

## RightTrackFlorida

Weekly Newsletter Update – April 13, 2009

# SPECIAL EDITION!

### *Orlando Magic Show Their Special Support*

The Orlando Magic continue to "lead the way" in their dedicated support of SunRail. At every turn they "have stepped up" and provided visible support "above and beyond the call of duty." Along these lines, Orlando Magic employees at Home Games are proudly wearing SunRail pins to show their individual and collective support of our important work. Special thanks to the Orlando Magic and "every member of their team" with a special wish for good luck as they prepare for the NBA Playoffs, which are "right around the corner."



Left to Right: Dan Savage, Web Coordinator shown with an Orlando Magic Usher; Otis Smith, General Manager of the Orlando Magic; Ali Kicklighter, Office of Communications, Orlando Magic; and Carlos Velez, Group Manager for Sales, Orlando Magic.

### *A Shared Vision for Statewide "Connectivity"*

Later this week, Wednesday, April 15, 2009, SunRail (SB 1212) will be heard before the Florida Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations (TED) Committee. Testimony to the Committee

will be provided by statewide leaders; who will gather in Tallahassee tomorrow to talk about the importance of "connectivity" when it comes to Florida's future.

Invitation have been extended to "key constituencies" that represent the entire State of Florida. This will include, but not be limited to representatives from the Floridians for Better Transportation (FTB); Florida High Speed Rail Authority; the Florida Transportation Commission (FTC); the Florida Economic Development Council (FEDC); the Florida Chamber of Commerce; and the Association of Florida Community Developers; along with a "host" of other Business, Government, and Community Leaders from all across the State of Florida.

***"Committee Hearing"***

Florida Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations (TED) Committee

Wednesday, April 15, 2009

9:45 a.m. until 11:45 a.m.

Room 309, The Capitol

Tallahassee, FL

If you have not done so yet, I urge you to pick up the phone and call or email each of the members on this important committee and ask for their support of [SunRail](#) (SB 1212). All Legislative Offices "count their calls" and, too, "count their emails." So, right now, please call each Senator on the Committee; please call their District Office; and please call their Capitol Office. Plus, a short email from you would go a long way if it were to be received by these Florida Senators.

**Chairman: Senator Mike Fasano (R)**

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### **Senator Christopher L. "Chris" Smith (D)**

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Senator Ronda Storms (R)

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### ***Anti-Commuter Rail Urban Myth "Debunked"***

In a recent entry by a [Lakeland Ledger](#) reporter who blogs, "One of the enduring claims regarding the commuter rail ([SunRail](#)) is that if it were killed, the Legislature would have hundreds of millions of dollars for schools or social programs that are facing 'hits in the current state budget crunch.'" As it turns out, that's a myth that was "debunked" at a legislative hearing on Tuesday of last week. When it comes to the same meeting, the [Orlando Sentinel](#) reports, "It seems that transportation officials use bonds, which means they only have to have a fraction of the project money in hard cash."

### ***Keep Those Calls Coming***

In Wednesday's [Orlando Sentinel](#) blog, it is reported that "Senate Democratic Leader Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee, says his phone has been ringing constantly thanks to [SunRail](#) backers, a day after he tried to 'gut' funding for the commuter rail project ([SunRail](#)) from the state budget." "So next Tuesday, he said, U.S. Reps. Kendrick Meek, D-Miami, Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer plan to meet with the Senate Democratic Caucus to try and massage concerns that the project is diverting money away from their hometown projects. 'It's going to be a full-court press,'" Lawson said.

### ***Emails Are Important Too***

Hundreds of [SunRail](#) supporters have taken advantage of sending a personal message to elected officials through our web site feature at [www.RightTrackFlorida.org](http://www.RightTrackFlorida.org). One particular and very thoughtful response from [Florida Representative Charles Van Zant \(R-Palatka\)](#) is worth "highlighting," because it is "right on message."

He replies "[SunRail](#) is a winner for Florida, to get our economy moving, manage congestion and protect the environment. Rail is the most environmentally friendly way to move goods on land and is more than three times more fuel efficient than the alternative."

"The House of Representatives has consistently supported [SunRail](#) and in fact last year, however, this legislation passed the House but died in the Senate. This year, [SunRail](#), which is in House Bill 7009, has passed its assigned committees of reference and is ready to be heard on the floor."

### ***Email Your Elected Officials***

Haven't contacted Florida elected officials yet? No more excuses, time's running out. Click here, now, and "get 'er done." [www.RightTrackFlorida.org](http://www.RightTrackFlorida.org).

## *North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Endorses [SunRail](#)*

North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) approved a Resolution of Support last week, strongly supporting SB 1212's ([SunRail](#)) indemnity language. "FDOT's duty to indemnify a freight rail operator is capped at \$200 million and any liability above that amount is the responsibility of the freight operator." The North Florida TPO represents significant interests of those in the northeast part of the state, and complements the efforts of Central Florida and the Tampa Bay Region to further commuter rail ([SunRail](#)).

Specifically, it represents the City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA), the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department, Clay County, St. Johns County, St. Augustine Urbanized Area, and the Florida Department of Transportation. It also includes portions of Nassau County, with Ex-officio Members representing Baker, Putnam and Flagler Counties, as well as the U. S. Navy.

## *Tampa Bay Builders Association Says "Go [SunRail](#)"*

Tampa Bay Builders Association sent email correspondence to members of the Florida Senate Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Committee stating that "Now is the time to lead in support of a statewide rail network, a critical part of our state's future economic growth."

"With over 1,300 members, the Tampa Bay Builders Associations is one of the largest organizations representing the residential and commercial construction industry in the nation. Job creation initiatives and regional transportation alternatives are top priorities, and we ask for your support in the passage of Senate Bill 1212 ([SunRail](#))."

## *Florida High Speed Rail Passes Resolution of Support for [SunRail](#)*

The Florida High Speed Rail Authority passed a Resolution of Support for [SunRail](#) on April 2, 2009, as previously reported. The document may now be found on our web site at [www.RightTrackFlorida.org](http://www.RightTrackFlorida.org). It addresses not only the competition for high speed rail funding, but is also in concert with Governor Crist's green house emissions challenge.

The "advancement of [SunRail](#) will demonstrate Florida's commitment to support rail projects, and this type of local and state support is an important criteria for the competition for Stimulus High Speed Rail funding," and it will "support the efforts of Governor Crist's Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, with ambitious goals for reducing statewide green house gas emissions."

## *Disney Says "Yes to [SunRail](#)"*

In a letter to Florida Senators this week, Walt Disney World Company President Meg Crofton voices her support of [SunRail](#). She writes "As president of the largest single site employer in our state, and as a Floridian who grew up here, I am writing today to urge you to vote in favor of [SunRail](#) (SB 1212). I believe that [SunRail](#) will provide critical transportation to literally thousands of our Cast Members and Guests."

This will accomplish great things for our state, including "Generating more than a quarter of a million jobs and \$8.8 billion in new revenue. And this estimate may be quite conservative; in just a year, a nine-mile light rail line in Charlotte (built with money once earmarked for Central Florida) has generated close to \$2 billion in new revenue for that city over the next three decades."

### ***Daytona International Speedway Says "Go SunRail"***

Daytona International Speedway President Lesa Kennedy writes to Florida Senator Evelyn Lynn (R-Daytona Beach) and others, talking about the importance of [SunRail](#). "We feel this project is critical to the economic future of our community, and will benefit all sectors of the community."

"In our business, a good transportation system is vital. Fans attending events at Daytona International Speedway travel to Florida from all over the nation creating a \$1.9 billion dollar annual economic impact for our community and help create over 38,000 jobs. Our studies show that the ease in which fans arrive at our facility is in direct correlation to whether they return for future events. A commuter rail system ([SunRail](#)) would give our fans the ability to travel easily to Volusia County from other areas of the state and encourage them to extend their stays to visit other Florida attractions."

### ***Daytona State College President Endorses SunRail***

Daytona State College President Kent Sharples writes the Volusia/Flagler Legislative Delegation that "It is my understanding that the majority of the cost of the [SunRail](#) will be derived from federal transportation funds and that these funds are earmarked for transportation and cannot be used for other critical areas such as education, health care and criminal justice. The implementation of the [SunRail](#) will ensure that 20 percent of our federal gasoline tax funds will remain in Volusia County."

"Whether it is our working population going to jobs, our students going to various campuses for education and training, our elderly and frail going to medical appointments or visitors exploring central Florida, [SunRail](#) will provide a clean, efficient and effective method of transport."

### ***Westshore Alliance Says "SunRail Important to Tampa"***

The Westshore Alliance, a business-based, membership-driven organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for the nearly 100,000 employees that call Tampa's Westshore District their working home, fully supports "the completion of the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project ([SunRail](#))."

Alliance President Paula Buffa writes to Senators "We view [SunRail](#) as the start of a statewide transit system and the catalyst that will accelerate our transit plans in Tampa Bay. The concerns we have regarding the growing demands on our transportation systems are echoed by partners throughout the state. Pass SB 1212 and let [SunRail](#) become a reality, so we in Tampa Bay and others around the state can celebrate and capitalize upon their success."

### ***League of Women Voters Says "SunRail Good for All of Florida"***

The Orange County League of Women Voters is asking its members to start sending email to Florida Senators slated to take up the [SunRail](#) insurance legislation Wednesday. Here's the email letter that leaders of the Orange County League of Women Voters is asking "folks" to forward on to members of the Florida Legislature.

*"SunRail is a critical fix for Florida, because it will create jobs and lower the cost of living by giving citizens a low cost environmentally friendly way to travel. We need it now! Without it, Florida will lose an opportunity to gain new jobs, some estimate as many as 260,000, and \$8.8 billion in economic benefits. Without it, Florida has a lower chance of being selected for federal funds for High Speed Rail. Without it, Florida can not*

*give its seniors and working citizens a lower cost clean transportation choice. Without it, Florida will have difficulty reducing congestion and improving its air quality, and offering walkable healthy communities. It is time to put politics aside and put working people and seniors first. I am counting on you to pass SB 1212 (HB7009)."*

***Don't Forget!***

Please go to our comprehensive web site, [www.RightTrackFlorida.org](http://www.RightTrackFlorida.org) to find recent reports, talking points, and articles of interest. In addition, please utilize the "Email Your Elected Officials" page to let Governor Crist, Florida's Cabinet Members, and the Legislature that you support commuter rail!

***So You Will Know***

As our Governor and Legislative Leaders continue their work in Tallahassee, I will continue to represent the ***Central Florida Partnership*** "on the ground;" advancing ***SunRail*** and other key issues that will positively impact the Central Florida Region.

***Need More Information?***

Please let us know please if there is any information we may provide to you and your organization as we work enthusiastically toward successfully advancing ***SunRail***.



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