What you think
Rail: An historic promise

Last year, Florida had a chance to make history by constructing what would have been the first U.S.-built high-speed rail network, helping America play catch-up with Europe.

Unfortunately, Gov. Rick Scott jeopardized that promising project, allowing California to snare our $2 billion in stimulus funds and the jobs that went with it. The Florida Department of Transportation’s decision did not kill the bullet that long-distance, transcontinental rail travel could have set in motion.

Enter Florida East Coast Industries (FECI), the private company that has the right to build and operate a passenger train service that would travel between Miami and Orlando. FECI, partnered with Port Lauderdale and West Palm Beach—in three stages—will launch in 2018.

While not true high-speed rail, which would require track redesigns and handiwork on the passenger seat, FECI’s 79 mph trains will reach speeds of up to 125 mph, the ASALowrd Autonomous project will allow this enterprise to intercity passenger rail service without needing massive public money for construction.

If it sounds too good to be true, it’s because the details remain unknown and legislation exists to protect the Florida’s ability to make grandiose claims on its own.

Still, remarkably, it’s the first time we’ve heard a private company express interest in building infrastructure for public transportation.

Think about it: Government has always built highways, airports and sewers. Even the modest history of the railroad is an example of the taxpayer funding large projects.

But Florida East Coast Industries is promising to turn a conventional wisdom on its ear. The presently owned and rail development firm wants to use its ridership to generate the revenues to keep its passenger trains a day as an alternative to the four-lane twin between Miami and Orlando.

While regional skeptics state the cars will compete with those of a bus service at an airline terminal, the firm believes there’s a money to be made on Florida residents, tourists and visitors, who will ride that route, that.Speeds of up to 125 mph in South Florida, and up to 80 mph outside the region. It expects to do so by offering convenient round-trip schedules and amenities such as fine dining and Wi-Fi.

FECI’s role in rail operations—and potential profits—FECI plans meals served on board that feature the finest from local chefs in Miami’s Little Havana, as well as partner restaurants in West Palm Beach.

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ail before the project can move forward.

The first involves obtaining state approval to lease the land along State Road 84—the Florida East Coast tracks between Ocean View and Easton, negotiations are ongoing to determine the site of the Broward County station, and the Florida Supreme Court has not ruled on the major east-west thoroughfare across the tracks of the Broward County Airport, making it possible that the project will fail before it even starts.

Perhaps this biggest concern, though, is the company’s pending application to the Federal Railroad Administration for fund-

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