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RECENT FEDERAL AND STATE ACTIONS FUEL CENTRAL FLORIDA'S TRANSPORTATION FUTURE

Last December, Governor Charlie Crist signed historic transportation legislation that establishes a broad framework for passenger rail in Florida, including plans for commuter and high speed rail in Central Florida. These two regional transportation projects "will define the way we live and the way we work for years to come," said Orange County Commissioner Bill Segal.



Florida High Speed Rail (HSR)

Plans for high speed rail in Central Florida moved into the fast lane in January when President Barack Obama allocated \$1.25 billion in federal funding for Phase I of the Florida High Speed Rail (HSR) line between Tampa and Orlando. The four-year construction project is estimated to cost approximately \$2.6 billion and produce 5,000 jobs.

HSR also is predicted to be an economic stimulator for the region and drive future growth. "Up to 27,500 jobs would be created and nearly \$3 billion worth of new business would occur annually in Orlando if the city is linked with Tampa to the west and Miami to the south by the year 2035," according to a report in the *Orlando Sentinel*, "[Study: High-speed rail to boost jobs.](#)"

"Part of the vision for HSR in Florida is that it will allow seamless connections between travel modes, and will also serve to spur development near the stations, including housing," according to The Florida Rail Enterprise, the agency responsible for planning, constructing, and operating Florida's high-speed rail system. "HSR has the ability to ... greatly contribute to the management of our growth by reducing sprawl and increasing urban densification."

From an architectural design standpoint, Florida Rail Enterprise expects the HSR system to be attractive and inviting in every aspect. "[W]e anticipate architecturally pleasing and iconic stations that will offer wonderful photo opportunities. HSR stations and other project components such as barrier walls [will] offer opportunities to

add a Florida flavor including artwork and other creative additions to the system." Phase I construction is slated to begin in 2011 with the Tampa-Orlando corridor completed by 2014.

SunRail

SunRail is a 61-mile, 17-station fixed rail project that will serve commuters from Volusia County to downtown Orlando and Osceola County starting in 2013. In addition to providing a much-needed transportation alternative to I-4, *considered one of the most congested transportation corridors in the state*, SunRail also is expected to have a substantially positive impact on the regional economy.

The Central Florida Commuter Rail Commission estimates the net economic impact of the construction, operation and maintenance of SunRail in Volusia, Seminole, Orange and Osceola counties over the next 30 years to exceed \$981 million in commercial business sales, \$295 million in household earnings and 11,523 jobs.

The experiences of other cities with commuter rail show that improvement to the region also comes in the form of transit-oriented development, according to the Central Florida Partnership. The potential for future development within a half mile of each of SunRail's 17 planned stations will result in \$4.6 billion in earnings for the construction sector over the next 20 years, produce property values worth nearly \$18.5 billion by 2028, and additional property tax collections estimated at \$158.7 million.

Job creation is another important benefit. "The construction, operation and maintenance of SunRail holds tremendous promise for getting Floridians back to work," according to SunRail. For instance, while the numbers vary by station, the Florida Hospital Station is predicted to directly account for an additional 5,800 permanent jobs.

Construction on Phase I of SunRail is expected to begin in 2011 with passenger rail service starting in 2013.

CTH+A is participating in the design criteria for five high speed rail stations under lead firm HNTB, a nearly century-old civil engineering, architecture, planning and construction management firm known for its infrastructure work on highway, rail and multi-modal transportation projects.

For more information about plans for commuter and high speed rail in Central Florida, visit [SunRail](#), [Central Florida Partnership](#) and [Florida High Speed Rail](#).

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