

RESOLUTION NO. 22-

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, URGING THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO ELIMINATE BRIDGE OPTIONS FROM CONSIDERATION FOR TRAINS CROSSING THE NEW RIVER, AND PURSUE CONSTRUCTION OF A TUNNEL AS THE LOCAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR TRAINS CROSSING THE NEW RIVER IN THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, AND PROVIDING FOR DISTRIBUTION, DIRECTION TO THE CITY'S STATE LOBBYISTS, RESCISSION OF CONFLICTING RESOLUTION PROVISIONS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale is supportive of the regional initiative to develop commuter rail service along the FEC railroad tracks through Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties in an effort to reduce congestion on South Florida roadways and improve mass transit; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale recognizes the challenges that commuter rail service would create at the crossing of the New River if the additional trains used the current bascule bridge to traverse the waterway, particularly the inordinate burden that would befall the marine industries located upriver in that the bridge would be down so frequently as to impose a severe economic hardship on those companies and their customers; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale is aware that the Florida Department of Transportation ("FDOT") is working on a preliminary design and engineering study of commuter rail service and is in the process of selecting a local preferred alternative for a New River crossing; and

WHEREAS, three of the four options under consideration would build a bridge up to three miles long through the center of Fort Lauderdale's downtown and as high as eighty feet above ground level at maximum clearance; and

WHEREAS, such a bridge would bisect Fort Lauderdale's downtown and create undue blight that is contrary to the vision that the City of Fort Lauderdale has created for the area as a vibrant, cosmopolitan, walkable urban center where people can live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS, downtown Fort Lauderdale is the center of an ongoing renaissance that needs to be nurtured, with 13,000 new residential units, 600,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, 1.1 million square feet of office space, and 1,000 new hotel rooms to be

developed over the next 10 years — on top of the phenomenal growth that has already occurred; and

WHEREAS, downtown Fort Lauderdale has seen an explosive increase in population, growing forty-one percent between 2010 and 2020, and is expected to grow an additional forty-five percent by 2025, thus placing the city center in the top two percent of fastest growing places in the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, there have been academic studies illustrating how bridges and overpasses divide communities and contribute to economic decline, and many urban areas such as Boston have decided to redevelop older areas by removing bridges and overpasses in favor of other solutions; and

WHEREAS, a bridge would overwhelm the city's historic district where many of the few remaining early buildings in the community are located, as they would be directly under the maximum height of a new bridge; and

WHEREAS, a bridge would also impact the picturesque Riverwalk, which serves as the cornerstone of the city's arts, science and cultural area, and features the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, the Museum of Discovery and Science, the NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, and the Fort Lauderdale History Center; and

WHEREAS, a train bridge would be disruptive to plans being drawn up by the City of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County to build a joint governmental campus to replace the current aging administration buildings; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale does not believe that the Florida Department of Transportation has sufficiently considered a fourth option of building a tunnel that would allow the commuter rail service to cross under the New River; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale is pleased that engineering consultants for FDOT have lowered their estimated cost of a tunnel from \$3.8 billion to \$1.8 billion but the city remains convinced that this number is high based on conversations with international experts in tunnel construction; and

WHEREAS, even with the current FDOT estimate, a tunnel is now a much more financially viable option when weighed against the negative impacts that would result from the construction of a new bridge;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. The City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, urges the Florida Department of Transportation to eliminate bridge options from consideration for trains crossing the New River, and pursue construction of a tunnel as the local preferred alternative for trains crossing the New River in the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, while continuing to work to reduce the project’s construction costs.

SECTION 2. The City Commission directs the City Clerk to transmit copies of this Resolution to the City’s state lobbyists, Governor Ron DeSantis, Senate President Wilton Simpson, Speaker of the House Chris Sprowls, the Broward League of Cities, the Florida League of Cities, the Broward County Legislative Delegation, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners, the Palm Beach County League of Cities, the Miami-Dade County League of Cities, and any other interested parties.

SECTION 3. The City Commission directs the City’s state lobbyists to advocate against bridge options for trains crossing the New River, and in favor of construction of a tunnel as the local preferred alternative for trains crossing the New River in the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

SECTION 4. That all resolutions or parts of resolutions in conflict herewith, be and the same are hereby rescinded to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 5. That this resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2022.

Mayor
DEAN J. TRANTALIS

ATTEST:

City Clerk
JEFFREY A. MODARELLI