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1 888 838 5355**Miami Intermodal Center****News Clip**From: *Miami Today*, Thursday, August 26, 2010Subject: **Fund bid would add Miami-Jacksonville rail run**Provided by: Jenine Spoliansky, Kommunikatz, Inc.
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Fund bid would add Miami-Jacksonville rail run

BY ASHLEY D. TORRES

The Florida Department of Transportation just reapplied for a \$250 million federal grant to extend Amtrak from Jacksonville to Miami to connect the East Coast by rail from New England to Miami and add new city-to-city options.

The department should learn in September if it got funded, said Nazih Haddad, chief operating officer of Florida Rail Enterprise, a division of the department. Planning would begin after approval, with construction in January. Targeted completion would be October 2013.

"An intercity passenger rail has been really missing since the mid-1960s," Mr. Haddad said.

The application seeks funds to reinstate passenger service along Florida's East Coast by revamping the freight-only Florida East Coast Corridor and the connector line that links the corridor to the South Florida Rail Corridor.

These two corridors are to be the route for two daily East Coast trains, one extending Amtrak's national long-distance service and the other from Jacksonville to

Miami, said Drew Galloway, Amtrak assistant vice president.

The trains would use the East Coast corridor from Jacksonville, then transfer in West Palm Beach to the South Florida corridor, where Tri-Rail operates.

The trains are vital "not only for their connectivity with our cities here in Florida, from Miami to Jacksonville, but it is important to adding service for Amtrak's intercity service throughout the country," Mr. Haddad said.

"The other exciting thing," Mr. Galloway said, "is that this service is intended to go right to the Miami Intermodal Center," a hub beside Miami International Airport that now has a new rental car center and is to tie in the airport, Amtrak, Metrorail and Tri-Rail.

The state is one of 77 grant applicants. Improvements of \$123.3 million already scheduled for the South Florida corridor are an in-kind match for the grant. Total project cost is \$373.2 million.

"The investment is going in and I think it will be a very good service," Mr. Galloway said.

If it gets the grant, the department will improve the corridors to increase trains'

top speed from 79 mph to 90, Mr. Haddad said, add short sections of track and revamp signals and controls.

Stations are to be built in Cocoa Beach, Daytona Beach, Fort Pierce, Melbourne, Saint Augustine, Stuart, Titusville and Vero Beach.

The department first sought funds from the Federal Railroad Administration's High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program in October after the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 designated \$8 billion for high-speed and intercity rails. But the \$8 billion went fast and this year Congress added \$2 billion more.

The rail administration rejected the state's first application because it needed additional engineering and environmental assessments, Mr. Galloway said.

As benefits, the grant application cites 2,100 construction, operation and maintenance jobs plus improved capacity and conditions for freight service through the East Coast corridor and for the proposed expansion of a commuter rail to Jupiter.

"Right now," Mr. Galloway said, "it's kind of, may the best corridor win."