

a report on

FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION TRENDS AND CONDITIONS



TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM Rail Facilities - Freight and Passengers



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Transportation Systems: Rail Facilities - Freight and Passengers

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Introduction

As in many states, Florida's rail transportation has been a critical element in the historical development of the state and continues to play an important role in meeting both passenger and freight transportation needs. To ensure that the rail system can meet the needs of the future, the State of Florida is currently in the process of evaluating future needs and planning enhancements of the system. Historically, the provision of rail services was predominantly a private-sector initiative with modest involvement of the public sector. However, in an era of resource and transportation right-of-way constraints, there has been a growing public sector involvement in exploring possible ways for partnerships between the public and private sector in providing rail services that can produce mutual benefits and serve the public interest. Rail rights of way remain valuable linear transportation corridors and rail is increasingly appreciated as an energy efficient mode of travel.

Florida's rail system is integral to the overall transportation network as people and products that travel by rail access and egress the rail system at various stations and terminal facilities. In addition, the rail system interfaces with the roadway system at 5,250 at-grade crossings in Florida.

The Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) is a statewide network of high-priority transportation facilities including many of the state's freight and passenger rail terminals. Inclusion of elements of the rail system in the SIS provides state recognition of rail's importance and enables the possibility of state funding for various projects on the rail system. Currently 1,700 miles of the freight rail system are on the SIS and another 400 miles are on the emerging SIS. The geographic location and the status of Florida as an international trade gateway underlie the importance of the rail freight system to the economy in the state.

The vast majority of Florida's rail freight facilities are components of the SIS.

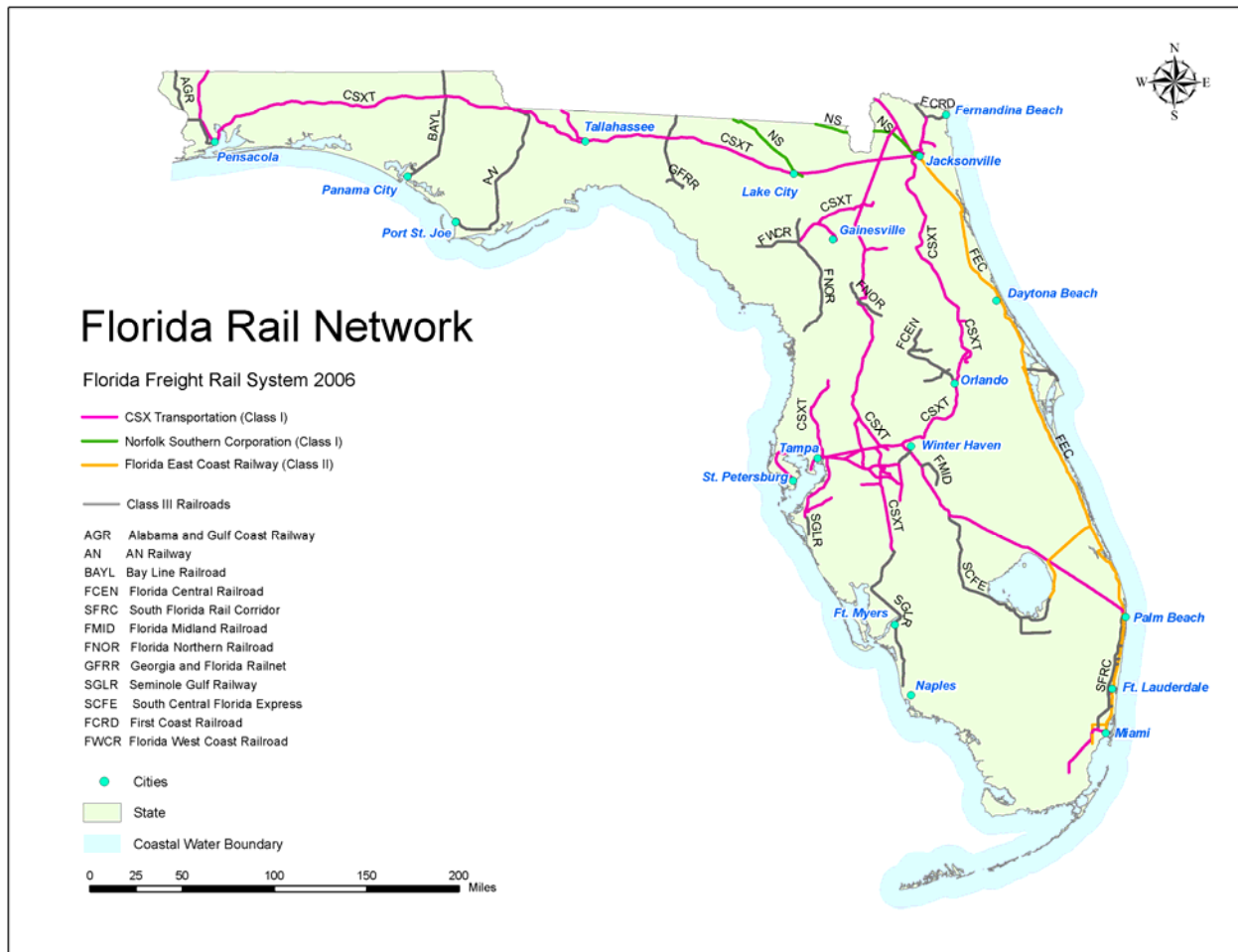
Florida's Rail System

The Florida rail system is comprised of 15 line-haul railroads and terminal or switching companies. The line-haul carriers range in size from fairly small intrastate railroads to members of large rail systems extending from Florida into Canada. Florida's railroad system consists of 2,786 miles of track, of which the State of Florida owns 81 miles. As the largest operator, CSX Transportation (CSXT) owns more than 54 percent of the statewide track mileage. Amtrak currently operates three main passenger routes (Auto Train, Silver Meteor, and Silver Star) through Florida. The Miami-Dade Metro rail system

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and the TECO streetcar system in Tampa are exclusively urban transit rail facilities and are not included in the mileage totals.

Figure 1 - Florida Rail System Map



Source: FDOT Rail Office, *The 2006 Florida Rail Plan*.

A total of 3,066 miles of railroads are operated in Florida. CSX Transportation is the largest carrier with 1,651 Florida route miles.

Railroads are classified into three classes: Class I, Class II and Class III. There are two Class I railroads, CSX Transportation (CSXT) and Norfolk Southern Railway (NS). In 2009, CSX, Florida's largest railroad, operated 1,651 route miles in Florida. NS operated 149 route miles in Florida. Florida East Coast Railway Company (FEC) is the only Class II railroad in the state. It serves the east coast of Florida with its main line running from Jacksonville to Miami. As the

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second largest railroad in Florida, it operates 386 route miles. All the remaining Florida railroads are Class III railroads (Figure 1). Table 1 itemizes the mileage of the various rail systems in Florida.

Table 1 –Railroads Miles in Florida, 2009

<i>Railroad</i>	<i>Miles of Railroad Operated in Florida</i>		<i>Percent of Florida Rail System Owned/Leased</i>
	<i>Owned/Leased</i>	<i>Trackage Rights</i>	
Alabama and Gulf Coast	45		1.5%
Apalachicola Northern	96		3.1%
Bay Line	70		2.3%
CSX Transportation	1,651	130	53.8%
First Coast Rail Road	32		1.0%
Florida Central	94	10	3.1%
Florida East Coast	386		12.6%
Florida Midland	37	10	1.2%
Florida Northern	114		3.7%
Florida West Coast	3		0.1%
Georgia and Florida RailNet	45		1.5%
Norfolk Southern	149	53	4.9%
Seminole Gulf	103		3.4%
South Central Florida Express	158		5.2%
South Florida Rail Corridor	81		2.6%
Terminal Companies	2		0.1%
Totals	3,066	203	100%

Source: FDOT Rail Office, *The 2010 Florida Rail System Plan – Investment Element*.

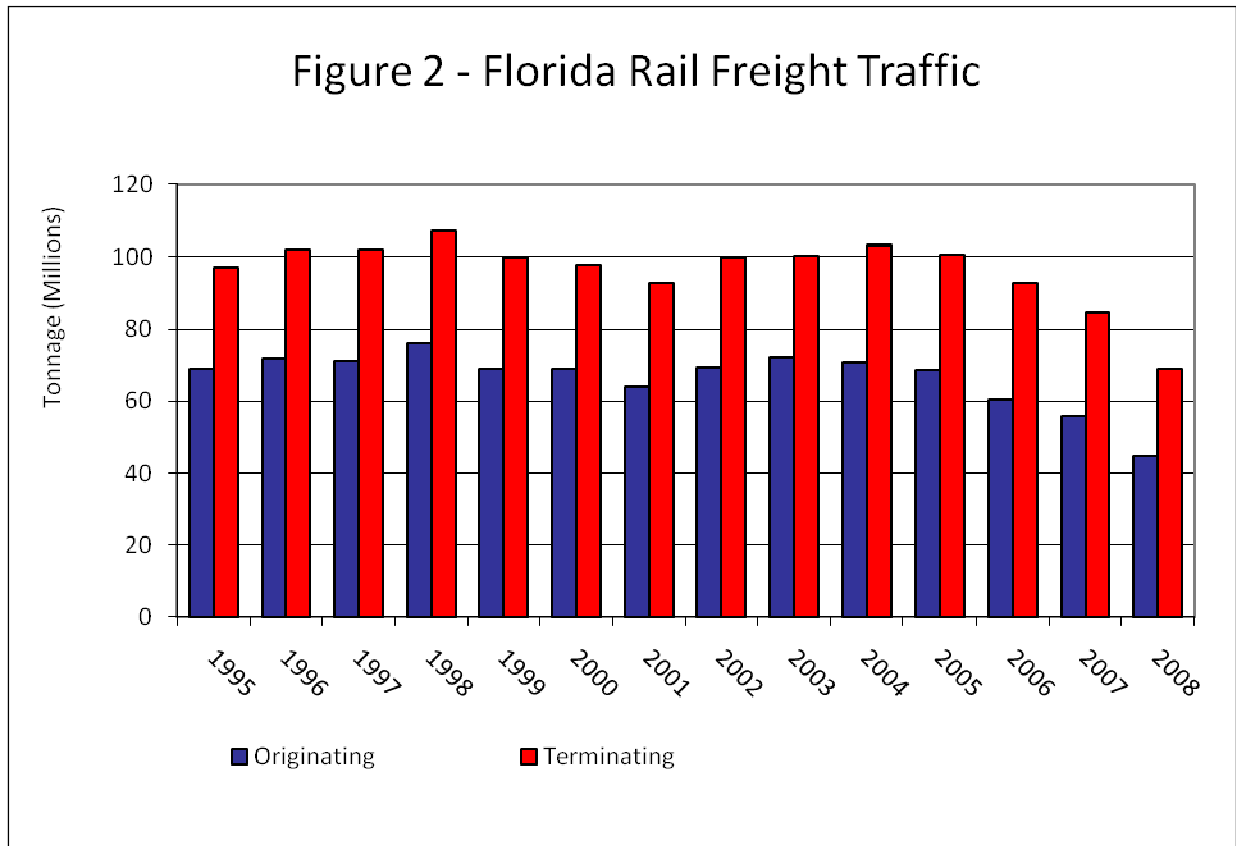
Rail Freight

Florida's rail system handles a variety of freight traffic. Bulk commodities and short-haul movements dominate the system. Major commodities moved in bulk and containers include phosphates and fertilizers, retail products, food and agriculture products, paper and fiber, automobiles, fuels and construction materials.

As shown in Figure 2, Florida's rail freight traffic has experienced slight annual fluctuations over the past 10 years. In 2008, Florida's freight railroads moved more than 83 million tons of freight, down from 108 million in 2006. This includes totals of inbound, outbound, through, and local freight tonnage. Florida is unique among states in that intrastate tonnage contributes nearly half of the total. Nearly 43 percent of activity is inbound freight, 15 percent is outbound freight and approximately 2 percent is through traffic. While rail

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freight volumes have remained relatively stable in recent years, the product mix and concentration of rail freight activity are continuously changing.



Source: FDOT Rail Office and Association of American Railroads.

Note: Originating and terminating categories each count intrastate tonnage resulting in the sum of originating and terminating being larger than the reported total freight volume.

Table 2 depicts the rail freight tonnages originating and terminating in Florida in 2008 by commodity classification. The total of 106 million tons differs little from recent year totals. One commodity group, nonmetallic minerals, dominates the traffic statistics, accounting for 55 percent of total originating and terminating tonnage. In the distant second place is chemical or allied products (14.3 percent), and the third-ranking commodity is coal (8.5 percent).

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Table 2 – Florida Rail Freight Traffic, 2008

Commodity	Tonnage (1,000,000)			Percent of Total
	Originated	Terminated	Total	
Farm products	0.02	1.30	1.32	1.2%
Coal	0.00	8.96	8.96	8.5%
Nonmetallic Minerals; Except Fuels	25.10	33.03	58.14	55.0%
Food or Kindred	1.94	3.55	5.50	5.2%
Lumber or Wood Products; Except	0.41	1.43	1.84	1.7%
Pulp, Paper, or Allied Products	2.10	1.43	3.53	3.3%
Chemical or Allied	8.37	6.75	15.12	14.3%
Transportation equipment	0.10	1.72	1.82	1.7%
Mixed shipments	3.67	5.87	9.54	9.0%
Total	41.71	64.04	105.77	100.0%

Source: FDOT Rail Office, *The 2010 Florida Rail System Plan – Investment Element*.

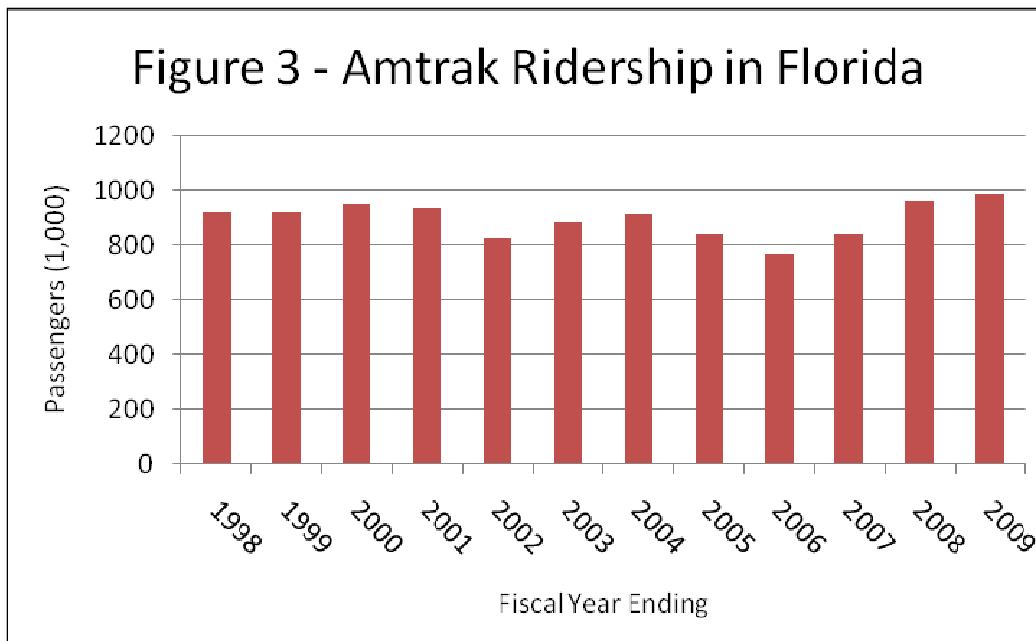
Note: Summaries by weight, unit type, and direction that are found in this Section are based upon the 2008 Surface Transportation Board Carload Waybill Sample.

In 2008, Florida's freight railroads moved more than 83 million tons of freight, down from 108 million in 2006.

Rail Passengers

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) continues to operate conventional intercity rail passenger service in Florida. As shown in Figure 3, rail passenger ridership has fluctuated since 1998, but grown since 2006 to its highest level in 2009. Florida's routes are among the most heavily used on the national Amtrak system. A variety of Amtrak services link Florida with the Northeast and the West. Both the Silver Meteor and the Silver Star, the two conventional passenger trains serving the Northeast, connect New York, Orlando and Miami through different routes and schedules. To the West, the Sunset Limited operated tri-weekly between Los Angeles and Orlando via New Orleans, Pensacola, and Jacksonville; however, since Hurricane Katrina in August 2004, this service has been rerouted east of New Orleans.

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Source: Amtrak

Amtrak operates an Auto Train service that runs daily between Lorton, Virginia and Sanford, Florida, a distance of over 800 miles. The journey takes over 16 and a half hours for passenger vehicles and their owners. The passengers ride in super-liner coaches and sleepers while the vehicles are secured in auto carrier cars. In 2009, Amtrak's Auto Train carried 111,373 vehicles. Table 3 shows Amtrak usage levels of the top 15 train stop locations in Florida. The Auto Train endpoint location in Sanford, Florida exhibited the highest number of boardings in the state with 232,955 passengers.

Besides train services, Amtrak operates its Thruway bus service to provide connections to points not served by rail. The service provides coordinated train-bus service with guaranteed connections and through fares and ticketing. Connections with commuter rail and transit are available between West Palm Beach and Miami.

Other passenger rail systems in Florida include urban commuter systems designed to serve daily person travel. Tri-Rail commuter trains cover a 72-mile route between West Palm Beach and Miami, serving 18 stations and carrying nearly 4.2 million annual passengers in 2009. This system, owned by the Florida Department of Transportation, shares tracks with both Amtrak and freight trains. Other forms of rail passenger services in Florida include the 22-mile Metro-Dade rail transit service in Miami-Dade county, the 2.5 mile Skyway Express and the Trolley operating in Jacksonville, and a 2.3 mile rail trolley system which began operating in Tampa in 2002.

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Several urban areas in Florida are exploring or planning local rail transit systems. Currently the Florida Department of Transportation is working with local governments in central Florida on a major initiative to reroute freight traffic and initiate commuter rail service on the CSX corridor that parallels Interstate 4 and serves downtown Orlando. The Central Florida Commuter Rail Project, SunRail, received approval from Federal Transit Administration to advance into preliminary engineering in Spring 2007 and progress on that system continues with state legislative actions to support the project in Fall 2009. Other communities continue to aggressively explore the prospect of using existing or developing new rail or guideway corridors to meet future travel needs. The current status of local initiatives is best determined from local sources including transit authorities, local FDOT offices, and the local metropolitan planning organizations.

Table 3 - Top 15 Florida Amtrak Stations by Ridership

Station	Boardings and Alightings
Sanford (Auto-Train Station)	232,955
Orlando	145,775
Miami	110,857
Tampa	81,582
Jacksonville	65,051
West Palm Beach	54,119
Fort Lauderdale	49,609
Kissimmee	41,054
Hollywood	34,532
Winter Park	30,948
Deland	27,506
Deerfield Beach	25,965
Winter Haven	22,881
Lakeland	22,212
Sebring	16,982
Total Florida Boardings	988,303

Source: Amtrak

The State of Florida is also working to establish the nation's first high speed rail line from downtown Tampa to Orlando International Airport. This rail line is currently in design and is expected to be operational by 2015. Figure 4 shows the intended alignment as well as the passenger stops being planned. In the figure, the Lakeland stop has not yet been chosen and so only one of the Kathleen Road or USF/Polk Parkway station sites will be used. Further information on Florida High Speed Rail can be found online at:

<http://www.floridahighspeedrail.org/>.

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Figure 4 - Florida High Speed Rail Map



Source: FDOT Florida Rail Enterprise.

The State of Florida has been actively planning for the future needs of the rail system. In 2009, FDOT released *The Florida Rail System Plan: Policy Element* which details a vision for the rail system as well as the goals, objectives, and strategies necessary to achieve this vision. *The Florida Rail System Plan: Investment Element*, released in late 2010, gives a more detailed look at the passenger and freight rail services in Florida, identifies and prioritizes specific rail needs in the state, and discusses the steps needed to fund these initiatives. For the most current information on FDOT rail planning and to view these reports, see the FDOT rail website: <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.shtm>.

Conclusions

With ever increasing mobility needs, it is imperative that the transportation process evaluate and consider alternatives to automobiles and trucks in moving goods and people. Rail transportation has played a critical role in Florida's development and growth and remains an important transportation option for Florida's citizens, businesses and tourists. The Florida Department of Transportation has worked with its partners to provide mobility solutions through its statewide Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). This SIS Strategic Plan acknowledges the vital role of rail in meeting travel needs.

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Growth in population and accompanying economic activity will result in continued demand for transportation of persons and freight. Responding to these needs will include relying on existing rail services and possibly new rail technologies and applications to help meet evolving travel needs. One can anticipate continued initiatives to leverage existing and perhaps future rail corridors to help meet freight and passenger travel needs in coming decades.

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