

## Cerabino: Hey, Martin County, why won't you get on board All Aboard?

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By Frank Cerabino - Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Those ingrates in Martin County are ruining the public transportation paradise that could be ours in South Florida.

That's the gist of what All Aboard Florida's lawyers are claiming in their courtroom efforts to get \$1.75 billion in tax-exempt bonds to create a passenger rail service that would connect Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach to Orlando.



Frank Cerabino

“While Martin County residents may not need modern passenger rail service, Orange, Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade County residents and visitors most certainly do,” the AAF lawyers argued in a federal court document filed Friday. “They suffer every day from badly congested roads, and an equally overburdened aviation system, and are in dire need of the alternative the project provides.

“Nonetheless, because some of Martin County's 153,000 residents are hostile to the rail line which existed long before they did, their local leaders are now seeking to prevent the millions of people who would benefit from the project from obtaining it.”

It's all your fault, you Martin County stick-in-the-muds.

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Why are you so hostile? Shouldn't you be happy that 32 passenger trains a day would be whooshing through your communities at about 100 miles an hour without making any stops in your county?

Show a little distant community spirit.

Because like those lawyers said, we here in South Florida are in "dire need" of a modern passenger rail service.

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We only have Tri-Rail, which runs 25 trains a day, stopping at 18 South Florida stations — not just Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach — all at a maximum one-way fare of \$6.90, about one-quarter of the projected price of an All-Aboard Florida ticket between its South Florida stops.

You can't expect us to keep taking those convenient, half-empty trains. Same thing goes for the cheaper existing Amtrak service between South Florida and Orlando.

We are in dire need here in Palm Beach County for another passenger rail service we won't use, and we're sick of you Martin County people trying to get in our way of not using it.

So I'm really happy that the AAF lawyers are asking a judge to make Martin County taxpayers post a \$50 million bond to cover the economic damages the rail project would suffer if Martin County's legal efforts are successful in delaying the U.S. Department of Transportation from authorizing tax-exempt bonds for the

project.

All Aboard Florida, which touts itself as a private venture, has called those tax-exempt bonds a “linchpin” to a project that has already benefited from \$9.3 million in federal highway money for track upgrades.

Even so, the project will continue, with or without the tax-exempt bonds, company leaders have maintained.

It will just be more expensive, they say.

And so it’s only fitting that those car-driving Luddites in Martin County ought to be ordered to cover for a “meaningful part of the substantial additional financing costs” of the train project if their county’s lawsuit achieves its goal of delaying the bond approval.

“A bond of \$50 million would cover between 12-18 percent of those costs, and is the minimum that should be established,” the AAF lawyers wrote.

And I hope a judge agrees. Martin County residents need to learn a lesson. They need to know there’s a price to pay for those who “thwart the public interest,” as the AAF lawyers have contended.

So shut up, and put up, Martin County. We’re tired of you thwarting the public interest in a South Florida project we’re not interested in.