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Florida AFL-CIO

Press Release

Florida AFL-CIO Calls the Governor's Support of CSX "Well Intentioned but Misguided," Urges Less Funding for a Gravy Train, more for Schools, Kids and Seniors

Tallahassee, Fla. – Joined by Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, Governor Charlie Crist held a press conference today to signal his full support of the CSX Transportation Project, which is once again being pushed through the Florida Legislature. While CSX has rebranded the project with a massive PR campaign, now referring to it as SunRail, the Florida AFL-CIO continues to oppose this misguided deal and its artificially inflated price tag of \$1.2 billion. In response to today's press conference regarding this massive corporate welfare project, the Florida AFL-CIO issued the following statement:

"Governor Crist's support of the commuter rail project being rammed through the Florida Legislature by the Florida Department of Transportation and CSX well is intentioned but misguided when the details of the deal are considered. This project will be the costliest railroad deal in the history of our nation, with each of the 61.5 miles costing taxpayers more than \$10.5 million. This project is being disguised as an innovative approach to solve Central Florida's transportation challenges but in reality, it is nothing more than a taxpayer funded giveaway to one of the state's most profitable, powerful and politically connected corporations. This will cost Floridians \$1.2 billion in the short term and unknown millions in the long run at a time when taxpayers can least afford to pay for it.

As more information about this deal, crafted largely behind closed doors, is released our cause for concern on behalf of all of Florida's working families has increased. For example, the Florida Department Transportation and CSX have continue to seek a major indemnity provision that would give sovereign immunity to CSX and place undue financial burdens on the backs of ALL Floridians. This is a major concern because in 2007, CSX was cited for over 3,500 safety violations and just last year, CSX's poor safety record was highlighted by eight deaths reported in 2008. Indemnification is a risk that the State of Florida cannot afford to take.

Additionally, a significant portion of the project's total cost is earmarked for CSX to improve other existing freight line facilities that have little to do with commuter rail. These taxpayer dollars will be going to a private company that has posted record profits over the past two years, including a whopping estimated \$29 billion last year alone. These millions could be used to help our struggling schools, provide health care for the tens of thousands of children in our state without it and provide needed services for our seniors who have seen their services cut. Legislative leaders are quick to discuss belt tightening for Florida's most vulnerable, but refuse to tighten their own belts when it comes to sweetheart deals for politically connected special interests.

(more)

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The cost surrounding this corporate project is too great and the questions are too long. This is not the right time nor the right deal for the people of Florida. Our state faces a grim financial outlook and to put the people of our state on the hook for \$1.2 billion for what is nothing more than a corporate bailout for CSX is just wrong and bad public policy.

The Florida AFL-CIO has always been a strong supporter of mass transit projects as a good solution for Florida's transportation woes, one that creates jobs and stimulates the economy. That support is unwavering. We were one of the few statewide groups that took the political risk of organizing opposition to the push by many of the same political leaders' push to eliminate the High Speed Rail program that voters approved through a ballot initiative. Now that there is a chance for a well connected private company to reap incredible benefits at taxpayer expense, these leaders are finally touting the need for commuter rail. We represent mass transit and railway workers and are confident that there are more cost effective and efficient mass transit solutions out there; ones that do not burden taxpayers with massive corporate welfare spending...this is not it."

The Florida AFL-CIO is the state federation of over 535 affiliated local unions, representing well over 500,000 workers, retirees and their families.

To learn more about the CSX Transportation Project, we encourage you to visit <http://wrongtrack4florida.com>. Please note that this website was not created by the AFL-CIO, but we believe the website contains accurate and valuable information pertaining to the CSX project that is supported by our own research and inquiry.

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