

Stuart/Martin Chamber of Commerce- Position Statement

(April 22, 2016) After extensive meetings, discussions, and analysis on both sides of the issue, the Stuart/Martin Chamber Board of Directors voted to Oppose All Aboard Florida. We recognize the potential positive impacts for communities along certain sections of the railroad corridor. However, the impacts to Martin County remain negative and the potential long-term burden of taxpayers is uncertain.

While we appreciate the fact that All Aboard Florida is a Chamber member, their representatives have been very accessible over the course of the project, and they own the real estate they are seeking to improve, our concerns have not been adequately mitigated.

There will be increased traffic delays on the corridor with the addition of up to 32 passenger trains daily. Coupled with the potential for increased freight transport, this will negatively impact those in our community who navigate daily between the east and west sides of the track. Martin Health System and the Martin County School District bus depot will be two of the largest impacted groups, both located on the East side of the railroad. Additional delays for first responders, doctors, nurses and at-risk patients will hinder their ability to provide and receive critical care. The trains will negatively impact students travelling by school bus, causing additional drive time and expense to the school district. We urge All Aboard Florida to partner with local and state governmental organizations and citizen groups to explore and invest in grade separations at intersections which may assist to reduce these concerns.

Safety is another key issue. All Aboard Florida recently delivered the engineering plans at intersections to our local governments for review. While these plans are under consideration, it does not appear that All Aboard Florida will be making safety upgrades at a couple of downtown Stuart intersections that are critical for commerce and traffic in the center of our county. Instead, it appears that it will be up to the local government to make these safety improvements at taxpayer expense.

We acknowledge the efforts by private citizen groups and our County Commission to legally fight the plan in its current form. Although we oppose All Aboard Florida, we believe continued taxpayer outlay of funds to fight the legal battle must be mitigated in order to address the many other County budget shortfalls.

The Stuart/Martin Chamber of Commerce consistently seeks to enhance the business climate, economy, and quality of life in our area. We respect that many of our neighbors both south and north support and believe this project will improve their local communities. We also realize construction of this project is well under way in the Miami to West Palm Beach phase. To us, this project in its current form fails to serve our members and our community and therefore, we oppose All Aboard Florida.