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FDOT Presentation to Reconnecting Lee County

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Presenters

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Summary

The Florida Department of Transportation is updating its Rail System Plan and this offers the best area for Reconnecting Lee County to provide meaningful input. A stakeholder committee has been involved in the rail update, but Southwest Florida is not represented on this committee. It makes sense to encourage that our area be more actively included, particularly since Phase Two of the update has yet to begin.

There are 77 miles of Seminole Gulf rail line running through DeSoto, Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Sarasota and Manatee Counties as part of a long-term lease. Due to the poor condition of much of the line, the maximum speed is 10 mph. Yet this rail line represents a very real opportunity for effective future transit.

There is no funding for light rail in Lee County, but FDOT says that it has “preserved” the corridor within the median of I-75. To consider adding an element of rail for this area, Lee County needs a rail master study. How could rail be realistically considered in Lee County? The Metropolitan Planning Organization needs to get the rail corridor incorporated into its long range plan as a priority, and then an environmental study would be needed to qualify for a new starts program.