

**RESOLUTION \_\_\_\_\_**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTH LAKE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SUPPORTING THE CENTRAL FLORIDA COMMUTER RAIL PROJECT; REQUESTING OF THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE CERTAIN INSURANCE PROVISIONS; SUPPORTING STUDY OF THE "NORTH AND SOUTHWEST CORRIDORS," FROM DOWNTOWN ORLANDO INTO LAKE COUNTY FOR COMMUTER/LIGHT RAIL FEASIBILITY; AND AUTHORIZING CHAIRMAN TO JOIN OTHER COMMUNITIES IN SUPPORT OF COMMUTER RAIL**

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is undertaking the development and implementation of the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project running from DeLand in Volusia County through Seminole County, and Orange County (including the Cities of Orlando, Maitland and Winter Park) to Poinciana in Osceola County; and

**WHEREAS**, FDOT has reached agreement with CSX Transportation providing for the acquisition of the CSXT's A-Line between Milepost A749.7 near DeLand and A814.1 near Poinciana, a distance of approximately 61.5 miles for the use of the Commuter Rail Project; and

**WHEREAS**, Orange, Seminole, Volusia, and Osceola Counties and the City of Orlando (collectively, the "Local Government Partners") have agreed that the FDOT will be the agency responsible for the design, permitting and construction of the Commuter Rail Project and will be responsible for its operation, management and maintenance for a period of seven years; and

**WHEREAS**, FDOT has agreed to convey the Commuter Rail Project to the Central Florida Commuter Rail Commission (other than the stations, which will be conveyed to the Local Government Partners) after the initial seven years; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commuter Rail Project is the first piece of a larger transit vision for the entire state, providing possible connections to Lake County and beyond, and is consistent with the statewide rail plan, last updated in 2006; and

**WHEREAS**, implementation of the Commuter Rail Project will result in overall social and environmental benefits, improve the quality of life in the state, stimulate economic growth, create new employment opportunities, and serve as a positive growth management catalyst; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commuter Rail Project will greatly benefit all of the citizens of and visitors to the Central Florida region, and is needed in order to relieve traffic congestion, provide transportation opportunities, and provide a relief for I-4 traffic during its reconstruction; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commuter Rail Project will become an integral part of Central Florida's balanced transportation system and, with concurrent development of improvements to roadways and bus transit, will greatly enhance the mobility of the traveling public; and

**WHEREAS**, the liability language requested for the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project is consistent with all 23 commuter rail projects throughout the nation and is already in place in Florida for the operation of South Florida's Tri Rail System – and will be a requirement statewide for all future commuter rail systems; and

**WHEREAS**, financial commitments for the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project have been made by the Local Government Partners and state funding is contained in the Five-Year Work Program of the Florida Department of Transportation; and

**WHEREAS**, Congressman Mica and Congresswoman Brown have pledged to secure more than \$300 million in federal funding for the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project and, if not used for this project, will be lost to rail transit projects elsewhere in the country; and

**WHEREAS**, it is more critical than ever to provide the traveling public with transportation alternatives as gasoline prices are soaring and new federal air quality standards for ozone put Central Florida at risk of being declared a non-attainment area which could result in sanctions being imposed; and

**WHEREAS**, the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project will support the efforts of Governor Crist's Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, established by Executive Order 07-128, with ambitious goals for reducing statewide green house gas emissions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization has established a partnership with the Florida Central Railroad, which leases and operates rail services along the "Northwest Corridor;" and

**WHEREAS**, the successful implementation of the 61.5-mile commuter rail spine, along with a favorable feasibility study of the "Northwest Corridor," could enable a regional commuter rail connection to Lake County, with potential stations in the cities of Tavares, Eustis and Mount Dora; and

**WHEREAS**, a 1999 feasibility study of commuter rail along the "Northwest Corridor" was not favorable during a time Lake County was without fixed-route transit services and without sufficient population numbers to support commuter rail; and

**WHEREAS**, with the establishment of the LakeXpress fixed-route bus service, which serves potential commuter rail station locations, with the addition of significant urban populations in northern Lake County and with the downtown redevelopment plans of Tavares and Eustis, which incorporate commuter rail stations, an updated feasibility study would likely result in a favorable assessment; and

**WHEREAS**, the South Lake corridor of State Road 50 as well as US Hwy 27 is a natural feeder for light rail into the Orlando area, future phases should take into consideration the feasibility of light rail opportunities to relieve traffic congestion on these major highways and to diversify the transportation options in this growing southern hub of Lake County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Lake~Sumter MPO is working with the Lake County Board of county Commissioners, as well as the municipalities of Tavares, Eustis, Mount Dora, South Lake

municipalities, the South Lake Chamber of Commerce and the Central Florida Railroad, to partner with FDOT, Metroplan Orlando, Orange County, the City of Orlando and the City of Apopka to initiate the update of the Commuter Rail Feasibility Study of the "Northwest Corridor;" and

**WHEREAS**, formal actions to initiate said feasibility study have been placed on hold until the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project is approved by the Florida Legislature; and

**WHEREAS**, the South Lake Chamber of Commerce represents the collective membership of its 850+ member businesses in South Lake County on legislative issues; and

**WHEREAS**, connection of Lake County in later phases to the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project would have long-term benefits to the economy and to the quality of life of all of Lake County.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the South Lake Chamber's Board of Directors that:

**Section 1.** The Chamber supports the design, construction, and implementation of the Commuter Rail Project in the Central Florida area; and

**Section 2.** The Chamber requests the Florida Legislature to approve fair and reasonable insurance provisions for the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project as recommended by the Florida Department of Transportation and consistent with the provisions of the Interlocal Agreement; and

**Section 3.** The Chamber supports an updated feasibility study of the "North and Southwest Corridors," with the understanding that formal requests are being withheld until action to approve the Central Florida Commuter Rail Project is taken by the Florida Legislature.

**Section 4.** The Chamber authorizes Chair Merideth Nagel, or her designee or successor, to join in efforts with other communities and chambers throughout the state to support the project and its future benefits for all of Florida.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** by the Chamber Alliance of Lake County this 24th day of November, 2008.

**Merideth Nagel**

Merideth Nagel, Chair

Certified:

*Ray San Fratello*

Ray San Fratello, President