

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 1115 CS

South Florida Regional Transportation Authority

SPONSOR(S): Greenstein

TIED BILLS: HB 1117

IDEN./SIM. BILLS: SB 2078 (s)

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Transportation Committee	15 Y, 0 N, w/CS	Pugh	Miller
2) Local Government Council		Camechis	Hamby
3) Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Committee			
4) State Infrastructure Council			
5)			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (Authority) was created in 2003 to broaden the scope of the old Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority (Tri-Rail) and to develop regional public-transit planning for Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties. This bill makes a number of significant changes to the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority Act. Specifically, the bill:

- Provides that the state will not limit or alter the rights vested in the Authority to sell revenue bonds until all the bonds issued by the Authority are paid off and discharged.
- Clarifies the requirement that each of the three counties dedicate and transfer \$2.67 million annually to the Authority for capital funding, as well as \$4.2 million annually from each county for operating costs, by specifying that the funds must be dedicated prior to October 31 of each fiscal year.
- Deletes the provision allowing three counties to collect a \$2 fee on initial and renewal vehicle registrations within their boundaries upon approval by referendum.
- Specifies that at least \$45 million of a state-authorized, local-option, recurring funding source available to Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties must be directed to the Authority to fund capital, operating, and maintenance expenses. This funding may only be dedicated to the Authority if all three counties impose the local-option funding source.
- Eliminates the operating and capital funding contributions from the three counties when the proposed \$45 million becomes available; however, those local contributions resume if the new funding ceases.
- Extends from December 31, 2009, to December 31, 2015, the date on which the local capital funding for the Authority ceases if no federal matching funds have been received.
- Deletes references to "commuter rail" to reflect the authority's broader transit mission.
- Provides the Authority an additional \$7.9 million each year, in total, from Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties to pay operating expenses.

This document does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill sponsor or House of Representatives.

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DATE: 4/6/2006

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Ensure Lower Taxes: The bill eliminates the \$2 fee on initial and renewal registrations of vehicles, which has not been implemented, in Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

CURRENT SITUATION

In an attempt to ease the disruptions created for commuters while six-laning I-95 in the mid-1980s, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) purchased an 81-mile rail corridor from CSX Transportation, Inc., (CSXT) for \$264 million and began building a commuter train system. Under terms of the sale, CSXT continued to operate its freight trains in the corridor; maintain the tracks, buildings, and signaling; and dispatches all trains using the tracks--its own, Tri-Rail, and Amtrak trains. In 1989, the Legislature passed the Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority Act as Part 1 of Chapter 343, F.S., creating a commuter railroad to serve Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.

In 2003, the Legislature enacted SB 686¹, which amended ch. 343, F.S., to reconfigure the Tri-Rail Commuter Rail Authority as the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (the Authority). Supporters of the legislation said that a transportation authority, rather than a commuter rail system, would have a better opportunity to draw down federal matching dollars for public transit projects.

The Authority is empowered to construct, finance, and manage a variety of mass transit options, not just commuter rail, as an integrated system. It has numerous statutory powers and responsibilities, including the power to acquire, sell, and lease property; to exercise the power of eminent domain; to enter into purchasing agreements and other contracts; to enforce collection of system rates, fees, and other charges; and to approve revenue bonds issued on its behalf by the State Division of Bond Finance.

The Authority is governed by a nine-member board comprised of:

- A county commissioner from each of the three counties, selected by his or her peers;
- A citizen selected by each county commission who must live within the county he or she is representing, be a registered voter, and, insofar as practicable, represent civic and business interests of the community.
- One of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) district secretaries who is responsible for one or more of the counties within the Authority's boundaries. That could be either the District 4 secretary (whose region includes Broward and Palm Beach counties) or the District 6 secretary (whose region includes Miami-Dade). At this time, the FDOT District 6 secretary serves on the Authority.
- Two citizens appointed by the governor who live in different counties within the Authority's jurisdiction but not the same county as the FDOT district secretary. They also must be registered voters.

The 2003 legislation also required each of the three counties served by the Authority to dedicate funding of \$2.67 million annually, no later than August 1, 2003. The potential sources of this dedicated funding include:

- Local-option fuel taxes;
- Each county's share of the local ninth-cent fuel tax;

¹ ch. 2003-159, L.O.F.

- Proceeds of a \$2 annual fee for registration or renewal of registration of each vehicle licensed in this state and registered in one of the three counties, if approved by a county referendum; or
- Other non-federal funds.

In addition, each county must provide annual funding of at least \$1.565 million for operations. These local funding requirements are repealed if the Authority does not obtain federal matching funds by December 31, 2009. A fiscal analysis of the 2003 legislation indicated the \$2 fee new and renewal registration fee would generate an estimated \$8 annually for the Authority; however, the fees have not been imposed.

Meanwhile, the Authority is continuing to improve the existing commuter rail system with its 18 stations. Since 1995, the major project has been the \$451-million "Double Track Corridor Improvement Program," which makes improvements to the existing 72-mile route and builds a second mainline track parallel to the existing track. About \$334 million of the project cost has been funded by the Federal Highway Administration through direct grants; FDOT paid the rest. All but 2 miles of the double-tracking has been completed, and the Authority recently added additional trains and introduced new schedules that have trains leaving the stations every 20 minutes during morning and evening rush hours.

Last year, the commuter train system was averaging about 8,000 riders a day, but the near-completion of the double-tracking, plus better on-time reliability and more scheduled runs, has boosted daily ridership averages in 2006 to nearly 10,000, according to this bill's supporters.

The Authority continues to seek a significant dedicated funding source to complete the commuter train system and to implement its long-range transit plans. Dedicated funding is necessary for the Authority to issue revenue bonds in order to obtain federal transit grants that typically require a 50-50 match. Under the state's participation in the federal "New Starts" transit program, a local match of 25 percent is required, while the state provides the 25 percent and the federal government 50 percent.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES

The bill makes a number of significant changes to the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority Act in ch. 343, F.S. These changes are briefly described as follows:

- Clarifies that the three counties must dedicate and transfer not less than \$2.67million annually to the Authority for capital expenditures prior to October 31 of each fiscal year.
- Raises from \$1.565 million annually to \$4.2 million annually the amount of money each of the three counties must contribute to the Authority to pay its operating expenses, generating an additional \$7.9 million annually for the Authority in operating funds.
- Deletes the \$2 fee on initial and renewal vehicle registrations within the three-county area. The fee, which must be approved by voter referendum, has not been approved in any of county.
- Specifies that at least \$45 million of a state-authorized, local-option, recurring funding source available to Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties must be directed to the Authority to fund capital, operating, and maintenance expenses. This funding may only be dedicated to the Authority if all three counties impose it. A potential source of funding is the local-option rental-car surcharge which is the subject of other currently filed bills (HB 301 CS and SB 2632).
- Eliminates the operating and capital funding contributions from the three counties when the proposed \$45 million becomes available, but those local contributions would resume if the new funding ceases.
- Specifies that the state will not limit or alter the rights vested in the Authority to sell revenue bonds until all the bonds issued by the Authority are paid off and discharged
- Extends by six years, to December 31, 2015, the date on which the local capital funding for the Authority ceases if no federal matching funds have been received. Section 343.58(1) , F.S., which specifies the local capital funding sources, is repealed under that circumstance.
- Deletes obsolete phrases and makes clarifying changes. Key among them is deleting references to "commuter rail," so that the Authority's broader area of responsibility is to plan,

develop, operate, and fund a transit system. This reflects the Authority's plans to operate an integrated system of public transportation options.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends s. 343.54, F.S., to revise obsolete language.

Section 2: Amends s. 343.55, F.S., to provide that that state will not limit or alter this section related to Authority revenue bonds until all the bonds issued under this section are paid off and discharged.

Section 3: Amends s. 343.58, F.S., to modify timing of county contributions to the authority; deletes \$2 initial and renewal registration fee for vehicles registered in the three counties; lays groundwork for Authority to receive certain, new local-option funding from the three counties; raises the counties' contributions to the Authority's operating expenses; provides for cessation and resumption of county contributions; extends repeal date to December 31, 2015 for county capital contributions.

Section 4: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2006.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues: As a state entity, the Authority could receive an additional \$7.9 million in operating funds each year because of the proposed increase in the current operating contributions made by the three counties, from \$1.565 million annually to \$4.2 million. In subsequent years, if HB 301 CS or SB 2632 creating a local-option rental-car surcharge becomes law, and Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties impose it, the Authority could receive at least \$45 million a year for all of its expenses. If that occurs, the existing dedicated sources of funding the three counties contribute to the Authority would be repealed.

2. Expenditures: None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues: None.

2. Expenditures: This bill increases from \$1.565 million annually to \$4.2 million annually the amount of money Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties each must contribute to the Authority to pay its operating expenses. If HB 301 CS or SB 2632, which create a state-authorized local-option recurring funding source, becomes law and is implemented by the three counties, the existing dedicated sources of funding the three counties contribute to the Authority is repealed.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR: If the Authority is successful in improving and promoting public transit in the three-county region, motorists and commercial carriers may benefit due to trips being diverted from the highways, and residents who do not drive may have access to more-affordable and dependable transportation.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS: Section 3 of this bill includes a provision specifying, "At least \$45 million of a state authorized, local-option recurring funding source available to Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties shall be directed to the authority to fund its capital, operating, and maintenance expenses. The funding source shall be dedicated to the authority only if Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties each impose the local-option funding source." The bill's supporters say their intent is to tap into revenues from a proposed local-option rental-car surcharge fee that is the subject of

different legislation (HB 301 CS and SB 2632). They estimate that the \$2-a-day surcharge on most car rentals would generate at least \$48 million each year if imposed by the three counties.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision: Not applicable because this bill does not appear to: require the counties or cities to spend funds or take an action requiring the expenditure of funds; reduce the authority that cities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with cities or counties.

2. Other: None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY: The Authority is subject to ch. 120, F.S., but none of the provisions in the bill as currently drafted appear to require rulemaking.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS: None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES

At its April 4, 2006, meeting, the Transportation Committee adopted without objection one amendment that replaced the original \$50 million in annual recurring state funds directed to the Authority with the provision for a minimum \$45 million, state-authorized, local-option, recurring funding source for the Authority if imposed by Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties. The committee then voted 15-0 in favor of the bill and reported it as a CS.