



Legislation Text

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TO: Mayor and Commissioners
FROM: John Morgan, Environmental Services Director
THROUGH: Chief Neal de Jesus, Interim City Manager
DATE: January 17, 2017

DISCUSSION OF TRESPASS PREVENTION STRATEGY FOR THE FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILROAD TRACKS

Recommended Action:

Staff is seeking direction regarding the railroad right-of-way trespass prevention best practices and infrastructure improvements best suited for the City of Delray Beach.

Background:

Nationwide, trespassing on a railroad's private property and along railroad right-of-way is a leading cause of rail-related fatalities. Many trespassing deaths occur each year, the vast majority of which are preventable. In most of the States, trespassing is seen as a property crime and a general offense, with many States specifically prohibiting trespassing on railroad property; Florida is one of them.

Thankfully, in Delray Beach injuries and fatalities due to railroad right-of-way trespass are not common. However, there is no doubt that railroad operating systems are hazardous/dangerous. Because the general public is generally not aware of the dynamics of train movements, many trespassers put themselves at risk by not using properly designated crossing locations. Sadly, on August 3, 2016, there was a trespass related fatality in Delray Beach. Instead of using the dedicated pedestrian crossings on East Atlantic Avenue, a couple decided to take a shortcut and cross the railroad tracks. Unfortunately, one of the individuals tripped and fell on the track north of the pedestrian crossing; and was struck and killed by an oncoming train.

The City is also facing new challenges associated with additional and more intense railroad traffic. The Brightline, a new passenger fast rail system initiative by All Aboard Florida will launch service between Miami and West Palm Beach in mid-2017, with full service from Miami to Orlando coming in the future. This means that the City is going to see around 32 Brightline trains running every day along the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway tracks that cross the City. Indeed, this has generated more concerns about the safety of the public and any potential liabilities for the City. Now that the additional railroad traffic is a reality for the City and in an effort to prevent incidents like the one on August 3, 2016, the City's leadership initiated a request to get barriers placed along the railroad tracks crossing the City. On September 7, 2016 the City's leadership met with All Aboard Florida representatives, the Palm Beach County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to discuss potential partnerships and collaboration to install trespass barriers along the railroad tracks.

Staff has prepared a report which evaluates the trespass prevention best practices being

implemented internationally and presents options for infrastructure improvements that are best suited for our diverse, vibrant community and first class resort destination.

Timing of Request:

Direction from the Commission is necessary in order to seek immediate funding for infrastructure improvements from the Palm Beach County Metropolitan Planning Organization and other possible funding partners. Delray Beach's efforts in providing trespass prevention infrastructure can be a model for other communities in the Palm Beach County as well as other regions in Florida experiencing similar issues.