, enhanced freight rail connectivity is important for the region and State of Florida to be economically competitive. The proposed project will improve rail mobility and increase cargo movement by rail, which will alleviate existing and future truck traffic on South Florida's congested roadways.

Maintaining intermodal connectivity and satisfactory freight operations on both the SFRC and FEC is essential to serving the movement of goods and people efficiently in the region. Existing freight service provides an efficient and highly economical mode of transportation to support the transfer of intermodal freight between major industries and major Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) transportation hubs, including airports, seaports and intermodal yards.

**II. NEPA CLASS OF ACTION**

*Please check the category or categories that the Project best fits. If no category applies, contact FRA as an EA or EIS may need to be prepared.*

- Changes in plans for a Project for which an environmental document has been prepared, where the changes would not alter the environmental impacts of the action. *(Describe the full consequences of the changes only in part III)*
- Maintenance of: existing railroad equipment; track and bridge structures; electrification, communication, signaling, or security facilities; stations; maintenance-of-way and maintenance-of-equipment bases; and other existing railroad-related facilities. *("Maintenance" means work, normally provided on a periodic basis, which does not change the existing character of the*

*facility, and may include work characterized by other terms under specific FRA programs)*

- Temporary replacement of an essential rail facility if repairs are commenced immediately after the occurrence of a natural disaster or catastrophic failure.
- Operating assistance to a railroad to continue existing service or to increase service to meet demand, where the assistance will not result in a change in the effect on the environment.
- Financial assistance for the construction of minor loading and unloading facilities, provided that proposals are consistent with local zoning, do not involve the acquisition of a significant amount of land, and do not significantly alter the traffic density characteristics of existing rail or highway facilities.
- Minor rail line additions *including construction of side tracks, passing tracks, crossovers, short connections between existing rail lines, and new tracks within existing rail yards*, provided that such additions are consistent with existing zoning, do not involve acquisition of a significant amount of right of way, and do not substantially alter the traffic density characteristics of the existing rail lines or rail facilities.
- Acquisition of existing railroad equipment, track and bridge structures, electrification, communication, signaling or security facilities, stations, maintenance of way and maintenance of equipment bases, and other existing railroad facilities or the right to use such facilities, for the purpose of conducting operations of a nature and at a level of use similar to those presently or previously existing on the subject properties.
- Research, development and/or demonstration of advances in signal, communication and/or train control systems on existing rail lines provided that such research, development and/or demonstrations do not require the acquisition of substantial amounts of right-of-way, and do not substantially alter the traffic density characteristics of the existing rail line.
- Improvements to existing facilities to service, inspect, or maintain rail passenger equipment, *including expansion of existing buildings, the construction of new buildings and outdoor facilities, and the reconfiguration of yard tracks.*
- Alterations to existing facilities, locomotives, stations and rail cars in order to make them accessible for the elderly and persons with disabilities, *such as modifying doorways, adding or modifying lifts, constructing access ramps and railings, modifying restrooms, and constructing accessible platforms.*
- Bridge rehabilitation, reconstruction or replacement, the rehabilitation or maintenance of the rail elements of docks or piers for the purposes of intermodal transfers, and the construction of bridges, culverts, or grade separation projects, predominantly within existing right-of-way, that do not involve extensive in-water construction activities, *such as projects replacing bridge components including stringers, caps, piles, or decks, the construction of roadway overpasses to replace at-grade crossings, construction or reconstruction of approaches and/or embankments to bridges, or construction or replacement of short span bridges.*
- Acquisition (including purchase or lease), rehabilitation, or maintenance of vehicles or equipment that does not cause a substantial increase in the use of infrastructure within the existing right-of-way or other previously disturbed locations, *including locomotives, passenger coaches, freight cars, trainsets, and construction, maintenance or inspection equipment.*
- Installation, repair and replacement of equipment and small structures designed to promote transportation safety, security, accessibility, communication or operational efficiency that take place predominantly within the existing right-of-way and do not result in a major change in traffic density on the existing rail line or facility, *such as the installation, repair or replacement of surface treatments or pavement markings, small passenger shelters, passenger amenities, benches, signage, sidewalks or trails, equipment enclosures, and fencing, railroad warning devices, train control systems, signalization, electric traction equipment and structures, electronics, photonics, and communications systems and equipment, equipment mounts, towers and structures, information processing equipment, and security equipment, including surveillance and detection*

cameras.

- Environmental restoration, remediation and pollution prevention activities in or proximate to existing and former railroad track, infrastructure, stations and facilities conducted in conformance with applicable laws, regulations and permit requirements, *including activities such as noise mitigation, landscaping, natural resource management activities, replacement or improvement to storm water oil/water separators, installation of pollution containment systems, slope stabilization, and contaminated soil removal or remediation activities.*
- Assembly or construction of facilities or stations that are consistent with existing land use and zoning requirements, do not result in a major change in traffic density on existing rail or highway facilities and result in approximately less than ten acres of surface disturbance, *such as storage and maintenance facilities, freight or passenger loading and unloading facilities or stations, parking facilities, passenger platforms, canopies, shelters, pedestrian overpasses or underpasses, paving, or landscaping.*
- Track and track structure maintenance and improvements when carried out predominantly within the existing right-of-way that do not cause a substantial increase in rail traffic beyond existing or historic levels, *such as stabilizing embankments, installing or reinstalling track, re-grading, replacing rail, ties, slabs and ballast, installing, maintaining, or restoring drainage ditches, cleaning ballast, constructing minor curve realignments, improving or replacing interlockings, and the installation or maintenance of ancillary equipment.*

**III. PROJECT INFORMATION**

Potential impacts from both construction and changes to operations (where applicable) should be analyzed and identified for each resource type below. Where appropriate, the Project sponsor may commit to mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or minimize impacts, including the use of Best Management Practices (BMP). Mitigation measures necessary to comply with other laws or regulations (e.g. Clean Water Act Section 404) should also be identified and the impacts from mitigation considered.

**A. Affected Environment: *Briefly describe the ecosystems and environmental conditions in the area affected by the Project (defined as broadly as necessary to evaluate potential impacts and address Project area habitats).***

The project is located within an existing urban industrialized area (Northwood Industrial Park) between the two active SFRC and FEC rail corridors, just south of the existing connection that served historical freight operations as recent as 2004 and along the north side of 25th Street.

The New Northwood Connection will require right-of-way acquisition (approximately 1.96 acres, involving 15 non-residential parcels of light industrial/manufacturing land uses, of which 4 parcels are vacant), resulting in up to 4 business displacements. FDOT anticipates that the project will have no direct right-of-way impacts on the neighborhoods of Northwood Hills, Old Northwood and North Tamarind (shown on Exhibit 3) since the communities were built around the historic FEC Railway that operates freight service today.

Cultural resources located near the project were originally developed and used after the creation of the existing connection between the FEC Railway and SFRC. The proposed improvements for the new connection were developed to avoid impacts to the five historic cultural resources that were identified within the Northwood historic area of potential effect (APE), as discussed further in Section C (Cultural Resources). FDOT developed the proposed improvements to avoid adverse effects to cultural resources; FDOT received documentation from SHPO concurring that no adverse effects to cultural resources will occur.

There are no wetlands or other significant habitat/natural features within the study limits.

Within the 500-foot buffer width, the majority of social features include residential land uses, three churches and cemeteries. There are no medical facilities, schools, community centers or other similar features within the 500-foot buffer width of the proposed alignment. Thirteen of the census blocks within the 500-foot buffer width have minority populations greater than 40%.

**B. *Location & Land Use: Briefly describe the existing land use of the Project site and surrounding properties and resources and identify and discuss any potential inconsistencies the Project might have with local land use plans and policies.***

The existing land use within the study area is primarily a mix of commercial and light industrial. Residential land uses exist at the southern and northern portions of the 1,000-foot buffer width (study area). The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) 2008 Land Use shows approximately 70 percent of the area as industrial/light industrial and 18 percent single family residential. Other land uses include multiple family dwellings and cemeteries. FDOT did not identify future land use changes within the 1,000-foot buffer width from the Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department.

Minimal right-of-way acquisition (up to 4 acres) is required to construct the proposed project involving 15 parcels, all of which are zoned industrial. The project will involve construction of an industry track for freight uses, which is consistent with the zoning in the existing industrial area. Of these parcel impacts, FDOT anticipates only five parcels will involve complete parcel acquisition (refer to Section J Property Acquisition for more detailed information). The land uses on the other 10 impacted parcels will remain unchanged.

Of the 15 impacted parcels, 3 are vacant. Existing property uses on the other impacted parcels include one utility (Florida Power & Light (FP&L)); five warehouse/distribution facilities; a light manufacturing facility (3 parcels); a lumber yard (2 parcels), and a small deli store (1 parcel).

Additionally, FDOT anticipates that up to four businesses will be displaced. The four anticipated displacements involve a lumber yard, a small deli store, a janitorial supply (warehouse/distribution), and a light manufacturing business, as shown on the exhibits in Attachment 1. An additional vacant property will require full acquisition. FDOT may be able to minimize the anticipated property impacts and relocations during the design phase. FDOT will conduct a Right-of-Way and Relocation program for the project. FDOT coordination with affected property owners may include minimizing the anticipated relocations.

The proposed right-of-way is immediately adjacent to the following land uses: industrial and utilities (owned by FP&L, which is also the location of an archaeological site, the 25th Street Scatter (8PB14830, National Register of Historic Places [NRHP]-eligible)). East of the proposed alignment, the remainder of the FP&L property is proposed to remain, which will provide an open space buffer between the proposed railway and the Storm of 1928 Memorial site (The Hurricane of 1928 African American Mass Burial (8PB11548, NRHP-listed)).

As shown in Exhibit 3, within close proximity of the project are residential areas of Northwood Hills (to the north), Old Northwood (to the east) and North Tamarind (to the south). Based on Exhibit 4, FDOT expects future land uses not to change the affected environment (source: Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department).

Since the existing Northwood Connection was initially developed as a commercial and industrial zone, complete with rail lines linking the structures to the adjacent FEC Railway and SFCR rail lines, any restoration of rail service through this area will represent a restoration of a historic setting and not an adverse effect.

The proposed connection is located within a designated Brownfield area, the Palm Beach County Enterprise Zone and the established Community Redevelopment Agency's (CRA) District in the Northwood/Pleasant City area. According to the future land use vision of the City of West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County, areas within the vicinity of the Northwood Connection are targeted for reinvestment through urban infill development and redevelopment.

The New Northwood Connection has the potential to facilitate redevelopment within the industrial area with enhanced freight connectivity. The proximity of the nearby FEC Intermodal Yard and freight access are economic catalysts for development and redevelopment potential. Existing vacant parcels adjacent to the proposed alignment have increased potential to redevelop to light industrial uses consistent with future land use.

Of the 4 acres of right-of-way impacted for the project, only 1.96 acres are required for the permanent construction of the Northwood Connection. The existing remaining acreage (approximately 2 acres) has the potential for industrial redevelopment. FDOT performed an economic analysis and determined that the economic impacts will be minimal. The redevelopment efforts taking place in the adjacent Old Northwood Historic District (mixed-use retail, commercial and entertainment) are east of the FEC Railway outside of the proposed improvements. There will be no indirect impacts to the downtown Northwood Village mixed-use area, as the redevelopment area is east of the existing FEC Railway and is outside the project limits. FDOT anticipates that the project will reduce freight traffic on the FEC Railway, which is anticipated to result in decreased noise levels on the FEC Railway (as compared to historical freight traffic levels).

In the immediate vicinity of the proposed project, FDOT anticipates that industrial land uses and values will not decrease as the area will remain industrial and that the project will provide enhanced freight connectivity to potential freight industry customers. FDOT anticipates no noise impacts to the residential areas to the north of the existing Northwood Connection and, thus, future land uses will not be impacted. In the southern end of the 1,000-foot buffer width, FDOT anticipates minimal noise increases (maximum of 3 decibels [dB]) for up to 20 residences. FDOT anticipates that such nominal increases will not affect land use or values within the active industrial area. For properties adjacent to the proposed alignment, no business access or designated parking will be impacted by the proposed project. Existing (Exhibit 3) and future (Exhibit 4) land use maps are attached.

**C. Cultural Resources:** *Is the Project of the type where there is no potential to affect historic*



*properties? Check yes or no depending on whether resources have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the Project (Area of Potential Effect)*

*Yes, explain how Project has no potential to affect historic properties. (Continue to D)*

*No, there is potential to affect historic properties. Describe identification procedures to determine the existence of cultural resources in the Project area.*

FDOT, in consultation with FRA and SHPO, prepared a Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS), including background research and a field survey coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), for the project. Refer to Attachment 3 for the CRAS.

*Describe any resource(s) identified in the project area and then describe any potential effect of the Project on the resource(s).*

As a result of the assessment, FDOT identified six cultural resources within the APE - five historic resources and one archaeological site. FDOT developed the proposed improvements for the new connection to avoid impacts to the five historic cultural resources that were identified within the Northwood historic APE: The Hurricane of 1928 African American Mass Burial Site (8PB11548) is NRHP-listed; and the Quonset Hut Row (8PB9907), Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway (8PB12102), Seaboard Air Line Railroad (8PB12917), and Evergreen Cemetery (8PB218) are NRHP-eligible. The boundaries of the Hurricane of 1928 African American Mass Burial Site (8PB11548, NRHP-listed) and the Pauper's Cemetery (8PB14864, NRHP-ineligible) do not directly intersect with the new alignment. See Exhibit 9 for a map showing Cultural Resources.

One previously recorded archaeological site is located within the archaeological APE and intersects with the new alignment: the 25th Street Scatter (8PB14830, NRHP-eligible). The 25th Street Scatter was tested extensively during a 2010 study as part of a separate project (FEC Amtrak Passenger Rail Study). The FEC Amtrak project proposed relocating partial Amtrak service (two trains daily) to the FEC via the Northwood Connection; however, the funding was not programmed for the project and project development was not continued.

The specific area of impact to this site (0.27 acre of direct use impacts, owned by FP&L) contains only mid-century fill material and lacks integrity. The site has been formerly used as an incinerator, a sewer/water treatment plant and, currently, the site of a FP&L substation. Therefore, construction of the Northwood Connection in this portion of the site will not constitute an adverse effect (see Attachment 2 for SHPO letter dated 08/04/2010, DHR File 2010-368), and SHPO letter dated 01/23/2014, DHR File 2013-53).

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), after consultation with the SHPO, has determined that no resources listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP will be adversely affected. The SHPO concurrence letter (and prior coordination letters) are provided in Attachment 2. Further detailed information on the cultural resource evaluation is available in the CRAS prepared for this project.

*Has consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office occurred?*

No, contact FRA

Yes, describe and attach relevant correspondence

Attachment 2:

1. SHPO letter dated 08/04/2010, DHR File 2010-3685
2. SHPO letter dated 01/23/2014, DHR File 2013-53

A CRAS Addendum was prepared for this project (refer to Attachment 3).

On 1/23/2014, the SHPO concurred with no adverse effect to cultural resources. Prior SHPO consultation occurred in the following months: December 2009 (CRAS Methodology), April 2010 (Area of Potential Effect), June 2010 (Northwood Connection Field Visit), and June 2010 (Cultural Resource Meeting). In 2013, meetings were held with West Palm Beach Planning, Historic Preservation and CRA Departments. An FRA and SHPO consultation meeting was held on November 19, 2013 (Update to Area of Potential Effect and Proposed Action, for meeting summary see Attachment 2).

*What resources of interest to Federally-recognized Native American Tribes are known to be present in the Project area?*

No resources of interest are within the study area. An Advance Notification Package (October 2013) was sent to Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, and Seminole Tribe of Florida. No response was received from the tribes.

**D. Parks and Recreational Facilities:** *Are there any publicly owned park, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or recreational area of national, state, or local significance within or directly adjacent to the Project area?*

No, include a short statement describe efforts to identify parks and recreational facilities in the Project area.

There are no parks or recreational facilities of national, state, or local significance within the study area.

Yes, include a detailed description of the property, including map or drawing, describe the recreational uses of the property, any unique characteristics of the property, any consultations with the entity with legal jurisdiction over the property, and the potential impact on the property.

**E. Transportation:** *Would the Project have any effect (beneficial or adverse) on transportation including but not limited to other railway operations, road traffic, or increase the demand for parking?*

No, explain why the Project would have no effect (beneficial or adverse) on transportation

Existing Grade Crossings: There are eight existing grade crossings within the study area that may be affected, all of which are considered active crossings in the United States Department of Transportation (U.S.DOT) Crossing Inventory database (as of February 2014). Existing active grade crossings that are in

frequent use are located at 25th Street/SFRC (628116P) and 25th Street/FEC Railway (272407R). Six of the existing grade crossings are located on the existing Northwood Connection and are recorded as active but have not been in regular use for several years. Existing grade crossings that are not in regular use are located at Windsor Avenue near Service Road (628105C), Windsor Avenue north of 25th Court (628114B), 26th Street (628115H), Tamarind Avenue (628106J), Division Avenue (628110Y), and Rosemary Avenue (628112M).

For Phase 2, FDOT identified locations for five new grade crossings and one modified grade crossing: Windsor Ave south of 25th Street (NCX1, new crossing), 25th Street east of Windsor Avenue (NCX2, new crossing), 25th Court north of 25th Street (NCX3, new crossing), N. Tamarind Avenue between 25th Street and 26th Street (NCX4, new crossing), Division Avenue between 25th Street and 27th Street (NCX5, new crossing), and Rosemary Avenue between 25th Street and 27th Street (NCX6, modification of existing crossing 628112M). It should be noted that the Windsor Avenue crossing (NCX1) is a private crossing. At this location, Windsor Avenue is a gated service road between 23rd Street and 25th Street. There is also a bus stop located along 25th Street west of the intersection with 25th Court. A map of the proposed grade crossings is included in the Grade Crossing Analysis (Attachment 3). A summary of the grade crossings is shown in Attachment 1 (Exhibit 9)

The project will have minimal impact on the surrounding roadway network, including traffic operations, designated parking and other conditions. The project will not increase parking demand. FDOT will continue coordination with the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), FEC and CSX Transportation (CSXT) in future phases to determine the FEC freight operations changes needed to facilitate transfer of four FEC freight trains from the FEC Railway to the SFRC and also to facilitate access to PortMiami and the South Florida Logistics Center.

FDOT conducted an analysis of grade crossings to determine the effects the proposed action may have upon the local roadway network. The grade crossing analysis was based on certain assumptions about the length (up to 14,000 feet) and speed (20-mph maximum allowable speed [MAS] through the crossing) of the proposed trains. FEC indicated there will be up to 12 trains per day using the connection and these trains will be active only during nighttime, off-peak hours beginning after 7:00 p.m. Based on information provided by FEC, the FDOT analysis assumed that no more than two train crossings will occur in a single hour. Given these parameters, results indicate that for both the opening year (2015) and the design year (2035) vehicular queues and delay incurred at the rail crossings will be nominal and can be accommodated without impacting roadway traffic operations at adjacent locations.

Further, adequate clearance time of approximately 20 minutes is needed between the two crossing events to allow drivers in queue to complete the rail crossing prior to the next rail crossing event. This ensures that no driver is affected by both crossing events without the opportunity to cross. Because of the industrial nature of the area and the time that the trains are scheduled to run, no significant impacts are expected to affect traffic in the project area. Refer to Attachment 3, Grade Crossing Analysis, for further

information.

In terms of rail operations, FDOT anticipates that the proposed action will enhance intermodal connectivity to major freight and multi-modal centers in the region, enhance freight connectivity between the SFRC and FEC Railway and support bringing additional future passenger rail options to Florida's East Coast.

- Yes, describe potential transportation, traffic, and parking impacts, and address capacity constraints and potential impacts to existing railroad and highway operations. Also, summarize any consultation that has occurred with other railroads or highway authorities whose operations this Project will impact.

**F. Noise and Vibration: Are there any sensitive receptors in the Project area?**

No, describe why there are no sensitive receptors (residences, parks, schools, hospitals, public gathering spaces) in or near the Project area. (Continue to G)

Yes, will the Project change the noise and/or vibration exposure of the sensitive receptors when applying the screening distances for noise and vibration assessment found in FRA and Federal Transit Administration's noise impacts assessment guidance manuals? Such changes in exposure might include changes in noise emissions and/or events, or changes in vibration emissions and/or events.

FDOT considers that overall project noise impacts (including the use of locomotive warning horns by the freight trains operating on the proposed connection) will be minimal due to the limited number of impacted residences (20 in the North Tamarind community) and type of exposure (i.e., moderate impacts of 2 A-weighted decibels (dB(A)) to 3 dB(A)). Although located within the 750-foot screening distance, the Hurricane of 1928 African American Mass Burial (commonly referred to as the Storm of '28 Memorial Site) is not anticipated to be affected by the train operations associated with Phase 2. The trains operating on the new Northwood Connection will operate between 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., whereas this site will be used primarily during the posted hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at latest); therefore, FDOT anticipates no noise impacts as a result of the proposed action. Based on the vibration assessment, the build condition ground-borne vibration level (78 VdB) at the closest sensitive site does not exceed the impact criteria (80 VdB); therefore, no ground-borne vibration impacts are anticipated. The estimated ground-borne noise levels (28 dB(A)) did not exceed impact criterion (43 dB(A)) at the closest sensitive site; therefore, FDOT anticipates no ground-borne noise impacts. Refer to Attachment 3, Noise and Vibration Technical Memorandum, for further information.

If the Project is anticipated to change the noise or vibration exposure of sensitive receptors, complete and attach a General Noise and/or Vibration Assessment. Describe the results of the Assessment and any mitigation that will address potential impacts.

Based on the results of the General Noise Assessment, FDOT anticipates that the proposed new Northwood Connection will not result in any severe noise impacts to any noise sensitive land uses. The proposed project will not generate a significant increase in noise due to the high existing noise levels in the industrial area surrounding the proposed project and the nominal increase (two trains per direction daily) in freight rail traffic on the corridor above historical levels. Based on the build conditions, overall noise exposure levels with and without horns, quiet zone and wayside horns will reduce noise levels by at least 1 day-night average sound level (Ldn) and minimize the moderate noise impacts. However, FDOT does not consider these feasible noise abatement measures because they will result in only a 1-Ldn noise reduction. During the design phase of the project, FDOT will reconsider the feasibility and reasonableness of quiet zones and wayside horns to minimize the moderate noise impacts associated with the New Northwood Connection. If a quiet zone is recommended for implementation as a result of further evaluations during the design phase, FDOT will implement the supplemental safety measures required for the local government to apply for an FRA quiet zone.

**G. Air Quality: Is the Project located in a Non-Attainment or Maintenance area?**

No, identify any air emissions increases or benefits that the project will create.  
(Continue to H)

The proposed action is located in Miami-Dade County, which is currently designated as being in attainment for all of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) criteria air pollutants including: Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), Nitrous Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) (less than 2.5 microns in diameter) and PM<sub>10</sub> (less than 10 microns in diameter), Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), Carbon Monoxide (CO), and Lead (Pb).

As part of this project, FDOT performed an assessment of potential air quality impacts (refer to Attachment 3, Air Quality Technical Memorandum). FDOT anticipates that emissions from the locomotives and emissions associated with idling vehicles in queue at grade crossings will occur up to two times per hour. Most of the emissions associated with the project will occur in the evening/night when traffic volumes are low.

Due to the nature of the project, which is anticipated to reduce overall emissions, and the location of the project in an industrial area with low traffic volumes, the project will not result in an overall increase in emissions of the criteria pollutants; lead to levels that exceed the NAAQS and/or lead to the establishment of a new non-attainment area; or delay achievement of attainment. FDOT also anticipates that the project will reduce CO emissions from trucks that would otherwise have to transport the goods associated with the increased freight rail traffic. The project is located in an area which is designated in attainment for all of the NAAQS under the criteria provided in the Clean Air Act. Therefore, the Clean Air Act conformity requirements do not apply to the project. Construction activities will cause short-term air quality impacts in the form of dust from earthwork and unpaved roads. Adherence to all applicable State and local regulations and to the FDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction will minimize these impacts.

Yes, for which of the following pollutants:

- Carbon Monoxide (CO)     Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), volatile organic compounds or Nitrous Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>)
- Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>)

*Will the Project, both during construction and operation, result in new emissions of criteria pollutants including Carbon Monoxide (CO), Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), volatile organic compounds, or Nitrous Oxides NO<sub>x</sub>, Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>)?*

No     Yes, Attach an emissions analysis for General Conformity regarding CO, O<sub>3</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, and NO<sub>x</sub>.

*Based on the emissions analysis, will the Project increase concentrations of ambient criteria pollutants to levels that exceed the NAAQS, lead to the establishment of a new non-attainment area, or delay achievement of attainment?*

No     Yes, Describe any substantial impacts from the Project.

**H. Hazardous Materials:** *Does the Project involve the use or handling of hazardous materials?*

No (continue to I)

Yes, describe the use and measures that will mitigate any potential for release and contamination.

Freight trains traveling on the FEC and SFRC have historically transported hazardous materials and FEC freight trains are currently equipped to haul hazardous materials. Although there is no regularly scheduled transport of hazardous materials, these types of cargo shipments are hauled on an average of once a week along the FEC Railway. FEC anticipates no change in the frequency or quantity of hazardous materials hauled along the FEC mainline associated with this project. There is a potential for existing FEC freight shipment of hazardous materials to transfer to the SFRC via the proposed connection. Based on the existing and historical FEC cargo shipments, FDOT anticipates minimal hazardous material transport within the limits of the proposed project. FEC does not plan to use or store hazardous materials along the proposed connection. All hazardous materials will be transported by FEC in accordance with federal Hazardous Materials Regulations found in Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Additionally, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) enacts and enforces all hazardous material shipping laws. Compliance with DOT and federal requirements included in FRA's Hazardous Materials Compliance Manual will be overseen by the railroads who transfer the cargo shipments to/from industry customers. Adherence to these federal shipping regulations governs the shipment of hazardous materials and mitigation measures in the event of an unanticipated contamination release.

**I. Hazardous Waste:** *Is the Project site in a developed area or was previously developed or used for industrial or agricultural production,*

No, describe the steps taken to determine that hazardous materials are not present on the Project site. (Continue to J)

Yes. *If yes, is it likely that hazardous materials will be encountered by undertaking the Project? (Prior to acquiring land or a facility with FRA funds, FRA must be consulted regarding the potential presence of hazardous materials)*

Yes, complete a Phase I site assessment and attach.

FDOT conducted a Contamination Screening Evaluation (Phase 1 Site Assessment) for the proposed action, which is provided in Attachment 3.

The entire project is located within the West Palm Beach Downtown Northwood - Pleasant City Community Redevelopment Agency Area Brownfield (Florida Department of Environmental Protection[FDEP] ID BF500302001). FDOT evaluated potential impacts associated with the sites contributing to the brownfield designation separately, and the brownfield designation itself will have no impact on the project.

High Risk Potential Sites:

There are no Federal Superfund sites within 1 mile of the 1,000-foot buffer width. The entire project is located within the West

Palm Beach Downtown Northwood - Pleasant City CRA Area Brownfield (FDEP ID BF500302001). Twelve High Risk sites (some of which will be acquired) received a High Risk rating due to potential contamination concerns. One site (#68 Atlas Plating) received a High Risk rating because known contamination has been documented in the study area.

Medium Risk Potential Sites:

Five Medium Risk sites were identified because of their potential contamination concerns immediately adjacent to the project.

No, explain why it is unlikely that hazardous materials will be encountered.

*If a Phase I survey was completed, is a Phase II site assessment recommended?*

No, explain why a Phase II site assessment is not recommended.

Yes, describe the mitigation and clean-up measures that will be taken to remediate any hazardous materials present and what steps will be taken to ensure that the local community is protected from contamination during construction and operation of the Project.

There are no known activities where a regulatory agency is taking, has taken, or may take action on any property where potential contamination could have an impact on the proposed project. FDOT will re-evaluate the identified contamination sites during the design phase to verify that construction activities will not encounter contaminated sites. FDOT will conduct Level 2 testing on medium/high risk sites impacted by the proposed alignment during the design phase. Also during the design phase, FDOT will re-evaluate any changes to the proposed improvements, including modifications to the surface drainage, infiltration or groundwater movement that results in proposed construction activities at the identified contamination sites.

Soil, where excavated at locations that have known or potential contamination, will be remediated and/or characterized for disposal at an approved facility.

**J. Property Acquisition: *Is property acquisition needed for the Project?***

No (continue to K)

Yes, indicate how much property and whether the acquisition will result in relocation of businesses or individuals. **Note:** *acquiring property prior to completing the NEPA process and receiving written FRA concurrence in the NEPA recommendation may jeopardize Federal financial participation in the Project.*

The proposed project involves minimal property acquisition (approximately 4 acres) for the new alignment of the New Northwood Connection. Of the total right-of-way acquisition, only 1.96 acres are required for the permanent construction of the New Northwood Connection. The existing remaining acreage (approximately 2 acres) has the potential for industrial redevelopment. The improvements will require primarily partial right-of-way acquisition from approximately 15 non-residential parcels; all 15 parcels are light industrial/manufacturing land uses. Three of the parcels are vacant. The 15 impacted parcels involve 11 property owners and impact 8



businesses. Up to four of the impacted businesses could be displaced as a result of the proposed project, which could result in an additional 2 acres of acquisition if full parcel acquisition is required. No residential displacements are associated with the proposed project. A map of the impacted parcels is included in Exhibit 7.

In order to minimize the unavoidable effects of right-of-way acquisition and displacement of people, FDOT will carry out a right-of-way and relocation program in accordance with Florida Statute 339.09 and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646 as amended by Public Law 100-17). FDOT may further minimize the anticipated property impacts and relocations during the design phase and during its coordination with affected property owners.

Refer to Section C regarding the 0.27 acre of direct use impacts to the parcel owned by FP&L, which is also the site of the 25th Street Scatter (8PB14830, NRHP -eligible). Refer to Section I, Hazardous Waste, for a description of the high risk contamination sites, some of which will be acquired.

The following provides a description of the 15 impacted properties and public right-of-way impacts:

N1: FP&L owns a vacant parcel that will have a 0.27-acre impact (of 4.60 acres) in the northwestern corner. This impact will require no displacements. The West Palm Beach Lift Station #22 located in the southwest corner will not be impacted. Though no contamination has been documented, this site (CSER#4 High Risk) was a former landfill and water treatment facility and is high risk for contamination potential. One archaeological site was identified, the 25th Street Scatter (8PB14830, potentially eligible for NRHP listing), which intersects with the impact area; SHPO has concurred that there is no adverse effect to this site (SHPO 01/23/2014).

N3. Liberty Scrap Metal (1030 25 Court) is a warehouse parcel that will have a 0.10-acre impact (of 1.81 acres) in the southeastern corner. This impact will require no displacements. This site (CSER#74 Medium Risk) has no known contamination, but it is a potential source of metals contamination. The proposed alignment will impact scrap metal storage but will not impact the building; therefore, it is medium risk for potential contamination.

N4: Preferred Chemicals (955 25 Street) is a warehouse parcel with a 0.30-acre impact (of 0.51 acre). The proposed alignment will impact the building, parking, janitorial and industrial supplies areas. This impact will displace the business and may require a full parcel take. This site (CSER#75 Medium Risk) has no known contamination, but it is a potential source of contamination from the sanitizing chemicals currently stored, as well as unknown chemicals previously stored at this site; therefore, it is medium risk for potential contamination.

N5, N6 and N7: Miotto 2000 File and Marble Work (911-921 25 Court) is located on three light manufacturing parcels that will have a total of 0.28 acre of impact (of 0.82 acres). The proposed alignment will impact a portion of the outdoor tile storage facilities in each parcel. The tile storage facilities may require relocation pending further FDOT coordination with the property owner during the right-of-way phase. This site (CSER#127) has no known contamination, but it is a potential source of petroleum and metals contamination from

the previous open-field auto parts activities; therefore, it is medium risk for potential contamination.

N8 Vacant Industrial: This is a vacant industrial parcel. The proposed alignment will extend through 0.04 acre (of 0.09 acre) in the middle of N8.

N13, N14 Vacant Industrial: These are vacant industrial parcels. The proposed alignment will impact 0.18 acre (of 0.81 acre) along the east side of N13 and 0.13 acre (of 0.54 acre) diagonally through N14. The remaining portions of N13 (0.63 acre) and N14 (0.41 acre) could be combined to make a new parcel. N13 (2706-2810 North Rosemary Avenue, CSER#167) was contaminated with petroleum products and a Site Rehabilitation Completion Order issued in 2005; therefore, it is medium risk for potential contamination. N14 (Palm Beach Oil, 2820 North Rosemary Avenue, CSER#168) has a history of petroleum contamination; therefore, it is also medium risk for potential contamination.

N9: Prime Time Grocery and Deli Store and Quick Service Gas Station (901 25 Street) will have 0.09 acre (of 0.29 acre) impacted in the middle of the property. This impact will displace the business. The proposed alignment will impact the building that divides the property. This property could be divided and resold or used as parking. This site has no known contamination, but it is a potential source of petroleum contamination from the previous service station activities; therefore, it is medium risk for potential contamination.

N10: MAC 1 Construction Services, Inc. is on a warehouse parcel that will have 0.14 acres (of 0.45 acres) impacted along the northern portion of the property. The proposed alignment will impact a vacant storage area. This impact will not displace the business.

N11: Olufina Candle LLC. (2616 East Tamarind Avenue) will have 0.01 acres impacted (of 0.40 acres) along the southern portion of the property. The proposed alignment will impact storage and undesignated parking. This impact will not displace the business. This site (CSER#151) has no known contamination, but it is a potential source of unknown contamination from the previous activities conducted at this site; therefore, it is medium risk for potential contamination.

N12 Paper Recycling (2617 Division Avenue) is on a warehouse parcel that will have 0.11 acres (of 0.49 acres) impacted along the southern portion of the property. This impact will not displace the business. This site (CSER#150) has no known contamination, but it is a potential source of solvents contamination from the paper recycling activities, and petroleum contamination from the numerous unmaintained vehicles stored on the site; therefore, it is medium risk for potential contamination.

N15, N20: MarJam Supply Co. (715 25th Street) and Lainhart and Potter Building Materials (713 25th Street) are on lumber yard parcels that will have 0.01 acres (of 0.58 acres) impacted in the northwest tip of N15 and 0.29 acres (of 1.76 acres) impacted diagonally through N20. The proposed alignment will minimally impact N15 but will impact ancillary buildings and storage on N20. This impact will displace the business on N20. The MarJam Supply Co. also owns the property south of N20, across 25th Street. It may be possible for the company to relocate some facilities across the street. These sites (CSER #163 and #166) have no known

contamination, but they are a potential source of petroleum, metals and solvents contamination from the activities performed at this site; therefore, they are both medium risk for potential contamination.

Public right-of-way impacts: The proposed alignment will affect the sidewalks on both sides of 25th Street and on the west side of Division Avenue. The sidewalk on Division Avenue ends at the north end of the N10 parcel so it will be minimally impacted. The sidewalk on the south side of 25th Street will also be minimally impacted. The proposed alignment runs almost parallel to 25th Street on the north side of the street, so the sidewalk on the north side of 25th Street will be impacted and require reconstruction. The proposed alignment will also impact a Palm Tran Bus Stop on the corner of 25th Street and 25th Court during temporary construction activities. The track infrastructure will not impact the bus stop and the bus stop is proposed to be maintained in the existing location.

**K. Community Impacts and Environmental Justice:** *Is the Project likely to result in impacts to adjacent communities? Impacts might be both beneficial (e.g. economic benefits) or adverse (e.g. reduction in community cohesion).*

No, describe the steps taken to determine whether the Project might result in impacts to adjacent communities. (Continue to L)

In accordance with the U.S. DOT Final Order on Environmental Justice in Executive Order 12898, FDOT conducted a socioeconomic analysis for this project. As shown in Exhibits 5 and 6, the 2010 U.S. Census and the 2007-2011 American Community Survey document populations with low income (below poverty level), minorities and limited English proficiency within the study area; however, FDOT anticipates no impacts to these populations.

FDOT anticipates that the project will have no adverse effects on nearby neighborhoods or communities since the communities were built around the historic FEC Railway that operates freight service today. The existing neighborhoods and communities will not involve community cohesion impacts as land uses were built adjacent to the railroad and no right-of-way impacts are anticipated to residential areas or community services. The project will be developed between the active SFRC and FEC railways, which are adjacent to the existing residential communities within the study area. The anticipated property acquisition is limited to vacant parcels and industrial businesses and does not involve disproportionately high or adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations.

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, FDOT developed this project and solicited public participation without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status. Refer to Section W for a description of the public outreach efforts undertaken as part of this project.

In total, 15 parcels will be affected by the Northwood Connection to some degree, with impacts ranging from needing a corner of vacant land to impacting structures. As a result, FDOT conducted two analyses to investigate the range of these impacts on the tax base and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenues for the Northwood Community Development Area (CRA), with partial takings (only the necessary portion of a property was acquired) on the low end and full takings (the entirety of a parcel was acquired) on the high end. The partial takings will result in a loss of approximately \$1.7

million in taxable value, or 0.88% of the total tax base. The full takings will result in losing 2.31% of the taxable value and nearly \$4.4 million in value.

FDOT applied the forecasted growth in taxable values to the CRA's tax base as well as those properties (or parts of properties) to be acquired for the Northwood Connection. Overall, the differences between the TIF revenues with partial property acquisitions are small enough (less than 1% of total CRA TIF revenues) that a slight increase in the forecasted tax base growth is sufficient to recover any losses associated with the takings by Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. For the full takings analysis, the revenue differences could be overcome when assuming a slightly higher growth rate. Refer to Attachment 3, Economic Analysis, for further information.

Yes, characterize the socio-economic profile of the affected community, including the presence of minority or low-income populations.

Describe any potential adverse effects to communities, including noise, visual and barrier effects. Indicate whether the Project will have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low-income populations. Describe outreach efforts targeted specifically at minority or low-income populations.

**L. Impacts On Wetlands:** *Does the Project temporarily or permanently impact wetlands or require alterations to streams or waterways?*

No, describe the steps taken to determine that the Project is not likely to temporarily or permanently impact wetlands or require alterations to streams or waterways.

The project corridor was evaluated for wetlands. In September 2013, FDOT conducted a field reconnaissance to locate and delineate wetlands within the 1,000-foot buffer width in accordance with the "Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands" (United States Army Corps of Engineers [USACE], 1987), "The Florida Wetlands Delineation Manual" (FDEP, 1995), the Florida Land Use Cover Classification System (FLUCCS), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) classification system as described in "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States."

The 1000-foot buffer width is heavily urbanized with few open areas, and FDOT identified no wetlands within it. The cut banks of the canal in the western portion of the 1000-foot buffer width are too steep to support jurisdictional wetlands.

The additional analysis, described above, concluded that there are no wetlands located within the proposed alignment or the limits of the proposed improvements.

Yes, show wetlands and waters on the site map and classification. Describe the Project's potential impact to on-site and adjacent wetlands and waters and attach any correspondence with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

*Is a Section 404 Permit necessary?*

Yes, attach all permit related documentation

No

**M. Floodplain Impacts:** *Is the Project located within the 100-year floodplain or are regulated floodways affected?*

No

Yes, describe the potential for impacts due to changes in floodplain capacity or water flow, if any and how the Project will comply with Executive Order 11988. If impacts are likely, attach scale maps describing potential impacts and describe any coordination with regulatory entities.

**N. Water Quality:** *Are protected waters of special quality or concern, or protected drinking water resources present at or directly adjacent to the Project site?*

No, describe the steps taken to identify *protected waters of special quality or concern, or protected drinking water resources present at or directly adjacent to the Project site.*

The project, once completed, will not result in additional water runoff or generation of wastewater, nor will it change the existing drainage or groundwater recharge patterns of the area. Therefore, no long-term negative impact on local groundwater or surface water quality will occur as a result of the project. There are no streams located within the limits of the proposed project. Based on FDOT's Efficient Transportation Decision Making environmental screening and Geographic Information System (GIS)-based analysis of impacts, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA's) National Marine Fisheries Service has concluded that the proposed work will not directly impact areas that support essential fish habitat or NOAA trust fishery resources.

Yes, describe water resource and the potential for impact from the Project, and any coordination with regulatory entities.

**O. Navigable Waterways:** *Does the Project cross or have effect on a navigable waterway?*

No (continue to P)

Yes, describe potential for impact and any coordination with US Coast Guard.

**P. Coastal Zones:** *Is the Project in a designated coastal zone?*

No (continue to Q)

Yes, describe coordination with the State regarding consistency with the coastal zone management plan and attach the State finding if available.

**Q. Prime and Unique Farmlands:** *Does the Project impact any prime or unique farmlands?*

No, describe the steps taken to identify *impacts to prime or unique farmlands.*

Yes, describe potential for impact and any coordination with the Soil Conservation Service of the US Department of Agriculture.

**R. Critical Habitat and Endangered Species:** *Are there any designated critical habitat areas (woodlands, prairies, wetlands, rivers, lakes, streams, and geological formations determined to be essential for the survival of a threatened or endangered species) within or directly adjacent to the Project site?*

No, describe the steps taken to identify critical habitat within or directly adjacent to the Project site.

Yes, describe them and the potential for impact.

Due to the developed nature of the area, limited threatened and/or endangered species and associated habitat exist in the project analysis area. FDOT conducted a desktop GIS analysis and site visit to verify no involvement with habitat and/or species. FDOT anticipates no impacts.

*Are any Threatened or endangered species located in or adjacent to the site?*

No, describe the steps taken to identify the presence of endangered species directly adjacent to the Project site.

FDOT determined the potential involvement with listed species and critical habitat through a GIS analysis, review of existing data and literature, and field reconnaissance conducted in September 2013. All GIS species occurrence data available from the USFWS, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), and Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) were also evaluated, including the FFWCC wading bird colony records.

During the field reconnaissance, four Federally endangered wood storks (*Mycteria americana*) were observed in the southwest portion of the 1,000-foot buffer width. However, no impacts to this canal will result from this project and there is no wood stork foraging habitat within the 1,000-foot buffer width, so FDOT anticipates no impacts to wood storks. Although the Federally endangered West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) may also occur in this canal, no impacts to this canal will result from this project, and FDOT anticipates no impacts to manatees.

FDOT has determined that there will be no effect on any protected species. USFWS concurrence is provided in Attachment 2.

Refer to Attachment 3, Natural Resources Technical Memorandum, for further information.

Yes, describe them and the potential for impact. Describe any consultation with the State and the US Fish and Wildlife Service about the impacts to these natural areas and on threatened and endangered fauna and flora that may be affected. If required prepare a biological assessment and attach it and any applicable agency correspondence.

**S. Public Safety:** *Will the Project result in any public safety impacts?*

No, describe method used to determine whether the Project results in any safety or security impacts

FDOT anticipates that the project will not impact safety and/or security related to rail operations. The existing rail line has not been in use for several years; therefore, as the project is advanced through construction, FDOT will conduct public outreach within the study area. Considerations should include, but should not be limited to, safety and security at grade crossings (pedestrian and roadway), including the addition of signage and other measures deemed necessary; the potential for encroachment within the corridor right-of-way; adequate clearance distance within the dynamic envelope of roadway grade crossings; signal preemption; and the addition of pedestrian and vehicular gates at crossings, as warranted.

Pedestrian safety measures such as adequate signage will be implemented consistent with the guidelines set forth in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. FDOT anticipates that emergency vehicle response time will not be impacted by the proposed project as the closely spaced grid transportation network will provide alternative traffic routes during the gate down time as the proposed freight trains are crossing the New Northwood Connection.

Yes, describe the safety or security concerns and the measures that would need to be taken to provide for the safe and secure operation of the Project during and after its construction.

**T. Cumulative Impacts:** A “cumulative impact” is the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts may include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or resulting from smaller actions that individually have no significant impact. Determining the cumulative environmental consequences of an action requires delineating the cause-and-effect relationships between the multiple actions and the resources, ecosystems, and human communities of concern.

Are cumulative impacts likely?  No  Yes, describe the impacts:

FDOT evaluated the proposed Phase 1 Rehabilitated Northwood Connection (FPID: 434948-1), All Aboard Florida (AAF) project (<http://www.allaboardflorida.com/>), planned Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study (refer to Section W for brief discussion), and the planned FEC Amtrak Passenger Rail Study to identify reasonably foreseeable future actions and the potential for cumulative impacts.

The proposed Phase 1 Rehabilitated Northwood Connection will result in direct impacts (noise, traffic and property impacts) to the surrounding Northwood area; however, FDOT anticipates that these impacts will be minimal as documented in the Draft Categorical Exclusion for the Rehabilitated Northwood Connection (March 2014). FDOT anticipates that indirect impacts from the Rehabilitated Northwood Connection will result in enhanced aesthetics and a potential increase in economic benefits and property values due to the redevelopment potential of surrounding properties and increased economic activity from the freight connection. FDOT anticipates no significant cumulative impacts as a result of the related Phase 1 project. The Phase 1 Rehabilitated Northwood Connection has an identified funding plan and is a reasonably foreseeable action.

The AAF project proposes high-speed intercity passenger service on

the FEC Railway and there are no plans to use the Northwood Connection or the SFRC for the proposed high-speed service. The proposed AAF passenger trains on the FEC Railway for the AAF project were documented in the approved Finding of No Significant Impact (January 2013). The AAF project is being studied further as part of an ongoing Environmental Impact Statement; however, the proposed Northwood project is not anticipated to result in increased freight traffic on the FEC Railway and cumulative impacts are not anticipated. The AAF project has an identified funding plan and is a federally approved action and, therefore, is a reasonably foreseeable action.

As of February 2014, the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study is in the planning phase and the environmental study is anticipated to begin in 2014 (pending FTA approval). There is no funding programmed for the future design, construction or operations phases. The Tri-Rail Coastal Link project is not federally approved and no funding plan has been identified to date and, therefore, is not a reasonably foreseeable action for the purposes of cumulative effects analysis. The operating plan proposes use of the existing Pompano Connection (Broward County) for passenger service between the SFRC and the FEC Railway. If the operating plan is refined to reflect periodic passenger service between the SFRC and FEC Railway in Palm Beach County on the Northwood Connection, the cumulative traffic and noise impacts will need further evaluation as part of that proposal. However, any future passenger service would be anticipated to occur at higher speeds than the freight trains (resulting in less traffic delays) and with reduced noise impacts (as compared to noise impacts from freight trains).

A new alignment for the Northwood Connection was previously studied as part of the FEC Amtrak Passenger Rail Study (2010). This study involved relocating existing Amtrak passenger rail (up to two trains daily in each direction) from the existing CSX corridor (through Central Florida) to the east coast of Florida (from Jacksonville to West Palm Beach). The proposed Amtrak service intended to use the New Northwood Connection to access the SFRC to connect to the existing Amtrak route with service to Miami. A Draft Environmental Assessment was prepared for the study and no significant direct or indirect impacts were identified. However, the project was discontinued due to Amtrak liability concerns and no identified funding for design, right-of-way or construction. The FEC Amtrak project is not federally approved and no funding plan has been identified to date and, therefore, is not a reasonably foreseeable action for the purposes of cumulative effects analysis. The subject project, the South Florida Freight and Passenger Rail Enhancement Study, proposes freight relocation on the new alignment studied in 2010. If the FEC Amtrak proposal is re-initiated, the cumulative impacts of the two proposed Amtrak passenger trains would not result in increased impacts on the existing Northwood Connection. Furthermore, the cumulative effects of any proposed Amtrak passenger trains and the proposed freight trains on the New Northwood Connection (up to six trains per direction daily) would not result in significant cumulative impacts as the FEC Amtrak project is not anticipated to result in increased noise levels or traffic congestion due to the nominal number of proposed passenger trains.

Based on the above evaluation, FDOT anticipates no significant cumulative impacts for the proposed project.



**U. Indirect Impacts:** “Indirect impacts” are those that are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect impacts may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

Are Indirect impacts likely?  No  Yes, describe the impacts:

**V. Mitigation:** Describe all mitigation measure commitments which address identified impacts that have been incorporated into the Project, if any.

Noise: FDOT anticipates moderate noise impacts to the 20 residences in the North Tamarind community; however, FDOT considers the overall project noise impacts to be minimal. During the design phase of the project, FDOT will reconsider the feasibility and reasonableness of quiet zones and wayside horns to minimize the moderate noise impacts associated with the New Northwood Connection Cultural Resources: Project commitments will be fulfilled as documented in the SHPO letter dated 01/23/2014.

Relocations: In order to minimize the unavoidable effects of right-of-way acquisition and displacement of people, FDOT will carry out a right-of-way and relocation program in accordance with Florida Statute 339.09 and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646 as amended by Public Law 100-17).

**W. Public Notification:** *Briefly describe any public outreach efforts undertaken on behalf of the Project, if any. Indicate opportunities the public has had to comment on the Project (e.g., Board meetings, open houses, special hearings).*

The Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study proposes reintroducing passenger service along an 85-mile stretch of the FEC Railway corridor between Jupiter and Miami. The Tri-Rail Coastal Link will serve 28 cities including the urban core central business districts (CBDs) of West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Miami. The Tri-Rail Coastal Link Service is being developed to integrate with the existing Tri-Rail commuter rail service.

The Northwood Connection was included as a component of the proposed improvements associated with the larger Tri-Rail Coastal Link project, and as such has been presented at numerous outreach activities including public workshops/open houses, staff and elected officials briefings and Board meetings during the Phase 2 and Phase 3 analysis of the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study.

In terms of public involvement, extensive outreach led to the identification of the currently proposed Northwood alignment as part of both the Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study study and the FEC Amtrak Passenger Rail Study. The timeline for major recent milestones of public opportunities for specific input on the alignments/Northwood Connection is shown below.

- January/February 2009 - Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study Phase 2

## Public Kick-off Workshops

- October 2009 - Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study Phase 2 Public Alternatives Workshops
- January 9 - 15, 2010 - Public Design Workshop (CSX-FEC Connector Charrette); West Palm Beach
- June 24, 2010 - Public Workshop for FEC Amtrak Passenger Rail Study held at West Palm Beach City Hall (Northwood Connection presented)
- September 2010 - Public Hearings for Tri-Rail Coastal Link Study

In 2013, meetings were held with City of West Palm Beach Planning, Historic Preservation and CRA Departments, and with elected officials to confirm continued support for the project. A public workshop was held on December 5, 2013 to update the public on project development for the Northwood Connection (both Phase 1A and Phase 2). A total of 88 individuals attended the workshop and 22 comments were received, most of which indicated support for the project.

As a result of the extensive outreach, there has been no significant public controversy about the proposed action; it is generally supported by the public, agencies and elected officials. The public has expressed an interest in quiet zones along the Northwood Connection. FDOT will analyze the implementation of grade crossing infrastructure to support potential future quiet zones during the design phase. FDOT commits to continued coordination with the City of West Palm Beach to support any future development of quiet zones (if requested by the City and approved by FRA). Additionally, the public requested further consideration of landscaping, lighting and fencing/barriers as part of the proposed improvements. FDOT commits to analyze these features as part of the design phase and obtain public input on the proposed design features as part of the future design phase .

In addition, the project was screened through FDOT's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process, which involves notification to the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) comprised of representatives from permitting agencies, local governments and other interested parties. The ETDM process affords these individuals a 45-day period for review and comment on the proposed improvements. No comments disputing the proposed project were received during the ETDM process. In addition, coordination between the FDOT, local governments and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) occurred prior to this evaluation.

*Has the Project generated any public discussion or concern, even though it may be limited to a relatively small subset of the community? Indicate any concerns expressed by agencies or the public regarding the Project.*

The project has not generated any known public discussion or concern by members of the public, interested stakeholders or agencies.

- X. Related Federal, State, or Local Actions:** *Does the Project require any additional actions (e.g., permits) by other Agencies? Attach copies of relevant correspondence. It is not necessary to attach voluminous permit applications if a single cover Agency transmittal will indicate that a permit has been granted. Permitting issues should be described in the relevant resource discussion above.*

- Section 106** *Historic Properties*
- Section 401/404 of the Clean Water Act;** *Wetlands and Water Quality*
- Section 402 of the Clean Water Act**
- USCG 404** *Navigable Waterways*
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act**
- Endangered Species Act** *Threatened and Endangered Biological Resources*
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act** *Essential Fish Habitat*
- Safe Drinking Water Act**
- Section 6(f) Land and Conservation Act**
- Other State or Local Requirements** (Describe)

This project will be permitted under the FDEP 10-2 Self Certification process. Potential permits that may be required for construction activities include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). FDOT commits to obtain the necessary permit prior to construction.

