

# Train Wreck Times

**Good News!** The first Florida Senate Committee to hear the Rail Safety Bill passed it **unanimously!** The bill was amended before the first committee meeting to require FDOT to conduct a Rulemaking Process. Instead of mandating certain safety features, the bill directs FDOT to draft regulations and publish them for public comment before making them final.

The state senators passed on the bill despite lobbying against it by the FL Chamber of Commerce, the Jensen Beach and Martin County Chambers of Commerce and, naturally, Virgin Trains. This is a prime example of the Big Money cities like Orlando and Miami flexing their muscles through the FL Chamber. It's also an example of a county trying to curry favor with the corporation in order to get a stop. *With the amendment added, we will have to stay vigilant that the necessary safety regulations are included in the new rules.* FYI...

**Florida Chamber of Commerce**  
136 S. Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301  
(850) 521-1200  
[info@flchamber.com](mailto:info@flchamber.com)

**Martin/Stuart Chamber of Commerce**  
1650 S Kanner Highway  
Stuart, FL 34994  
772-287-1088  
[info@stuartmartinchamber.org](mailto:info@stuartmartinchamber.org)

**More resolutions supporting the safety legislation pass!** We're pleased to report Vero Beach, Sebastian and St. Lucie County all passed resolutions supporting the legislation recently. We thank the council and commission members for their efforts and all of our friends who turned out or wrote in support of the very important legislation. We continue to need your help! (See below)

**More national news...** Your humble editor was called by NPR (National Public Radio) while suffering from the flu. They requested a recorded interview and I couldn't say no! You can read about it or listen to it here: [https://www.npr.org/2020/01/29/799962246/brightline-nations-deadliest-railroad-after-high-number-of-track-deaths?fbclid=IwAR309-PlKqYryKcMf5zgeOZRO87\\_3EPmwJyxlipxynS2mMacAL8EtTV69S0](https://www.npr.org/2020/01/29/799962246/brightline-nations-deadliest-railroad-after-high-number-of-track-deaths?fbclid=IwAR309-PlKqYryKcMf5zgeOZRO87_3EPmwJyxlipxynS2mMacAL8EtTV69S0)

**More bad news for Virgin Trains...** They continue to lose money and miss ridership projections. Their latest report to bondholders for the month of December confirms they missed their 2019 ridership projections by more than half and continue to lose money every month. The rider to revenue comparison shows their ticket prices haven't stabilized. Here's an article on the report and, remember, 'revenue' does not mean profit. They have been averaging losses of \$19 million per month. <https://www.palmbeachpost.com/business/20200120/brightline-passenger-counts-revenue-remain-well-below-companys-own-projections>

**Three accidents in one day...** On January 28, three train accidents occurred resulting in two deaths and a non-fatal car crash. There were deaths involving both FEC and Virgin trains and an additional car accident in Vero Beach by an FEC train. (And there have been more since then.)

*"STATE'S FEC RAIL CROSSINGS DEADLIEST IN U.S., STUDY SAYS"* We know the FEC freight corridor was dangerous before Fortress Investment Group bought the line and dreamed up All Aboard

Florida. The lead engineer for the Fed Railroad Administration said in his 2014 report on AAF rail safety recommendations, "Trespassing is epidemic on the corridor."

Well before that, it was a known fact the route was very dangerous. Here's an article from 1991 and if you ever thought we should have Quiet Zone designations for our crossings so we don't hear the horns – read this article. [https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1991-04-10-9101180298-story.html?fbclid=IwAR3OrEVIISk\\_4y3c-WZOXn1AboOZDSIqP428Y7-TJ59Km4lQ3OQINt4WtDg](https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1991-04-10-9101180298-story.html?fbclid=IwAR3OrEVIISk_4y3c-WZOXn1AboOZDSIqP428Y7-TJ59Km4lQ3OQINt4WtDg)

***We need your help!*** I know many of you contacted senate and house members because you reported back to me – THANK YOU! We must continue to push the critical Senate and House committee members to take up the Safety legislation bill and pass it out to get it to the floor by the end of the session. Please remember, many of these committee members are not even near our region and believe it's our problem not the State's, not FDOT's. Remind them Virgin plans to go to Jacksonville and Tampa and there's talk on many fronts for more high speed rail in Florida. One day it could be their constituents who are threatened!

*Attached* are the key people on the House Committee we need contacted and Senate Subcommittee. Note that Senator Annette Toddeo is from Miami and needs to be reminded her constituents are dying! Tell them TAKE UP THE BILL!

As always, thanks for your continued support. **Together we can win this war and *Make Them Safe!***

Sincerely,

***Susan Mehiel***

*Alliance for Safe Trains*

[FLSafeTrains.com](http://FLSafeTrains.com)

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