

Final Report

The Florida Rail System Plan: Policy Element



prepared for the Florida Department of Transportation

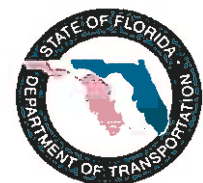
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3.0 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Florida's future economic competitiveness and quality of life require meeting increasing demands for moving people and goods in a sustainable manner. Despite slower growth in population and tourism between 2007 and 2008, due to a slowdown in the state and national economy, continued growth can be expected in the long-term. Our economic growth is also dependent on the movement of raw materials and freight into and within the state, as well as across state lines and through international gateways. Much of this increase in demand has been handled without a corresponding increase in the capacity of our transportation system. As a result, our highways are experiencing high levels of congestion, while our rail systems, airports, and seaports must attempt to keep pace with demand for mobility.

As Florida responds to this increased need for mobility, we must also meet rising business and household expectations for safety, security, efficiency, and reliability while preserving Florida's rich environment and livable communities. Furthermore, uncertainty in the future cost or availability of fossil fuels, as well as the growing awareness of the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, suggests a shift towards greater emphasis on rail transportation systems. Physical, environmental, community, and financial (revenue and cost) conditions sometimes limit, and sometimes enhance, our ability to meet these expectations.

Clearly, no single mode of transportation will sufficiently serve the growing demand for the mobility of people and goods in Florida. Therefore, Florida must place a stronger emphasis on a multimodal interconnected system if the state is to be well positioned to compete globally in the 21st century. The state's rail system, with its inherent energy efficient and environmentally-friendly characteristics, should play a key and increasing role, in partnership with the highway system and other transportation modes, to meet our future mobility needs.

The major issues to be addressed in the future include capacity constraints and the high capital costs to improve the rail system. The 2006 Florida Freight and Passenger Rail Plan called for FDOT to emphasize the following priorities:

- Eliminate chokepoints and improve corridor operations;
- Improve the interaction between rail, seaports and trucking;
- Upgrade shortline railroads to handle industry-standard cars;

- Improve railyard operations and opportunities for passing sidings; and,
- Respond to the increasing demand for passenger rail service while ensuring continued freight access on shared corridors.

The department will continue with these initiatives while placing a greater emphasis on freight and passenger rail in its overall transportation planning process and investment decisions.

The goals of this plan are organized around the five goals of the 2025 Florida Transportation Plan. These goals are:

- Safety and Security
- Quality of Life and Environmental Stewardship
- Preservation and Maintenance
- Mobility and Economic Competitiveness
- Sustainable Transportation Investments

This plan includes 5 goals and 11 long range objectives as listed in Table 3.1. Also included under the goals and objectives are key implementation strategies for all public and private partners and stakeholders to consider in their planning and programming activities. These strategies constitute key actions and policies recommended by the Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee. (see Appendix A for a complete listing of the committee's recommendations). Finally, this plan also includes implementation actions for the Florida Department of Transportation to take as it plans and invests state funds in Florida's rail system.

It is important to note that although the following goals, objectives, and strategies follow the goal structure of the 2025 Florida Transportation Plan, they are also intended to look forward to 2030 and, as such, will serve as important input to the next update of the 2025 Florida Transportation Plan and the Strategic Intermodal System Plan.

Table 3.1 Summary of 2009 Florida Rail System Plan Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goals	Long Range Objectives	Key Implementation Strategies	FDOT Implementation Actions
<p align="center">Safety and Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce accidents and fatalities • Ensure the rail system is secure • Ensure the rail system can respond to emergencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement rail and rail-highway safety improvements • Coordinate to identify and implement security and emergency response plans • Identify partnerships to fund safety and security improvements • Increase public awareness of rail safety through education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to invest in grade crossing safety improvements • Continue to support the safety inspection program and education/enforcement programs such as Operation Lifesaver • Continue support for the crossing opening and closure program • Develop a safety action plan to address trespass issues • Promote the use of intelligent transportation management technologies • Develop security action plans • Coordinate with appropriate agencies to implement emergency response plans • Extend public outreach efforts to law enforcement agencies and community organizations

Goals	Long Range Objectives	Key Implementation Strategies	FDOT Implementation Actions
<p>Quality of Life and Environmental Stewardship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support responsible land use strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate rail and land use planning at all levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ State level: Integrate statewide growth management and transportation plans ○ Regional level: Encourage regional entities to coordinate and integrate plans in support rail and to advance rail initiatives ○ Local level: Encourage land use plans conducive to sustainable rail-oriented communities and economies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review and implement, where appropriate, land use practices and programs that have been successful in other states and countries to support rail and effectively integrate various modes of transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with DCA and others to integrate long-range growth management and transportation plans and help create a policy framework for land use and infrastructure supportive of rail • Work with local governments to ensure land use decisions near commuter rail hubs are supportive of urban infill and transit-oriented design and development concepts, where appropriate • Evaluate the impacts of rail capacity expansion on communities and the environment

Goals	Long Range Objectives	Key Implementation Strategies	FDOT Implementation Actions
<p>Quality of Life and Environmental Stewardship (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support responsible environmental stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the environmental benefits of rail and integrate environmental decisions into the transportation and land use planning process Inform the public and policy makers about the environmental and other benefits of rail Support the use of carbon-reducing technology for locomotives and encourage participation in the EPA SmartWay program for rail Make explicit the environmental benefits of rail planning and project level assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with other transportation agencies to expand the use of ETDM, where applicable, to identify potential environmental issues

Goals	Long Range Objectives	Key Implementation Strategies	FDOT Implementation Actions
<p>Maintenance and Preservation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve, maintain, and modernize the rail system when public benefit can be demonstrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to invest in infrastructure and service, including assistance for shortline railroads to achieve 286,000 pound car standards • Encourage long-term preservation of rail corridors and rights-of way for future appropriate use • Continue to identify and support rail bridge repair and replacements • Continue to support modernization, including technologies and system management strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with all partners to maintain rail infrastructure, preserve rail service, and modernize the rail system when public benefit can be demonstrated

Goals	Long Range Objectives	Key Implementation Strategies	FDOT Implementation Actions
<p>Mobility and Economic Competitiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in rail capacity improvements to enhance the interstate and intrastate movement of passengers and freight when public benefit can be demonstrated Ensure rail investments to support and spur desired economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support expansion of the multimodal transportation system with rail playing a critical role Promote smooth and efficient transfers of passengers and freight within the rail system and between rail and other modes Preserve new and existing capacity and evaluate abandoned corridors for future needs Strengthen coordination with economic development organizations to ensure rail investments to support and spur desired economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate corridors for future uses during the abandonment process For passenger rail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on development of key commuter rail hub systems and work to ensure supportive transit connections and land uses Focus on development of intercity passenger rail service between commuter rail hubs and key city pairs For freight rail, where public benefits exceed public investment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in freight infrastructure that improves operational efficiency and eliminates critical chokepoints Invest in upgrades to the system to handle industry-standard rail cars Invest in rail projects to ensure continued access to key industrial and intermodal hubs Invest in new rail capacity in under-served areas of the state

Goals	Long Range Objectives	Key Implementation Strategies	FDOT Implementation Actions
<p>Sustainable Investments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve broad public support for investments in the rail system • Maximize the use of state and federal funding programs • Identify new and alternative revenue sources and financial tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote public awareness of and support for rail investments, including the economic, growth management, and environmental benefits of rail • Capitalize on opportunities to capture federal funding for rail projects • Conduct benefit analysis for rail investment and project prioritization decisions • Identify new and innovative revenue sources and financial tools and consider public-private partnerships to fund rail improvements when in the public interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop initial review process for rail projects to seek public input and establish support • Support studies to enable a better understanding of FDOT's investment decisions and the value/cost of investing in a variety of projects, including rail • Expand project assessment tools to prioritize projects and consider benefits of all modes when meeting needs • Ensure benefit/costs analyses include full range of mobility, economic growth, quality of life, environmental, safety, and other factors • Ensure funds are available to respond to investment opportunities, to the maximum extent feasible