



RALPH L. "BUDDY" FLETCHER, *Mayor*

March 20, 2008

The Honorable Frank Attkisson, Chairman
Polk Legislative Delegation
303 House Office Building
402 S Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Chairman Attkisson:

This correspondence is intended to clarify the City of Lakeland's positions surrounding the relocation of the CSX ILC from Orlando to Winter Haven and the peripheral issues of consequence. In this time of debate in the Florida Legislature, we as Lakeland's Mayor and City Commissioners find that many parties are putting forth opinions on the project as a whole, and feel it important that the City of Lakeland's positions be clear and well defined among the Polk Legislative Delegation.

First, the City of Lakeland recognizes the interests of the State of Florida to pursue the development of freight corridors to serve the growing needs of our businesses and residents. We support the state's efforts to improve the freight rail and transport capacity in our state. We do believe that to meet the needs of both our business and residents, the State of Florida should seriously consider planning for the separation of commuter from freight rail corridors to enhance future passenger rail service in urbanized areas and encourage freight rail traffic to be routed through non-urbanized areas

Second, the City strongly supports commuter rail as a progressive and contemporary solution to Florida's transportation challenges and looks to utilize the concept for its own residents when the time is right. The FDOT has stated the current vehicular trips on I-4 today total 100 million annually. In light of the associated transportation constraints, we support the current Central Florida Commuter Rail Transit (CFCRT) proposal and believe it should ultimately connect the urbanized communities of Polk County and the Tampa Bay Region in response to current and future transportation challenges.

Third, the City of Lakeland recognizes the economic development benefits of the CSX ILC in Winter Haven. It is absolutely not our intention to divide the interests of municipalities within our county by becoming an obstacle to the efforts of a neighboring city's economic development. Likewise, we are asking neighboring communities and regional partners to help us protect our city's economic development investments that are close to \$100 million in the redevelopment of our downtown area, by requesting that State of Florida and CSX re-route freight traffic out of downtown Lakeland.

Fourth, while the City's adopted resolution stated that no funds should be released prior to the completion of a comprehensive statewide study, we now recognize this position could jeopardize the Orlando metropolitan area's effort to move forward with the CFCRT system. Given the potential leverage of Federal Transit Administration funds, we would accept a written commitment from the state to re-route freight rail out of our downtown by a date certain as an alternative.

Finally, it is unfortunate that the City of Lakeland has been characterized as "more rural" by some proponents of the CFCRT effort. As such, it is apparently acceptable that our community be on the losing end of this plan. As area legislators, you know firsthand that Lakeland is a growing, economically diverse municipality with a population nearing 100,000 with roughly 250,000 people residing in the immediate service area – not unlike the City of Orlando just two decades ago. We continue to make investments in support of area economic development initiatives, as evidenced by our active endorsement of a new USF campus, and only seek to protect those investments and prevent the destruction of our community by encouraging an I-4 corridor partnership.

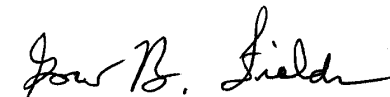
The City of Lakeland is most interested in working with the Legislature, CSX and other local governments and stakeholders to accomplish a project which moves the State of Florida, and its growing municipalities, in a progressive and positive direction that addresses all of our respective concerns in a win-win relationship. It is our strong belief that what we are proposing achieves such, and provides for a long-term solution that will be of great benefit to the people, businesses and visitors of this state.

Please do not hesitate to contact me as Mayor or any City Commissioners for any further clarification or information you may require as the debate concerning this issue continues.


Sincerely,



Ralph L. "Buddy" Fletcher
Mayor



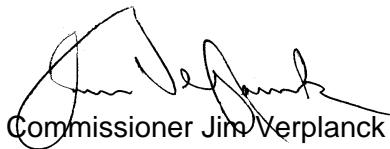
Commissioner Gow Fields



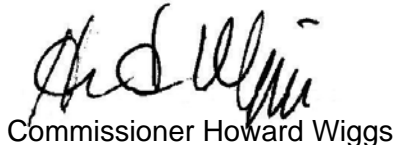
Commissioner Glenn Higgins



Commissioner Troller



Commissioner Jim Verplanck



Commissioner Howard Wiggs



Commissioner Edie Yates

cc: The Honorable JD Alexander
The Honorable Marty Bowen
The Honorable Paula Dockery
The Honorable Seth McKeel
The Honorable Dennis Ross
The Honorable Ronda Storms
The Honorable Baxter Troutman