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**CITY OF RIVIERA BEACH – MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** HON. MAYOR, CHAIRPERSON AND CITY COUNCIL

**THROUGH:** JONATHAN EVANS, CITY MANAGER, MPA, MBA, ICMA-CM

**FROM:** TERRENCE BAILEY, P.E., PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR  
CLARENCE SIRMONS, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

**SUBJECT:** BRIGHTLINE PRESENTATION

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

**CC:** GENERAL PUBLIC

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**Background:**

In March 2012, Florida East Coast Industries (FECI), a private company, introduced a proposal for a high-speed passenger rail service initially known as “All Aboard Florida” (AAF) and later renamed “Brightline.” The project proposed a first phase of “express” rail service between Miami and Orlando, on the Florida East Coast (FEC) rail corridor from Miami to Cocoa, which is approximately 195 miles, and along SR 528 from Cocoa to Orlando International Airport, which is approximately 40 miles. The first segment of this service became operational in 2018 between Miami and West Palm Beach, with construction underway to extend the service to its second segment from West Palm Beach to Orlando. Until the COVID pandemic, the company was operating hourly service from 6 AM until 9 PM, with 16 daily trains in each direction, totaling 32 trains per day. As a higher-speed “express” service, Brightline trains operate at speeds up to 79 MPH from Miami to West Palm Beach. From West Palm Beach to Cocoa, trains are anticipated to operate at speeds up to 110 MPH and up to 125 MPH from Cocoa to Orlando. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the lead federal agency responsible for the project, and in conjunction with the Florida Department of Transportation and Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency (TPA), the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) has been the local coordinating agency for local governments seeking to install quiet zones.



In February of 2020, Councilwoman Miller-Anderson raised the issue of the train speeds and the desire to investigate quiet zones for the City. At that time, staff reached out to the TPA for assistance as the TPA has taken the lead on funding quiet zones for municipalities throughout Palm Beach County. TCRPC has been identified as the local coordinating agency by the TPA, and staff initially scheduled a presentation with TCRPC staff (Dr. Kim DeLaney) in March; however, delays due to the COVID pandemic required the presentation to be rescheduled. Accordingly, Dr. DeLaney has been scheduled to provide an overview of quiet zones for Council. It should be noted TCRPC is available, through funding from the TPA, to provide assistance to the City for quiet zones if desired.

Councilmembers also expressed concerns about safety around the Brightline tracks and requested information on possible safety barriers. Staff has conducted a high level analysis of the properties along the rail corridor within the City limits to evaluate the possibility installing barriers and found the following: The majority of the properties located south of Martin Luther King, Jr Blvd are owned by the Port of Palm Beach and FPL and are secure. The properties just to the north of Martin Luther King, Jr Blvd are also owned by the Port and are also secure. Excluding these properties, the linear footage from w 10th Street, north to Silver Beach Road, is approximately 8,580 LF.

There are 56 properties, including those owned by the Port, and 38 owners. The majority of the properties that back up to the tracks appear to be commercial or industrial type uses. There are about 15 or so properties that appear to be residential as well as of a few vacant lots, and two streets that dead-end into the tracks (W 14th Street and Avenue J). Properties on the west side of the rail right-of-way were excluded as President Barak Obama Hwy serves as the western border of the tracks.

Staff also researched a similar effort undertaken by the City of West Palm Beach which resulted in barriers installed along the rail route. The project resulted in the installation of about ½ mile of wall, fence and landscaping adjacent to the FEC tracks. The local CRA was the majority property owner so the installation of the wall had fewer hurdles. However, the City of West Palm Beach did work with a few private property owners as well as the City to get permission to install the fence or wall on their property. The FEC required 200 foot clear site from the crossing back in either direction, which is where the metal picket fence was installed. Images of the wall and fence can be found below.

Further research will need to be conducted to compare the trade-offs between vegetative barriers, which require continuous maintenance, and wall-type structures which are more expensive but provide more security. Staff looks forward to discussing both the quiet zone and safety barriers in more detail at either a Workshop or Special Council Meeting.



**Citywide Goal:**

The Citywide Goal is to Build Great Neighborhood

**Budget/Fiscal Impact:**

None at this time.

**Recommendation(s):**

To provide direction on next steps to discuss in greater detail.

**Attachment(s)**

Photos of railroad safety barriers in City of West Palm Beach

Geographical Map of affected area



