



Marine Industries Association of South Florida

Officials vow to protect marine industry at New River bridge test deviation meeting

FORT LAUDERDALE -- U.S. Representative Lois Frankel and Broward MPO Director Greg Stewart vowed that their administrations would not put the marine industry at risk at a meeting last week with stakeholders in All Aboard Florida.

Other attendees included representatives from the Marine Industries Association of South Florida, U.S. Coast Guard, Broward County Commission, Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, All Aboard Florida and Florida East Coast Industries. The meeting was held to get an update on the railroad test regulations being implemented at the FEC rail bridge over the New River.

Greg Stuart, executive director of the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization, promised that his organization will not allow for the degradation of the bridge and the capacity of the marine facilities west of it. "We recognize the need to improve it if we want to add more," he told attendees.

Frankel commended the Coast Guard for their efforts and vowed to stay committed to the marine industry and finding a solution. "I'm optimistic we can do it," she said.

The test regulations currently in place require that the bridge not be closed more than 60 minutes combined for any 120-minute time period. If the test regulations are successful, the Coast Guard has indicated they will become permanent.

Coast Guard Bridge Administrator Barry Dragon noted that communication has been the biggest problem in the past and that the regulations, which require various means of communication (which can be found [here](#)) have helped them get a handle on it. A review of their logs shows that since the test regulations began, the average time the bridge has been down is 1 hour and 45 minutes in a 12-hour period for 17 minutes each time.

Representatives from All Aboard Florida and Florida East Coast Industries, the parent company of All Aboard Florida, said their goal is predictability and communication. Starting in 2017, they estimate that AAF's 32 trains will add 12 minutes to every hour the rail bridge is closed between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m., totaling an additional 3 hours during the day, and that they will implement a website and/or an app that will communicate the times of the closings.

"We both want to grow and grow successfully," said Jose Gonzalez, senior vice president of Florida East Coast Industries.

They also discussed short- and long-term initiatives to move freight west to U.S. 27. FEC reported that 8 of the 14 trains that currently run through the county, mostly at night, could eventually be diverted to the CSX tracks. MIAASF pointed out that this would help car traffic but the trains still would cross the New River at another point.

All agreed that in the next 5-7 years, growth in Florida combined with freight and additional commuters on the FEC corridor would require a second, higher bridge over the New River to elevate commuter trains, ensure predictability and protect the marine industry. Both the MPO and Frankel committed to finding funding for this.



From left: Broward MPO Executive Director Greg Stuart, U.S. Representative Lois Frankel and MIASF Executive Director Phil Purcell at last week's meeting.

MIASF was created in 1961 to focus on the sound growth of the marine industry in the region. Today, the association continues to promote and protect the \$11.5 billion industry in South Florida. For more information call [954-524-2733](tel:954-524-2733) or visit www.miasf.org