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Marco Island to SW Florida International Airport - 50 Mile Project



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Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
PL 05 The Capitol, 400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis,

We are proposing the building of a futuristic and revolutionary 50-mile-long solar-powered light-rail commuter train system for S.W. Florida. It would be similar to the urban transit system in Portland, Oregon and it would include bicycle and pedestrian pathways with 50 transit stations. It will be an alternative to building new roads and expanding existing roadways in Collier and Lee County. The light-rail line will be built partly along old unused Seminole railroad tracks that run north and south through N. Naples, Bonita Springs, Estero, and Ft. Myers. Our goal is to create a mass transit system with biking and walking pathways to reduce vehicle traffic and to create more livable communities.

The project would require building a 50-mile two-track transportation artery with 50 park and ride transit stations from Marco Island to SW Florida International Airport. It will help reduce traffic and congestion and the train will average 50,000 daily riders with ticket fares from \$1-5, or \$1 for 10 miles traveled. The cost will be \$1.25 billion = \$25 million a mile. This is a similar cost to building toll roads. We are suggesting that the FDOT pay 2/3 of this amount = \$825 million. The \$425 million balance will be paid from sources such as municipal bonds, sponsorship, advertising, donations, and revenue from ticket sales and bike/car share fees. The value of businesses and residences near the artery will rise by 3-5%, which will increase community tax bases. The light-rail train will provide a fast, convenient, and low-cost transportation system to travel through Collier and Lee County and a 50-mile tree-lined linear park that is safe for walking, running, and biking to experience our cities without having to share our time with cars and trucks driving past us at 40-50 mph on our roadways.

The light-rail transit stations will be spaced one mile apart. Each station will have a one-acre park and ride lot with 100 parking spaces available including 20 spaces dedicated to charging electric vehicles at no cost. The parking lots will be on one level and built with concrete posts to support the roof where 2000 solar panels will be installed. Vertical wind power columns will be placed around the structure's exterior. The power created annually at each station will be \$100,000 x 50 stations = \$5 million each year. The clean/free solar and wind electricity will be used to power the commuter trains which will be on regular 15-minute arrival schedules, so passenger waiting times will be short.

There will be a bike-share site at each of the 50 transit stations x 20 bikes at every site = 1000 bikes. An additional 1000 bikes will be installed at 50 locations at beach parking areas, hotels, malls, parks, schools, and public buildings, etc. The bikes will be easily reserved and rented by cell phones and credit cards by the hour, day, week, month or annually and 50% of the bicycles (1000) will be electric. The e-bikes will be charged for free at the stations. In addition, 20 electric cars will be available to rent and recharged for free at each park and ride lot = 1000 cars. Our population is expected to rise by 100% in 50 years. So now is the time to act and make an investment in our transportation future that provides infinitely better choices than driving fossil fuel vehicles everywhere we need to go.

Southwest Florida is known for our warm and sunny winter weather and beautiful beaches, and this has sustained us for decades. But now we have been hit with occasional red tide episodes with dead fish/marine life. This problem is influencing tourists' perceptions which is harming local economies. Our major man-made problem is heavy traffic, and we lack safe and enjoyable pathways for biking, walking, and

running. Tourists want to be outdoors to bike, walk, and run near their hotels and we must improve our communities to appeal to their interests because many cities in the U.S. focus on these activities and they do not have our deadly crowded roadways or unhealthy red tide issues.

The first phase for this new community project would start at the old rail tracks from Bonita Beach Road near Old U.S. 41 and head north. It will pass through Bonita Springs near numerous businesses, hotels, golf courses, medical centers, schools, churches, parks, and large gated communities. It will continue through the Village of Estero and pass close to city landmarks including Coconut Point Mall, Hyatt Place, The Brooks Development, Hertz Corp. Offices, Estero High School, Koreshan State Park, and Estero Community Park, etc. The first phase of this urban pathway will stop at Estero Parkway.

The second phase will start with the building of light-rail tracks and a bike pathway that heads east from the old railroad tracks along the south side of Estero Parkway. It will travel over the 75 Freeway and turn south to connect with Hertz Arena and Miromar Outlets. We will encourage corporations, businesses, and community leaders to become sponsors for this critical effort which will benefit all retailers and businesses located near the tracks and pathway by bringing them additional customers.

The third phase would travel north from Hertz Arena along Ben Hill Griffin Parkway to Florida Gulf Coast University and Gulf Coast Mall. It will go north along Treeline Avenue to connect with S.W. Florida International Airport and head east on Daniels Parkway to JetBlue Park (Boston Red Sox). Additional routes can be created in the future including heading north along the old railroad tracks from Estero Parkway to Daniels Parkway to reach Hammond Stadium (Minnesota Twins), Gulf Coast Medical Center, and South Fort Myers High School and then travel east to S.W. Florida Int. Airport.

The fourth phase for the project travels south from Bonita Beach Rd. along the old railroad tracks to N. Naples at Wiggins Pass Rd. where the tracks end. The light-rail and bike/pedestrian pathway with bike/car share transit stations will continue to Immokalee Rd. near Naples Hospital and Veterans Park. It will go south along Goodlette-Frank Road, crossing Vanderbilt Rd. near Mercato Mall and two Ritz Carlton hotels. It will cross Pine Ridge Rd. near Waterside Shops and then cross Golden Gate Parkway at Naples High School, Coastland Mall, Naples Zoo, and Conservancy of SW Florida. It will end at the Naples Pier. The fifth phase will travel east and then south from Naples to Marco Island.

There are many benefits that will make the project successful. First, it will be cheaper to ride the train or bike to destinations along the route than to drive. Second, it will take less time to travel to where people need to go. Third, it will reduce traffic and congestion. Fourth, our citizens will become more active, fit, and independent by using the train and pathways. Fifth, this light-rail and pathway project will reduce pollution, which will improve water quality. Sixth, S.W. Florida will be recognized for creating a futuristic transit system and that will attract more businesses and tourists to our area.

We look forward to your response to our proposals.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick Post". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Post - Executive Director Southwest Florida Light-Rail and Bike/Pedestrian Pathway Org.