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A Chronology of Passenger Rail Proposals in Central Florida Through Media Headlines and Story Excerpts

By David L. Grovdahl

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INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, the idea of rail transit was advertised as coming to Orlando. With the demise of this proposal came another and another. The proposals have changed over the years from monorail to fixed guideway to maglev to bullet train to light rail and most recently to commuter rail, but Orlando is still waiting.

Periodically over the 50 years, generally every five years or so, another entrepreneur would step forward with the idea that he had the solution to the area's traffic congestion, something no-one else had thought of. Some of the proposals were rather bizarre – involving non-stop trains with a detachable module that separated from the train to stop at a station or buses with magnets on the roof that would be elevated into the air and transported via a ski-lift type of system to their destination, all above the congestion on the streets. Other proposals were more practical, being

based on systems already in operation in other parts of the world. But eventually even those practical proposals failed. Once again, a proposed rail system is being considered, this time a commuter rail system. And once again, the proposal has its detractors as well as proponents. Will it succeed where so many others have failed?

A renowned philosopher, George Santayana, once said that “those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” It is with that in mind that the following compendium of newspaper articles relating the history of rail transit in Central Florida are provided. The article sources have been many, including:

- Orlando Sentinel
- The Orlando Business Journal
- American Public Transit Association (APTA) Passenger Transport
- Apopka Planter
- Apopka Chief
- Daytona Beach News Journal
- Seminole Herald
- Palm Beach Post
- Florida Journal
- Common Dreams News Center
- The Tampa Tribune
- Wall Street Journal, and
- USA Today

The content of the excerpts drawn from the articles are verbatim from the reporters. Many of them have contacted me directly over the years for background information and I have been privileged to work with them and, on occasion, be quoted by them. Among the most prolific of the reporters in covering what transpired with each proposal have been Jim Heaney, Dan Tracy, Scott Maxwell, Roger Roy, Jim Stratton, Scott Powers, Sandra Pedicini and Jay Hamburg, all of the Orlando Sentinel. It was

you who covered the stories; I am merely reiterating them here. Thank you for your stories and, hopefully in the future, we won't have to repeat their lessons.

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CHAPTER ONE – THE EARLY YEARS

Proposals for the use of monorail as a means of transportation in Orlando precede the monorail at Walt Disney World. But, according to Ron Diridon, director of the [Mineta Transportation Institute](#), the real reason monorails in the United States came to be typecast with theme parks and never took flight was because "it got caught in what all mass transportation got caught in in the '50s and '60s -- the love affair with the [automobile](#)." (San Francisco Chronicle, December 27, 2002)

Besides intra-city transit, however, intra-state transportation also brought forth various rail proposals, many of them oriented around Amtrak. It was the Cross-Florida studies conducted by Allen M. Voorhees Inc. that pinpointed the Orlando International Airport – Walt Disney World as the major generator of traffic within the Daytona Beach – Orlando-Tampa – St. Petersburg corridor and that spurred local interest in serving this corridor with rail.

1957 (date not identified) Orlando Sentinel Star (writer not identified) -
TRANSPORTATION PLAN STUDIED

“Orlando city council yesterday expressed enthusiasm at the offer of Monorail, Inc., a Houston, Tex. Firm, to build a new type of mass transportation system here at no cost to the city....The project uses cars hanging from a rail 27 feet in the air and clearing all traffic at 15 feet. Powered by electricity, they travel at an average 90 mph....The firm would like to construct the first two lines from downtown to the airport and from downtown to the Martin plant on South Orange Blossom Trail....Eventually Monorail wants to build lines which would service Pine Hills, College Park, Colonialtown, Winter Park, the Lee Rd. area, Azalea Park, Pine Castle, Pinecastle Air Force Base and finally a line to Port Canaveral, Patrick AFB and the guided missile base....The original Orlando lines would cost about \$8 to \$10 million and Monorail will make arrangements for financing.”

March 16, 1962 Orlando Sentinel Star (Tom Harmon) - MONORAIL TEST SLATED FOR
CENTRAL FLORIDA; EXPERIMENT NOT TO COST AREA ANY \$\$

“Central Florida yesterday was assured of an experimental monorail system within the near future – at no cost to local interests....(Thomas D.) Webb, who represented Murchison Bros. of Dallas, Tex., and District of Columbia Transit Co., said his principals are ‘raring to go on the project’. He added that Murchison Bros. and District of Columbia Transit Co. definitely will finance construction of a five-mile-long experimental monorail system “somewhere in this area” as soon as engineers find the most feasible location....(Engineer C.H. Peterson of Howard-Needles) said that the experimental system might be best tested in Orange County from downtown Orlando to either the Martin Co. or McCoy Air Force Base.”

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March 6, 1974 Orlando Sentinel Star (D.G. Lawrence) - ASKEW WANTS TURBO TRAIN FOR FLORIDA

“Gov. Reubin Askew proposed Tuesday that the state subsidize operation of a turbo train between Orlando and Miami which he said could be operative no later than June, 1975. He said the state for two years should help pay for the service, operated in cooperation with AMTRAK, the federal railroad operating agency. The system, using trains similar to those used by AMTRAK on a Chicago-St. Louis run, later would tie into the proposed Interstate 4 corridor service from Tampa to Daytona Beach....James Rankin, chief of the Transportation Department’s surface transportation division, explained the \$4.5 million requested of the legislature would finance the state’s share of initial development costs plus some of the operating deficit, if any, encountered in the first year of operation....The Turbo Train service, Rankin said, would tie in with the mass transit system that has been under study for several years for the I-4 corridor from the Tampa Bay area through Orlando to Daytona beach. No final plans on the corridor system have been made. Proposals have been advanced for exclusive bus lanes along I-4 or for a monorail or high-speed, cushioned air vehicles running along the center strip.”

January 22, 1975 Orlando Sentinel Star (Bruce Dudley) - DAYTONA-ST. PETE ‘ZIP’ RIDE STUDIED

“A Daytona Beach-Orlando-St. Petersburg mass transit system using the Interstate 4 corridor for 150-m.p.h. vehicles to zip passengers coast-to-coast could provide a major tourism boost as energy conservation awareness grows. This is what transportation experts and novices were told Tuesday at a State Department of Transportation conference held in Orlando to kick off a 10-month study on the financing and use of various traveling modes – from express buses to monorails – along the 157-mile route. Joseph Miorelli, East Central Florida Regional Planning Council chairman, said such a system could link Central Florida attractions, like Sea World and Walt Disney World, with tourist destinations both in Daytona Beach and the Tampa-St. Petersburg area. And Walter Kulash, project manager for the consultant firm of Alan M. Voorhees and Associates, studying the corridor, said the transit network “could also be a tourist attraction itself”.

CHAPTER TWO – THE 1980’S: RAIL FIXED GUIDEWAY PROPOSED FOR ORLANDO

The Voorhees study identified the corridor between the Orlando International Airport and Walt Disney World as having the “second highest number of trip ends in the entire country”, meaning the second highest number of trips coming from many outside origins, both national and international, all funneling through a common point (the Orlando International Airport), all traveling within a narrowly defined corridor (the Bee Line Expressway), and all traveling to a common destination (Walt Disney World). Number one in the country was New York City’s Manhattan. In response to this finding, the Orlando Urban Area MPO initiated a request to the Florida Department of Transportation to study what type of rail system might be appropriate within that corridor defined by Orlando International Airport and Walt Disney World plus the corridor extended to downtown Orlando. Recognizing that private sector attractions would substantially benefit from a rail/fixed guideway system, their funding support was sought. A unique series of advertisements in the Wall Street Journal seeking a private turn-key project (design, build, operate, finance) generated national and international interest. The project, which would have used a French fixed guideway system, almost became a reality. In its wake, came a proposed magnetic-levitated, high-speed train.

January 29, 1982 American Public Transit Association Passenger Transport (writer not identified) - BUSINESS AIDS TRANSIT STUDY IN ORLANDO

“A group composed of local government leaders and business people in Orange County is helping to shape the direction of an Orlando transit feasibility study being conducted by Florida DOT. According to Terry Kraft, chairman of the special task force studying the transit system, “The Orange County (sic – Orlando) Metropolitan Planning Organization asked Florida DOT for help after a 1976 Orlando urban area transportation study showed a transit system in southwestern Orlando would be needed by the year 2000. Florida DOT had made a study in 1975 looking at the possibility of a high-speed train between Daytona Beach and Tampa that also pointed to a transit system in Orlando....Florida DOT let a \$220,000 contract for the

study in July 1981 to the consultant firms of Harland Bartholomew and Associates, Inc. and DeLeuw, Cather and Company. The proposed transit system would link the downtown area, the Florida Center, the Interstate 4 tourist attractions, the Orlando International Airport, and several large businesses....The preliminary findings of the study point to a light rail system over a bus or heavy rail system. Both the local and express bus alternatives were discarded because the bus system would not be able to meet the demand of the year 2000. A heavy rail system was rejected because of the high construction costs, according to Kraft. "We chose light rail – monorail, trolley, people mover – because it can handle more than a bus system, and the local leaders and business people feel it is a more attractive transit choice," Kraft said....The study now calls for a 30-mile transit system with 13 stations and 54 vehicles. The estimated cost at this point for the light rail system is \$535 million in capital costs. Daily operating costs would run around \$76,000, Kraft estimated."

July, 1982 (date not identified) Orlando Sentinel (Mark Andrews) – COMMITTEE INVESTIGATES MONORAIL PLAN

"Five government officials and five business people will form a steering committee to push ahead with plans for a half-billion dollar monorail in southwest Orange County. County Commission Chairman Allen Arthur named himself to head the panel at a meeting Thursday of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, a group of elected officials from Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties who set transportation priorities....In addition, one member each will be invited from Walt Disney World, Sea World, the hotel-motel industry and Orlando Central Park, which will also represent Martin Marietta. The Downtown Development Board will be asked to nominate someone representing downtown Orlando business interests. The Legislature has allocated \$500,000 for further studies on the proposed monorail or another rail system that would link Orlando International Airport, Florida Center, Disney World and downtown Orlando. A consultant's final report on the feasibility of a mass transit rail system in the so-called Orlando Southwest Corridor was presented Thursday to MPO members. The report found that 75,000 people per day could be carried on the system in 1990, the scheduled date to begin operations. Ninety-thousand are projected to use it by the year 2000. Ninety percent of the riders are expected to be tourists."

April, 1983 (date not identified) Orlando Sentinel (Jim Heaney) – TRANSIT ROUTES OUTLINED

“Ambitious plans for a transit system in metropolitan Orlando shifted into second gear Friday as engineers unveiled three possible routes for the half-billion dollar project. ‘It looks like it’s for real.... We’re getting down to some very specific decision-making,’ former Orange County Commissioner Allen Arthur said after a consulting engineer outlined routes that would connect downtown, Orlando International Airport and Walt Disney World.... A final decision on the preferred route and technology is expected in July, said Dave Grovdahl, the steering committee’s staff director. Whether the MPO’s route and technology will be used will be determined in part by the private company it chooses to build and operate the system, Grovdahl said. ‘The best deal that is offered to us is the one that we’ll go with.’ The committee wants the system, estimated to cost \$537 million to build and equip to be constructed with a minimum of public financing.”

June 15, 1983 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Heaney) – FRENCH COMPUTERIZED TRAIN DESIGNERS IN RUNNING FOR PEOPLE MOVER

“The designers and builders of the world’s only computerized mass-transit system are joining the competition to build and run a people mover in metropolitan Orlando. Interest from the two French companies is noteworthy because of their worldwide track record in mass transit. Their engineering credits include systems in Montreal, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, Chile, and Caracas, Venezuela, about 50 in all. Their experience exceeds any of the half-dozen groups that have shown interest in building and operating Orlando’s proposed 32-mile system, which

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would connect downtown Orlando, Walt Disney World and Orlando International Airport.... Sofret, the privately-owned engineering arm of the Paris Transit Authority, and Matra, makers of the computerized train that started operating in April in Lille, France, are the interested companies.”

August 20, 1983 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Heaney) – MARTIN, HUBBARD BACK FRENCH RAIL SYSTEM

“French rail interests making a pitch to build and operate a rapid transit system in metropolitan Orlando disclosed Friday that Martin Marietta Aerospace and Hubbard Construction Co. have agreed in principle to join their team.... Martin Marietta, the giant defense and aerospace contractor and the area’s second-largest employer, would manufacture some components of the French computerized rail cars and assemble the vehicles. Hubbard, the area’s largest transportation contractor, would be general contractor for the project.”

June 9, 1984 Orlando Sentinel (Goldie Blumenstyk) – FRENCH GET 1ST CRACK AT RAIL SYSTEM

“A French consortium Friday was given the chance of developing the first part of Orange County’s proposed rapid transit system. The group combined the best elements of four proposals, said Orange County Commission Chairman Lou Treadway....If crucial private financing can be arranged for the 8.4 mile segment linking International Drive and Walt Disney World; the first phase of the rail line could be in operation by 1988. The French estimate the segment would cost \$172 million to build and would carry 30,000 passengers per day, most of them tourists. The unanimous committee vote, ending a two-year planning effort, followed a morning meeting at which the four contenders argued their cases.”

February, 1985 Orlando Business Journal (David Wilkening) – GREEN LIGHT FOR MATRA

“Rumors abounded the vote would be close. Three to two. Either for or against. But as it turned out, the Orange County Commission unanimously agreed to give the French-based MATRA a green light. MATRA was given 12 months to come up with a plan for a mass transit system. It would mark the first time a mass transit system would be built with private funds....The first phase of the system would be 12 miles, up from the 8.6-mile route originally envisioned. The first leg of the system that eventually would cover 34 miles would meander between Walt Disney World and International Drive, stopping at Sea World and Hyatt Grand Cypress Hotel.”

June 16, 1985 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Heaney) – RAIL TRAVEL: HIGH-TECH TONIC FOR ORLANDO’S GROWTH WOES

“Lou Treadway thinks he’s onto something. The flamboyant Orange County commissioner believes the Buck Rogers rail transit system he is pushing is the region’s solution to the double-barreled future problems of wall-to-wall development and bumper-to-bumper traffic. In addition, Treadway thinks Orlando’s approach may be the transit industry’s remedy for shrinking federal aid, disappointing ridership, huge cost overruns and sky-high operating subsidies.

Planning for a rail transit system linking Walt Disney World and the International Drive tourist area has garnered nationwide attention because it shucks conventional wisdom. Just how different would the \$375 million rail system be? If built, it would be:

- The first transit system built in the United States since the 1920s with a substantial amount of private investment. Traditionally, the federal government has paid up to 80 percent of costs, with local and state governments putting up the rest.
- The only automated, driverless public transit system in the United States and one of only a few in the world.
- The first public transit system since before World War II entirely developed and operated by a private company. A consortium headed by Matra, a French high-tech conglomerate, would be responsible for cost overruns during the construction of the system and operating losses once a taxpayer financed reserve fund is depleted. Usually, governments develop transit systems and are responsible for all cost overruns and operating losses.
- The only public transit system to depend mostly on tourists for riders. Three-quarters of the system's estimated 28,000 daily passengers would be tourists. No other system in the United States relies on tourists for more than 18 percent of its ridership.

In addition, Treadway is seeking sweeping changes in land-use plans to encourage high-density development around rail transit stations. His plan would discourage automobile use. 'If they're successful in doing it with a combination of private investment and new land uses, they will be setting a precedent that will be a model for the rest of the country,' said Robert Paaswell, director of the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago."

December 13, 1985 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Heaney) – CARTER'S TURNABOUT RESURRECTS RAIL PLAN

"Declaring it 'a good deal for the county,' Orange County Commissioner Vera Carter on Thursday accepted a new offer from transit developers to build and operate a computerized train system to Walt Disney World. Carter's support clears the way for commission approval of the 11.7-mile system, considered dead last week when she cast the decisive vote against the project's financing plan....She changed her mind after the system's developers offered to drastically cut their fee to build and run the system linking Disney's Epcot Center and International Drive.

Instead of paying an annual fee that would begin at \$10.9 million and rise to \$34 million over 30 years, the county would pay a flat annual fee of \$11 million, raised from property taxes collected from landowners within a half-mile of the route.”

January, 1986 (date not identified) Orlando Sentinel (Jim Heaney) – THE RAILS ARE TURNING AT DISNEY

“Walt Disney World is planning a major expansion of its monorail system and is listening to an overture from a Japanese company that wants to build a 310-mph train system linking Disney and Orlando International Airport, The Orlando Sentinel has learned. Either of the systems would enhance Disney World as the one-stop resort company officials want it to become. They also could upset plans by Matra, a French conglomerate, to build a computerized train system that would link Disney with competing theme parks and hotels along International Drive. No final decisions have been made on either the monorail extension or half-billion-dollar Japanese train system and Disney officials were reluctant to discuss details, saying both projects are in the preliminary stages.”

March, 1986 (date not identified) Orlando Sentinel (Jim Heaney) – DISNEY OPPOSITION KNOCKS RAIL PROPOSAL OFF THE TRACKS

“A proposed computerized train system to Walt Disney World apparently was derailed Monday when Disney officials failed to meet a deadline transit supporters had set in hopes of forcing an endorsement of the project. Disney’s inaction prompted Orange County Commissioner Lou Treadway, the system’s leading proponent, to say the \$394 million project is dead unless the company takes a positive stance today. Disney officials, however, say they have said all they are going to say, ‘We’re going to address the biggest question first...and that’s roads,’ said Disney vice president Bob Allen. Treadway responded Monday by saying, ‘If I don’t have anything from them by tomorrow, my position is going to be the project is dead. I’ll recommend to Matra that they close up shop,’ Treadway said.”

March 4, 1988 Orlando Sentinel (Lauren Ritchie, Jim Leusner) – JAPANESE PLAN A SUPERTRAIN LINK TO DISNEY

“A Japanese company that wants to build the world’s most modern train is quietly reserving land for the project between Orlando International airport and Walt Disney World. The train, which travels at 300 mph on an electromagnetic cushion of air, would be the first of its kind in commercial operation. It would showcase the technology for potential buyers. Mag-Lev of Florida representative Sam Tabuchi and Tallahassee lawyer Robert Scott Cox visited four Orange County commissioners on Thursday to describe the project, which would cost \$500 million to \$800 million and could be built within 10 years.”

May 15, 1988 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy) – BRINGING FAST TIMES TO ORLANDO

“Mag-Lev of Florida came first, appearing in early March and promising to build a revolutionary train racing from Orlando International Airport to Epcot Center. At no cost to the taxpayer. That offer sounded good to area leaders until a couple of weeks ago, when the HSST Corp. said it too could build a revolutionary train linking not only the airport and Epcot, but also International Drive and maybe downtown Orlando or Lake Mary in Seminole County. At no cost to the taxpayer....Probably the biggest difference between the Japanese concerns are the possible routes. Mag-Lev wants a nonstop run; HSST is interested in more of a regional, multistop system. The contrasting approaches, predictably, have attracted camps of supporters and detractors. Orange County Commissioner Lou Treadway, one of the leaders of the failed mass transit initiative, said he likes the HSST plan because it serves the county and city. Mag-Lev, he argued, does not. ‘It sounds great up front,’ he said of Mag-Lev. ‘But once you get past all the chaff, who is the benefactor? It’s Disney.’ Nunis (Dick Nunis, president of Walt Disney Attractions) bristles at such criticism, saying Mag-Lev would bring construction jobs and a multimillion-dollar enterprise to the area, plus act as a possible magnet for high-tech companies. ‘That’s obviously good for the community....Any time you can get something like this, it is healthy,’ he said. Nunis also questions the necessity of mass transit for south Orange County, where development is relatively dispersed and congestion is minimal. The traffic tie-ups, he said, are downtown and north into Seminole County.”

September 16, 1988 Orlando Sentinel (Michael Blumfield) – RIVALS TEAM UP ON HIGH-SPEED RAIL

“Mag-Lev of Florida, a Japanese company seeking permission to run a high-speed train between Walt Disney World and Orlando International Airport, has teamed up with a rival West German company that might have one of the advanced trains available in just over a year. The partnership was made necessary because the Japanese government has been skittish about exporting its superconductivity technology that propels the train. Super conductivity allows the high amounts of electricity to travel without resistance. The German company, Trans-rapid International, doesn’t use superconductors to magnetically levitate the train, but it is considered about five years ahead of the Japanese in testing. Mag-Lev will rely on the Germans to produce the train, which resembles a monorail but can hit speeds of up to 300 mph. In turn, Trans-rapid can take advantage of the homework the Japanese company has done in preparing an Orlando route and getting financing.”

March 3, 1989 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy) – STATE GETS 1 BIDDER FOR FAST TRAIN

“A company backed by Japanese investors and West German technology was the sole bidder with the state Thursday to build a superfast train to south Orange County. Three other companies that had expressed interest did not apply, including the HSST Corp., a Japanese company with offices in Longwood and Las Vegas, Nev. These no-shows left only the Maglev Transit Co. of Tallahassee, which triggered a

yearlong competition for the job last March when it announced plans to run a sleek, futuristic train between Orlando International airport and Epcot Center. Maglev president Sam Tabuchi predicted the train will be up and running at 10 a.m. on Oct. 1, 1994.”

May 17, 1989 Orlando Sentinel (Editorial) – HOW TO DERAIL A GOOD IDEA

“Interest groups are swarming around a proposal to run a magnetically levitated train from the Orlando International Airport to Epcot Center. The strategy seems clear: Make things so difficult that the train’s backers will go elsewhere. That ploy may suit certain hotels, amusement parks and other businesses in the International Drive area, but it threatens to spoil a good deal for Orlando....Opponents have advanced a clever demand to stop Maglev Transit, Inc. from demonstrating this remarkable technology, which cost the West Germans \$1 billion to develop. They insist that the new train stop along International Drive on its way to Disney World’s property. The demand sounds perfectly reasonable until you consider a simple fact: The point of building this 17.5-mile run is to allow the train to attain speeds of 300 mph or more. Put a stop in the middle of the route and nothing is gained from the project.”

September 29, 1989 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy) – MAGLEV LOSES OUT ON EPCOT STOP

“Walt Disney World has decided not to allow a train going 300 mph to stop at its Epcot Center theme park. Instead, Disney officials offered to allow the train to deliver tourists to undeveloped land three miles south of Epcot. Dick Nunis, president of Walt Disney Attractions, said Thursday that there is just not enough room at Epcot for the rail network promoted by Maglev Transit Inc. of Tallahassee. Instead, he said the train could deliver tourists to what is now a cow pasture. The stop would be on undeveloped land Disney owns about three miles south of Epcot near the intersection of Interstate 4 and U.S. Highway 192 in north Osceola County.”

CHAPTER THREE – THE 1990’S: BULLET TRAINS, MAGLEV, LIGHT RAIL – TRANSIT VISIONS TURNED DOWN

The rail proposals multiplied during this time as did the estimated costs. Light rail took center stage in Orlando, primarily operating on or adjacent to the CSX mainline tracks through Orlando, while bullet trains and maglev became the buzz words within a corridor connecting Tampa, Orlando and Miami. Again, the Orlando light rail system almost became a reality, this time primarily funded by public tax dollars, only to be turned down at the eleventh hour. The bullet trains and maglev fared no better.

September 18, 1993 Orlando Sentinel (Roger Roy) – MAGLEV MAY USE SLOWER TRAINS

“Orlando was supposed to become the home of the world’s fastest passenger train with the construction next year of a rail line between Orlando International Airport and International Drive. But rather than a super-fast train, Orlando may have to settle for one that just half as speedy. Maglev Transit Inc. had proposed building a 250 mph magnetically levitated train operating on a 14-mile track by 1997. But because of a dispute with Transrapid Inc., the German manufacturer of that train, Maglev Transit is planning to use a Japanese-made magnet train with a maximum speed of 130 mph, said Maglev Transit president Sam Tabuchi. Tabuchi said he plans to use the High Speed Surface Transport, or HSST, under development by Japan Airlines, which has built a test track in Japan.”

December, 1994 (date not identified) Orlando Sentinel (Roger Roy) – ORLANDO MAGLEV DEAD IN ITS TRACKS

“The troubled seven-year bid to make Orlando home to the world’s first magnetically levitated train in commercial service finally appears dead. The state Department of Transportation and Maglev Transit, Inc., a Japanese-financed company that wanted to build the train, have reached a tentative agreement to pull the plug on the project, which was crippled by financial woes and a disagreement among business partners. Maglev’s demise would leave up for grabs the largest federal transportation grant ever given to Central Florida - \$97.5 million that was awarded to the project three years ago but was never spent. Because the money was earmarked by Congress for the Orlando project, its use for anything else will require congressional approval. Central Florida transportation officials have discussed seeking the money for projects including construction of the Central Florida GreeneWay near Sanford and a proposed commuter rail system. State officials want to spend it on a planned high-speed train linking Orlando, Tampa and Miami.”

November 1, 1995 Orlando Sentinel (Roger Roy) – 5 TRAIN COMPANIES ROLLING IN RACE FOR FLORIDA RAIL NET

“Five bidders jumped into the race Tuesday to build the nation’s first new high-speed passenger train that would link Orlando, Tampa and Miami. Competing for up to \$70 million a year in state money, the five companies offer a range of technology from steel-wheeled trains already operating in France, Sweden and Italy to new magnetically levitated vehicles under design in Florida....An attempt to build a similar Orlando-Tampa-Miami train in the 1980s using private financing generated mostly by development around the rail stations died when real estate values fell. But what sets apart the latest effort from those that have failed in Florida and elsewhere is the promise of more than two decades of state money....Selection of a franchise winner rests with DOT chief (Ben) Watts, who must make a recommendation by Feb. 28, and with Gov. Lawton Chiles and the Cabinet, who make the final decision. It could be two years before a franchise is awarded. The winning bidder must begin construction within three years of winning the franchise. The trains must start running six years after the franchise is awarded.”

February 28, 1996 Orlando Sentinel (Roger Roy) – ORLANDO COMPANY GETS
MILLION-DOLLAR RAIL DEAL

“A \$5 billion venture to build a 200-mph passenger train linking Orlando, Tampa and Miami won an exclusive franchise from the state Tuesday. Orlando-based Florida Overland eXpress beat out four competitors to land the franchise – and \$70 million a year in state funding during the next 25 years. FOX, as the consortium is known, will use a new version of the French-designed TGV train that now operates in Europe at speeds of up to 200 mph. FOX has 90 days to finalize plans for the project, including detailed financing, selecting an exact alignment and resolving engineering issues. Florida Transportation Secretary Ben Watts said he selected the FOX team over competitors, which included Amtrak and two ventures to build magnetically levitated trains, because it was the one most likely to succeed. . . . Watts said the trains could begin operating between Orlando and Miami – with travel times of 90 minutes by 2004, with service to Tampa beginning in 2006. But the project faces substantial hurdles, including financing and environmental concerns. The FOX bid sought \$95 million a year from the state - \$25 million more than planned. It also planned to build miles of rail atop a levee that would run along the eastern edge of the Everglades – a prospect that has drawn criticism from some environmentalists. Watts said, though, that the state has conflicting opinions from environmentalists on whether the levee (alignment) would be harmful. Once FOX and the state work out details, a lengthy process of public hearings follows, ending with approval from the governor and Cabinet. That could take a year. . . . FOX’s plans calls for two Central Florida stations – one at Orlando International Airport and one near Walt Disney World. Orlando city officials also want a station downtown on a parcel of city-owned property near the new Orange County Courthouse under construction.”

July 30, 1996 Orlando Sentinel (Roger Roy) – HIGH-SPEED TRAIN BACKERS: STATE
TALKS ON TRACK

“A 200 mph passenger train that would link Orlando, Tampa and Miami faces a milestone this week as the state and an international consortium backing the project try to iron out a financing plan. . . . Although the two sides have not agreed on several major issues, a spokeswoman for FOX said project backers are confident they can reach a deal. . . . FOX was awarded a franchise for the project in February, when state Transportation Secretary Ben Watts selected the Orlando-based consortium over four competitors. The financial issues that must be settled include who will

guarantee the bonds that would be sold to finance the project, and how large an annual subsidy the state will pay. FOX's initial proposal called for the state to back the bonds, but state officials have balked at that idea. If the project failed, paying for the bonds could tie up much of the state's transportation money for years, delaying other highway and transit projects....Fox also sought \$95 million a year in state subsidies, with increases each year to cover the cost of inflation. The state proposed only \$70 million, with no annual increases....Some of the financial details may remain unresolved until the project goes through its final approval process with the state, which could take up to three years....The consortium hopes to break ground in late 1999, opening the Orlando-Miami line in 2004 and Orlando-Tampa in 2006. FOX plans to use a version of the TGV train in use in Europe. It would run from a station at Orlando International to Miami International Airport in one hour and 25 minutes."

August 15, 1996 Orlando Sentinel (Roger Roy) – TOP STATE OFFICIAL NOW CALLS HIGH-SPEED TRAIN 'LONG SHOT'

"A \$5 billion, 200 mph train that would link Orlando, Tampa and Miami may be running out of steam. The project's key supporter, Florida Transportation Secretary Ben Watts, conceded this week that the project isn't likely to succeed....In February, Watts awarded Orlando-based Florida Overland eXpress (FOX) a franchise to build and operate a train like the successful TGV train in Europe. Watts also promised FOX \$70 million a year in state money. That makes it the first high speed rail venture in the country to receive substantial government funding. The lack of government money has been blamed for dozens of previous failed projects around the U.S., including one in Florida in the 1980s. Two weeks ago, the project reached a milestone with a financial agreement between FOX and the state. But behind the scenes, three days before the Aug. 2 deadline for that agreement, Watts notified FOX he had decided to kill the project for financial reasons. Only a last-minute counteroffer by FOX, in which the private consortium agreed to assume more of the financial risks and take a smaller profit, persuaded Watts to keep the project alive for another 90 days....The new hurdles set for the next deadline in November include getting federal funding of \$300 million and federal backing of the \$6.5 billion of bonds that would be sold to pay for the train. Rail backers don't expect to get the federal money by the deadline but want assurances from federal officials that they'll back the project. But relying on federal help has many questioning whether the project can move ahead. In the past, federal officials have supported high-speed rail proposals, but usually with more talk than money....Dick

federal money are slim....Batchelor also worries that FOX could be in competition for money with other Central Florida transportation priorities – for example, a proposed commuter train along Interstate 4.”

October 2, 1996 Orlando Sentinel (Blake Fontenay) – MAGLEV OFF TRACK AS MONEY RUNS OUT

“A Volusia County company that wants to revolutionize public transportation with magnetically levitated trains has been grounded – at least for now. American Maglev Technology Inc. closed its Edgewater testing facility after running out of government grant money used to finance the project’s first phase. Company officials said Tuesday they consider last month’s shutdown only a temporary setback. President Tony Morris said he expects the company will get more federal and state money to help with the project’s next phase: a fully operational train to run on a 3-mile track at the Edgewater site. Morris said the next phase would cost about \$20 million over three years. The company hopes to raise about \$15 million in public money to support the project, with the balance coming from private sources....The company broke ground on the testing facility in Edgewater two years ago using a variety of grants from federal, state and county governments. Volusia County contributed \$600,000 to the project. The company built a small section of linear track and a bare-bones test vehicle. Company officials said the vehicle was sufficient to test the propulsion system but not components such as braking and handling.”

April 24, 1997 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – WRONG TRAIN OF THOUGHT? STATE URGED TO FORGET HIGH-SPEED RAIL

“Florida’s controversial plan to build a high-speed rail line took a hit Wednesday when a Tallahassee-based think tank concluded the project is doomed to become a billion-dollar failure. Researchers with the James Madison Institute claim project supporters are relying on starry-eyed projections and ignoring important problems. The report says the project, ‘is likely to be a financial disaster; and will do little to ease traffic congestion on major roads. It said high-speed rail will ‘cost much more, carry fewer passengers, and expose the state to greater financial risk than is presently anticipated.’...The study comes as Florida lawmakers appear ready to include \$30.5 million in next year’s budget as planning money for the project.”

November 15, 1998 Orlando Sentinel (writer not identified) – BUSH FLAGS TRAIN COST

“Florida’s latest attempt to build a high-speed rail system linking Miami, Orlando and Tampa with 200 mph trains may again get stuck at the station. Gov.-elect Jeb Bush is open to the idea, but he says taxpayers are footing too much of the estimated \$6.3 billion price tag. ‘The entrepreneurs who are behind this and stand to profit need to bear more of the financial risk,’ Bush spokesman Cory Tilley said.

The state has signed a franchise agreement with Florida Overland eXpress (FOX), a private consortium that plans to run French-designed TGV trains that travel nearly 200 mph. Tilley said Bush wants the agreement restructured and also is willing to consider alternative rail systems, including a proposal for a not-so-fast system being pushed by a tiny group of train advocates....The Florida Department of Transportation plans to seek the first in a series of \$70 million annual appropriations to help finance the project, which was embraced by outgoing Gov. Lawton Chiles. A similar effort to link Florida's urban areas by high-speed rail failed in the early 1990s when the developer who won a state franchise asked for public money to build the project. At that time, the state had no plans for taxpayer help, and the effort folded."

November 05, 1998 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy, Scott Maxwell) – LIGHT RAIL TO RECEIVE TENTATIVE APPROVAL

"The Orange County Commission and the Orlando City Council plan on tentatively approving construction of a \$600 million light rail system linking downtown with International Drive. A majority of both boards favor the concept and are expected to pass resolutions saying so next week. Those promises would allow the Lynx regional bus service to seek \$330 million in federal tax dollars to help pay for the train."

November 11, 1998 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – ORANGE ENDORSES RAIL LINE

"Plans for a \$600 million light rail; system cleared their final first-round hurdle Tuesday when Orange County commissioners tentatively agreed to spend \$11 million to help build the train system and another \$3.7 million each year to run it. The commission's 5-2 vote came on the heels of a similar decision from the Orlando City Commission on Monday. The two votes of support give the project a shot at more than \$300 million in federal money in next year's mass-transit budget."

November 11, 1998 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – MERCHANTS ON I-DRIVE WANT CHANGES IN LIGHT-RAIL PLANS

"International Drive business leaders say they're prepared to help pay for an electric rail system, but not the one envisioned by Lynx. To get \$23 million in I-Drive money, key property owners said the region's transit authority must:

- Shift the proposed rail line slightly to the east along the northern section of I-Drive.
- Promise that the second phase of light rail will run from I-Drive to Orlando International Airport.

The route shift would take the system off north International Drive and run it along Universal Boulevard and a drainage easement before heading back to I-Drive at Sand Lake Road....In the current Lynx plan, the light-rail line north of Sand Lake

Road would run along a new median built down the middle of I-Drive. The \$600 million system would run from Sea-World Orlando to downtown Orlando. I-Drive players fear two years of rail construction would kill many businesses along the road. They also worry that running rail down the middle of North I-Drive would exacerbate existing traffic problems.”

December 12, 1998 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – I-DRIVE RAIL CHANGE COULD BE COSTLY

“If the route of a planning International Drive electric rail line is changed it would delay the start of rail service, add about \$12 million to the project’s costs and possibly risk losing federal funding, transit officials said Thursday. Even though the change would be minor – shifting the route slightly to the east along one section – environmental and engineering work would delay the start of International Drive rail service until March 2003. The existing proposal calls for I-Drive service to begin in December 2001. The delay – plus the addition of two elevated rail stations – would add about \$12 million to the cost of the \$600 million project.”

December 27, 1998 Seminole Herald (Editorial) – IS THIS THE LAST CALL FOR LIGHT-RAIL?

“Unless everyone starts cooperating, any chance for a light-rail system in the Orlando area is going to be light years away. Seminole County residents have all but given up hopes they would benefit from light rail. The most optimistic say this wouldn’t happen until 2010 – or later. Those in Orange County were optimistic about an initial 14.7-mile, \$600 million rail line, which would run between downtown Orlando and the International Drive tourist corridor. Later, a northern leg would be built into Seminole County. The latest snag comes from CSX which said this past week that it will not allow a light-rail line to operate next to company-owned freight tracks in downtown Orlando. The CSX protest – though expected – has rattled many light-rail activists. CSX officials say the light-rail plan poses too many safety risks and too many potential problems for CSX freight delivery. In other words, CSX would like some more bucks from Lynx, which is proposing the area’s light-rail plan. One alternative Lynx has is to pay the cost of moving most CSX freight lines off the downtown tracks and onto a route west of Orange County”

January 6, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – MONORAIL GROUP SET TO GET OK FROM STATE

“While Central Florida debates the merit of light rail, the state is poised to tell a private consortium it can develop a billion-dollar monorail linking Orlando with Port Canaveral. Late last week, the Florida Department of Transportation told the Bee Line Monorail System Inc. that it was the state’s choice to build the new rail line, which would run along the Bee Line Expressway. The consortium faces significant hurdles before it can begin carrying tourists, commuters and freight. Most important, it must persuade would-be private investors to pony up more than

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\$1 billion for an idea that, in the past, has gone nowhere. If built, the project would link Port Canaveral, Orlando International Airport and International Drive. As envisioned, the system would use trains that are levitated inches above the track by powerful magnets. ... The consortium behind the proposal – a group that includes Lockheed Martin, Salomon Smith Barney and Siemens – would lease the right of way needed for the project. Consortium officials claim they would build and operate the \$1.5 billion system without any public money. ... Money has doomed Bee Line rail projects in the past. Similar proposals died in 1992 and 1994 when financing fell through and business and environmental problems came up.... (Florida DOT District Secretary Nancy) Houston said Bee Line Monorail officials think they could open the first phase of the system in 2003. That leg would link I-Drive and the airport. The leg to Port Canaveral would open in 2006, increasing ridership, officials say, to 19 million passengers annually. Ultimately, the consortium claims, the line would carry more than 35 percent of people traveling in the Bee Line corridor.... The project is headed by Pompano Beach businessman Eugene Garfield. He developed Amtrak’s AutoTrain service – which ferries passengers and their cars between Sanford and Washington, D.C. – and the defunct Florida Fun Train.... Bee Line Monorail will formally become the state’s choice for the project provided no other group challenges the decision during the next few days. After that, the consortium will have about eight months to prepare a detailed ridership and revenue study. It must also produce a blueprint showing how it will raise the money needed to build and operate the system.”

January 8-14, 1999 The Orlando Business Journal (Alan Byrd) – NOT SO FAST:
MONORAIL FACES FOX FOE

“Buckle up, Central Florida: Maglev is back. Fox doesn’t like it, and the ride could get bumpy. A Pompano Beach company has been selected by the Department of

Transportation to build a Brevard-to-Orlando monorail over the heated objections of Florida Overland Express, the consortium charged with building the state's first high-speed rail system.... The private partnership challenged the state authority to award the lease to any rail system other than Fox. Right now, Fox enjoys an exclusive franchise with the state to build and run a high-speed rail system. The maglev system envisioned by Beeline Monorail is not high-speed rail: top speeds would not exceed 120 miles per hour. But lawyers for Fox argue that their franchise agreement bars Florida from permitting development or renovation of any type of transportation system that eventually would compete with Fox.”

January 12, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – BACKERS SAY LIGHT RAIL NOT A MONEY PIT

“With time running out to make their case, transit officials sought to convince a county committee Monday that a proposed light-rail project would not become a black hole for local tax money. Though construction of the Lynx Lyne could cost from \$600 million to \$612 million, rail supporters told the Martinez Transportation Commission that Orange County's contribution was relatively small – about \$11 million, or roughly 2 percent. The county also is being asked to pay \$3.7 million a

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year – increasing annually for inflation – to cover the system's operating costs. Lynx Executive Director Leo Auger told the panel a huge question – the amount needed to gain use of a private rail company's right of way – will be answered before the region formally commits to building the system. That question, he said, must be answered by fall when Lynx seeks Federal Transit Administration money for the project.... The agreement is critical because Lynx wants to operate its rail line next to CSX tracks in downtown Orlando. The company has resisted that proposal, saying – despite two evaluations to the contrary – that such an operation would be unsafe. CSX has said the only arrangement that would work is if Lynx paid to route CSX freight trains around downtown. County officials have worried Lynx might sign an agreement with Federal Transit – locking in the federal contribution to the project – before anyone knew how much it would cost to satisfy CSX. That would leave the county and the city of Orlando as the logical places to turn for any additional money.... Specifically, Orange County staff members have asked whether Lynx has underestimated how much it will cost to buy the land needed for the rail system. Lynx has budgeted \$116.8 million for right-of-way purchase, but working agency estimates put the figure closer to \$132 million.”

January 15, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (John Kennedy, Jim Stratton) – BUSH STOPS BULLET

TRAIN DEAD IN ITS TRACKS

“Gov. Jeb Bush derailed Florida’s \$6.3 billion bullet train Thursday, recommending that state lawmakers steer high-speed rail money toward more conventional mass transit. Florida taxpayers have spent almost \$22.4 million on high-speed rail during the past two years. But Bush’s move stops the state from spending another \$124 million earmarked during the next two years. ‘The financial structure of this deal was not viable – I am absolutely convinced of that,’ Bush said. In killing the project – which would have linked Miami, Orlando and Tampa – Bush endorsed increased spending on light-rail projects, aviation and port improvements.”

January 26, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LIGHT-RAIL STUDY PUTS COST HIGHER

“The price tag of a planned light-rail system is likely to be at least \$85 million more than expected, according to a county panel studying the proposal. Members of the Martinez Transportation Commission said Monday that they think the region’s transit authority has under-estimated the cost of buying property needed to build the project. If panel members – and Orange County staffers working for them – are correct, the bill for the 14.7-mile rail system could jump from \$600 million to \$685 million. Under the project’s tentative financing plan, construction and equipment costs paid by Orange County and the city of Orlando would increase from about \$11 million each to about \$20 million each.”

February 10, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LIGHT RAIL – IT’S STILL ALIVE

“Orange County commissioners kept Central Florida’s ailing light-rail project alive Tuesday, saying they could endorse the controversial proposal but only if certain conditions were met. After a more than four-hour public hearing that lasted until 11:40 p.m., commissioners voted 5-2 to keep the project moving. But in doing so, they did little to end confusion over how much of the rail system would get built, who would pay for what and how federal officials, whose agencies are being asked to pay the most, would view the entire episode.”

February 14, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy, Scott Maxwell) – POLITICAL TURF WAR

COULD KILL LIGHT RAIL

“Publicly, the fight is over where a light-rail train might be built. Orange County wants what could become a billion-dollar system to go one way. Orlando wants it to go another. The outcome has enormous significance for Central Florida. And at this point, it looks as though the choice of the route may fall to whoever wins the power struggle between these two governments....(Orlando Mayor) Hood is seeking a 14.7-mile link between downtown and International Drive. It would move workers to the county’s bustling corridor of hotels, restaurants and attractions, plus bring tourists into downtown. The previous County Commission tentatively approved the city route, but last week the panel and Martinez changed course. Now, with a new chairman and two new commissioners on the seven-member board, the commission desires a 13-mile line from I-Drive to Orlando International Airport. Martinez contends that line would be a sounder investment than the downtown link and remove more cars from area roads.”

February 17, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton, Scott Maxwell) – FEDS THREATEN TO PULL RAIL MONEY

“The head of the Federal Transit Administration is warning that Central Florida may lose federal money for its proposed rail project if Orange County insists on a rail system different than the one that was studied for more than two years. But the county chairman maintains he isn’t really demanding a different system – just a guarantee that county money pays for only those parts of the rail line south of Universal Studios Escape. The dueling messages – contained in letters written over the past few days – illustrate the shifting status of the rail project and the uncertainty over exactly what key players are asking for. The Federal Transit Administration indicates a growing concern with the local political landscape. In a recent letter to Lynx, the region’s transit authority, FTA Administrator Gordon Linton wrote that he was hesitant to approve federal money for Central Florida ‘while local decision-makers debate their financial commitment to the project.’ Linton was referring to a recent county resolution detailing a number of conditions county commissioners demanded before agreeing to help build the \$600 million to \$685 million rail leg. Chiefly, the county wants its money to pay solely for the segment of the project between SeaWorld and Universal Studios Escape. But the resolution went further, saying that all federal money coming to the project next year help pay for the

county’s I-Drive segment and for a leg to Orlando International Airport. Linton balked at that, saying FTA was prepared to finance the rail proposal it has studied for more than a year. That segment would run from SeaWorld to downtown Orlando.”

March 12, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – ORLANDO TAB MAY TRIPLE FOR LIGHT RAIL

“Light-rail costs to the city of Orlando would nearly triple under a financing plan detailed by Orange County on Thursday. The new numbers create yet another hurdle – one that may be tough for the city to overcome in its push for a \$600 million system connecting International Drive and downtown Orlando. Orange County leaders have maintained they never intentionally tried to kill rail plans. But when county commissioners passed a resolution last month that said they wouldn’t contribute any money to a route north of Universal Studios Escape, they knew that the city’s costs would increase. By how much became clear Thursday when county staffers unveiled numbers that show the city’s contribution would have to jump from \$27 million, including money from downtown merchants, to \$71 million. Meanwhile, the county’s contribution, which includes money from the convention center and International Drive merchants, would drop from \$108 million to about \$64 million. County staffers said the new figures shouldn’t be shocking, because Orange County vowed a month ago not to contribute to the downtown leg. They simply used numbers that Lynx provided them Thursday to figure out exactly what each share would be.... But since most county commissioners have stressed that they don’t plan to offer to spend any more money on the project, that leaves the onus on city officials to take the next step, County Chairman Mel Martinez said.”

April 2, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy, Scott Maxwell) – ORANGE’S CASH OFFER REVIVES LIGHT-RAIL IDEA

“Orlando and Orange County resolved some key financial differences Thursday, moving them closer toward building a \$601 million light-rail project that would run from downtown to tourist-laden International Drive. After months of bickering over how to pay for and where to place the train, county officials turned around and agreed to spend an extra \$14 million in tourist taxes for construction, plus another \$1 million in maintenance and operation expenses. Those concessions, along with the county turning over an interest-free state loan of \$11 million to the city, leave three major hurdles before the proposal can become more than blueprints:

- Orlando has to come up with \$15 million to cover its share of construction costs.
- A deal must be struck with the CSX railroad to use downtown tracks.
- The train must not cost more than its \$601 million estimate.”

April 6, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy) – ORLANDO KEEPS LIGHT RAIL MOVING

“Orlando remains \$15 million short of paying for its share of a planned light-rail train, but the City Council on Monday voted to keep the project rolling. ‘We’re doing what’s best for this community,’ said Mayor Glenda Hood before the council voted 4-2 in favor of the \$601 million proposition to link downtown with International Drive. Going against the plan were council members Betty Wyman and Don Ammerman, both of whom fear the costs will be much greater than anticipated.”

April 13, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – HARMONY ON LIGHT RAIL SCREECHES TO A HALT

“Two weeks after Orange County and Orlando leaders announced a compromise on light rail – one that consisted primarily of the county giving in to the city’s request for more money – the deal again appears in peril. What has changed this time, however, is that the constant negotiating over the \$600 million project went from simply confusing to downright misleading in the minds of some county commissioners.... When County Chairman Mel Martinez reversed his stance against light rail, saying he would support Orlando Mayor Glenda Hood’s compromise, he talked about offering up an additional \$13 million in tourist-tax money. What he didn’t say was that the new plan also calls for using at least \$3 million in local taxpayers’ money every year to pay for the commuter system’s maintenance. That’s something County Commissioner Clarence Hoenstine – who is likely the swing vote in this matter – said he didn’t know when he backed Martinez’s plan two weeks ago.... Commissioners Bob Freeman, Ted Edwards and Bob Sindler have all said they refuse to spend local tax money on the project – with Sindler and Freeman saying they oppose the whole route, from International Drive to downtown Orlando, no matter who is paying for it. The bottom line is that the current plan calls for \$56 million from Orange County, \$41 million from Orlando, \$23 million from I-Drive merchants, \$135 million from the state, \$330 million from the federal government, and \$15 million to be determined. On top of that, yearly operations would cost \$4.7 million for the county, \$2.7 million for the city, and \$3.7 million from the federal government.”

April 14, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – LIGHT RAIL HANGS ON – ORANGE WILL PAY MORE

“Light rail survived by one vote Tuesday, with Orange County Chairman Mel Martinez pushing an eleventh-hour plan that persuaded his fellow commissioners to support a \$600 million project they scoffed at just a few weeks ago. The close vote that shifted more costs to the county – and to businesses along International Drive – means that rail plans have cleared one of the most significant hurdles to date.

May 4, 1999 – Orlando Sentinel (Editorial) – A WOLF ON THE TRACKS

“Schoolchildren know the tale of the little boy who cried wolf. The kid runs around town crying about a big, bad wolf that doesn’t really exist. But when a wolf actually does materialize, nobody pays any attention to the boy’s cries for help. Well, it appears that CSX Transportation Inc. has decided to reprise the role of the poor, misguided boy who cried wolf. CSX executives insist that it’s impossible for the light rail project to use the railroad tracks through downtown Orlando unless transit officials are willing to pay as much as \$400 million to relocate freight traffic to another line west of town. That’s crying wolf. There are several reasonable and less costly ways to address the railroad’s concerns, which include safety and the availability of tracks for freight operations. But CSX executives must be willing to meet with local officials and discuss these issues in good faith – something that has not yet occurred. But giving in to the railroad’s demands is not financially realistic. The entire 17-mile stretch of the planned light-rail system, expected to run from downtown Orlando to the International Drive tourist district, is expected to cost about \$600 million. A fraction of that amount is earmarked for CSX.”

May 19, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – CSX STAYS COOL TO HAVING LIGHT RAIL NEAR FREIGHT TRACKS

“Despite months of talks, the Lynx transit agency and CSX Transportation still don’t agree on the most basic points of bringing light rail to downtown Orlando. Citing safety concerns, CSX says it will not allow light rail trains to run next to freight traffic. Lynx, meanwhile, says that’s the most reasonable plan and it has crafted a deal it hopes CSX will accept. In the proposal – sent Tuesday to CSX – LYNX:

- Offers to pay \$14.4 million to use about two miles of CSX right of way in downtown Orlando. The agency would build a separate set of light rail tracks on the company’s property.
- Drops the idea of upgrading a rail line west of Orange County. CSX proposed improving that line, saying it could then move its freight traffic out of downtown to make room for light rail. A recent report estimated the cost of that plan to be about \$100 million.
- Suggests that CSX get another company – Florida Central Railroad – to carry CSX goods into downtown. That way, the agency said, CSX customers are served but CSX trains wouldn’t run next to light rail cars. Florida Central has said it’s willing to run its trains in the same

corridor as the light rail cars.”

May 28, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LYNX PLANS NEW ROUTE FOR LIGHT-RAIL LINE

“In an effort to get International Drive support for a light-rail line, the Lynx transit agency agreed Thursday to shift a short segment of the system off of north I-Drive. But given some new rumblings on I-Drive, that concession may prove meaningless. Rather than run the electric rail line up the median of north I-Drive – a segment

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north of Sand Lake Road – Lynx will route it along a drainage easement at Sand Lake before hooking up with Carrier Drive. It would shoot east on Carrier, then turn north on Universal Boulevard before linking again with I-Drive near the Wet n Wild water park. North I-Drive businesses pushed for the change, saying the project, if built in the median, would play havoc with traffic. They said 18 months of construction on their main drag would put many small merchants out of business. Lynx has been studying the alternate route – which planners said should not add to the project’s \$600 million cost – for several months.”

June 10, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (writer not identified) – MONORAIL GROUP SAYS ITS BEE LINE PROJECT ON TRACK

“The private consortium seeking to build a billion-dollar monorail between International Drive and Port Canaveral told local officials Wednesday that the project is moving smoothly ahead. The Bee Line Monorail System Inc. hopes to operate the first magnetically levitated passenger train in the United States. The Bee Line Monorail System Inc. would run along the Bee Line Expressway and would link Port Canaveral, Orlando International Airport and International Drive. Bee Line Monorail officials think they could open the first phase – the link from I-Drive to the airport – by 2003. The leg to Port Canaveral would open in 2006, increasing ridership, officials say, to 19 million passengers annually. Ultimately, the consortium claims, the line would carry more than 35 percent of people traveling in the Bee Line corridor.”

June 11, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – TO RUN DOWNTOWN, LIGHT RAIL MAY NEED ELEVATED TRACKS

“With an Aug. 1 deadline looming over light rail, CSX Transportation says it will not allow Lynx to build its system next to CSX tracks and has suggested the agency consider elevating the electric train through downtown Orlando. Such a proposal could add millions to the price of \$600 million project – elevated systems are typically two to three times more expensive than those built at street level – and could prevent Lynx from meeting a deadline recently set by the Federal Transit Administration.... The Federal Transit has given the regional transit agency until Aug. 1 to wrap up a host of agreements needed to finance the controversial rail proposal.”

June 12, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LYNX OFFERS SINGLE TRACK FOR LIGHT RAIL

“In order to keep its light-rail system at street level in downtown Orlando, the Lynx transit agency has offered to operate its system on only one track, a concession it hopes will satisfy the safety concerns of CSX Transportation. By using one track downtown, Lynx will increase the amount of space between its trains and freight trains operated by CSX. The distance between the trains would increase from about

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17 to 31 feet. Also, CSX would retain the use of a third track in the center of the rail corridor. Under the original Lynx proposal, the regional transit agency would have used two tracks while CSX used just one. CSX would use the middle track sparingly, and during those times light-rail cars would be prohibited from downtown. CSX repeatedly rejected the original plan, saying it would bring the smaller, lighter electric rail vehicles dangerously close to its massive freight trains.”

June 15, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – CSX NIXES MODIFIED RAIL PLAN BY LYNX

“The rail company at the center of Central Florida’s light-rail proposal said Monday that a new operating plan from Lynx still doesn’t ease its safety concerns. In a letter to the region’s transit agency, CSX Transportation said an offer to increase the distance between its freight tracks and Lynx’s light-rail tracks is only a small improvement from the scenario CSX has opposed for more than a year. Lynx wants permission to build and run its \$600 million electric-rail line next to the CSX tracks through downtown Orlando. CSX has repeatedly refused, arguing that such an arrangement would be unsafe for three reasons:

- It would bring the smaller, lighter, electric-rail vehicles too close to its massive freight trains.

- It would increase the chances of car-vs.-train accidents because of the number of road crossings along the route.
- It would draw thousand of pedestrians close to the CSX tracks, increasing the risk of injury.

Lynx offered to increase the distance between the light-rail and the freight tracks from 17 to 31 feet. Agency officials hoped the extra space would satisfy CSX officials. It didn't. The company said the new idea 'marginally increases the distance between freight and light-rail tracks' but does not address the company's concerns about the road crossings or pedestrians. The company encouraged Lynx to consider alternative routes through downtown for the \$600 million rail line or to build an elevated system."

June 24, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LIGHT RAIL MAY TAKE TO THE SKY DOWNTOWN

"In an effort to save light rail, the region's transit agency has agreed to elevate the system through the heart of downtown Orlando. Lynx will fill in board members today on the details of the tentative agreement it has reached with CSX Transportation. The agency wanted a ground-level system running next to CSX tracks, but the company said that was unsafe. CSX suggested Lynx build its electric rail line and stations above ground. Agency officials acquiesced earlier this week to keep the proposal alive.... Financial details of the deal need to be finalized, but Lynx says it can build the system for \$600 million – the original price tag. Typically, elevated rail systems are more expensive than street-level lines. Also, Lynx has agreed to pay CSX for any losses it incurs during light rail's construction.

But the agency hopes to offset those costs by building one track instead of two, by building two stations downtown instead of three and by purchasing less right of way. Lynx will only need patches of CSX property to put up support structures. ((Steve Willis, assistant executive director) Willis estimated the elevated system will add about \$17 million to the construction costs. But that amount will be covered by a contingency fund built into the \$600.1 million budget."

June 25, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – SEAWORLD, LYNX FORGE LIGHT-RAIL DEAL

"In its battle to build the northern end of a light-rail line, the region's transit agency got some help from the south. While Lynx wrestled publicly with CSX Transportation, SeaWorld Orlando was prodding the agency to re-route the southern

end of its planned electric-rail line. SeaWorld wanted the line to travel west on Westwood Drive instead of Sea Harbor Drive. The change would keep the rail line from crossing SeaWorld driveways and would save some of the attraction's parking spaces. So while Lynx and CSX feuded loudly about downtown right of way, agency consultants quietly shifted the SeaWorld segment of the project. The result: SeaWorld – a major player on International Drive – is satisfied, and Lynx saves about \$10 million to \$15 million, much of it in right-of-way costs. That is needed cash now that Lynx has conceded to CSX and agreed to elevate the rail line through downtown.”

June 25 – July 1, 1999 The Orlando Business Journal (Jill Kreuger) – TO THE NORTH, LIGHT RAIL GETS A SECOND LOOK

“In an unexpected turnabout, local transportation officials and cities to the north of Orlando have agreed to take a fresh look at light rail. While the first leg of the proposed light-rail system is under fire in Orlando, some of the earliest and most serious opposition to the railway has come from those towns and cities on the second, northern section of the route: Maitland, Winter Park, Altamonte Springs and Eatonville. Those towns have spent months unsuccessfully attempting to persuade light-rail officials to reconsider the currently favored route, near existing CSX rail tracks. They argue that the system will disrupt nearby businesses and neighborhoods – and may violate their state-mandated growth management plans. All four favor an alternative light-rail route running alongside the I-4 corridor. Now, representatives from northern cities in Orange and Seminole counties, the Florida Department of Transportation and the Lynx public transportation system have agreed to take a second look at the two competing routes, with a supplement to the original light-rail study.”

July 21, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – ORANGE VOTE GIVES MONEY TO LIGHT RAIL – BY A HAIR

“Light rail won a razor-thin victory Tuesday as Orange County commissioners tentatively agreed to help pay for the controversial transit system. Despite a parade

of opponents – who arrived by the busload – board members voted 4-3 to OK a preliminary financing agreement. If ultimately approved in its final form, it would provide up to \$56.4 million to build the \$600 million system and another \$4.7 million annually – with adjustments for inflation – to help run it. The money for construction would come from the county's hotel tax, and the operating money

would come from the resort tax and from property taxes paid by new development on International Drive.

July 22, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Gwyneth K. Shaw) – ORLANDO AGREES TO PAY FOR ITS SHARE OF LIGHT-RAIL LINE

“The Orlando City Council on Wednesday agreed to a final pact that funds the city’s portion of a \$600 million light-rail project. Council members Don Ammerman and Betty Wyman voted against the agreement, which calls for the city to chip in \$31.2 million for the rail line itself and \$2.7 million in annual operating costs. The city’s downtown Community Redevelopment Agency will add another \$16.4 million to help build the line, in the form of a loan from the city repaid with money generated by a special downtown taxing district. The system’s first leg will run from Livingston Street in downtown Orlando to the Central Florida Parkway.... But even as the city firmed up its commitment, wild cards remain. The Orange County Commission still must take a final vote on the project, and Universal Studios Escape and CSX Transportation also have to sign final agreements. International Drive merchants have tentatively agreed to a deal for their share.”

September 8 , 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton, Scott Maxwell) – I-DRIVE HANDS LIGHT RAIL A VICTORY

“Central Florida’s controversial light-rail project won a big battle Tuesday only to learn that the outcome of the war remains in question. Hours after International Drive representatives agreed to pump \$23 million into the \$600 million proposal, a key Orange County commissioner said he might pull his support for the project. Commissioner Clarence Hoenstine, who in the past has cast critical swing votes supporting light rail, said he is having second thoughts. The Orange County Commission will take what could be a final vote on light rail today.”

September 9, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell, Jim Stratton) – END OF LINE FOR LIGHT RAIL

“Light rail appears to be dead after two years of public bickering, closed-door conversations and political pressure. In a decision that shocked both supporters and opponents, Orange County commissioners voted 4-3 Wednesday against contributing money to the controversial \$600 million rail system that would have connected downtown Orlando and International Drive. The vote appears to kill a project that seemed to be rolling toward reality just a few days earlier.... It was Commissioner Clarence Hoenstine who flipped his stance at the eleventh hour Wednesday afternoon, dooming the project. For months, Hoenstine had joined

Martinez and Commissioners Mary I. Johnson and Homer Hartage in keeping the project alive. But Hoenstine said Wednesday that he had too many questions that Lynx rail planners had never answered. Though Lynx and city officials seemed to accept that final details would be worked out later, Hoenstine said that he no longer could. 'I am looking out for the protection of Lynx, as well as the city and the county – and everyone,' he said. But those words didn't appease those who have championed rail, resuscitating it each time the plans escaped death. The vote also left rail backers questioning whether any rail system would ever be built in Central Florida."

September 10, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – MONORAIL IDEA FOR I-DRIVE MAY BE NEXT STOP

"The death of light rail could give life to an idea some property owners on International Drive have been pushing for more than a year. A monorail system serving the tourist area is worth considering, said Orange County Commissioner Clarence Hoenstine – the official who cast the vote killing a long-planned, \$600 million light-rail proposal. Hoenstine and other commissioners who opposed the rail project have long questioned its downtown-to-I-Drive route. They say it would be better to serve only I-Drive and link it to Orlando International Airport – maybe using a monorail. But that technology was rejected as impractical and too expensive by Lynx planners and board members."

September 22, 1999 The Wall Street Journal (Evan Perez)– RAIL PROJECT DELAYS FILING FUNDING PLAN

"An ambitious high-speed rail project planned between Orlando's tourist corridor and Port Canaveral is off track even before it pulls out of the station. Bee Line Monorail System Inc., the Pompano Beach company planning the 54-mile passenger and freight link, last week missed a financing-plan deadline that was considered key to negotiating a lease for the right-of-way with the state of Florida. Meanwhile, it is fighting off an uprising by some of its investors and by vendors who haven't been paid in months. Under terms of an agreement signed in January with the Florida Department of Transportation, Bee Line was to have presented to state officials a financing plan and ridership study by Sept. 13. DOT officials gave the company a 30-day extension after it said it couldn't meet the deadline. Gene Garfield, chairman and chief executive of Bee Line Monorail, says the company plans to have the financing plan ready by next month. He partly blames the delay on late engineering changes, which he says will actually increase the number of passengers and improve revenues. He also says delays in getting an agreement with the DOT have slowed his efforts to get financing secured.... Bruce Fischman, a Miami lawyer representing the investors, says, 'It's our position that (the investors) were hoodwinked.' He says investors were falsely told the project would cost about \$800 million when \$1.5 billion is more accurate. The suit says that investors were told construction costs would run about \$12.5 million per mile, but that current estimates put the cost at nearly \$35 million per mile. Mr. Garfield disputes that estimate and puts the cost per mile now at \$28 million.... In original plans filed with

the Florida Department of Transportation, Bee Line had said its trains would run about 120 mph, because the state at the time had granted a franchise on high-speed trains to a partly taxpayer-funded high-speed rail project from Miami to Orlando and Tampa. After that project was cancelled this year, however, lawmakers agreed to let the Bee Line train go faster. Mr. Garfield now says the trains will run up to 300 mph, making the Orlando to Port Canaveral run in about 20 minutes. He says that the company has been making engineering changes that would allow that, and that the company will probably miss its 2003 targeted date to begin operation.”

September 28, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy, Jim Stratton) – LIGHT RAIL’S RIDE NOT OVER IN ORLANDO

“Orlando’s moribund light-rail project from downtown to International Drive was revived Monday night by Mayor Glenda Hood. Hood won the backing of the City Council by a narrow 4-3 count Monday night to push for a shortened version of the transit system that appeared dead after the Orange County Commission nixed its support Sept. 8. The new plan calls for a track running from Livingston Street downtown to the Belz Factory Outlet Mall at I-Drive, a distance of about eight miles. The previous plan was 14.7 miles. The project would cost \$325 million, with the federal government paying \$222.8 million, the state \$48.1 million and Orlando \$48.1 million....The state and Orlando would be equally responsible for \$7 million in annual operation and maintenance costs, including any fare-box shortfalls.... Because the train would stop at the city’s southern limits, Orange County would not be asked to pay or participate.”

September 30, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Tamara Lytle) – FEDS OK ORLANDO LIGHT-RAIL CASH

“Orlando on Wednesday won the federal backing it needed for light rail. After pleas from local lawmakers, a House-Senate conference committee included \$5 million for the controversial project in the \$13.2 billion national transportation budget approved for next year. The committee, which has the last word on individual budget items before President Clinton gets the bill, had planned to eliminate Orlando’s money.... Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, said the shorter line will cost \$325 million, compared with the \$600 million that the longer route would have cost. The federal government’s share of the new line will be \$228 million instead of the \$345 million that Congress would have kicked in for a longer route, he said.”

October 28, 1999 The Apopka Planter (writer not identified) – APOPKA HEARS ABOUT
COMMUTER RAIL LINE

“A commuter rail system designed to eventually carry Apopka residents to and from Orlando every day is in the works again as the leaders of Florida Central Railroad presented the plan to the Apopka City Council on Wednesday, October 20, at City Hall. The rail line is part of a pilot program Florida Central Railroad hopes to start

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with money that would have been used for the high speed bullet train that would have connected Orlando, Tampa and Miami. The rail, which early estimates have running about \$60 million, will be paid for almost exclusively by the state and federal government, said Ben Biscan, president of Florida Central Railroad. The state would pay for upgrading the current tracks and the federal government would pay for the commuter cars. Biscan and Louis Rotundo of Florida Central estimate the pilot program could be up and running in two years at the earliest, although it will likely take at least two and one-half years. Biscan said this is a real opportunity to ease the traffic needs in Northwest Orange County and to get traffic coming from Lake County off U.S. Highway 441.”

November 10, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – ORANGE DOES AN ABOUT-
FACE ON LIGHT RAIL

“Light rail made its way back on to the priority list of Orange County commissioners Tuesday – this time with a renewed dedication to build a leg between the airport and International Drive. The plan to connect the Orange County Convention Center and Orlando International Airport is in its infancy. There has been no talk of costs – or who would pay them – and there is no time line for the project. Neither has there been much attention paid to the gaping hole that would exist between this airport leg and the city’s planned downtown route. County Chairman Mel Martinez said plans to connect the two lines will follow. But for now, Martinez says his board wants to get back to the mass transit efforts that a majority of commissioner originally supported. ‘This is the leg that makes the most sense,’ he said after his board informally agreed to pursue planning. And the way Martinez sees things, the county should build the potentially best-traveled link before it builds anything else. Still, the board’s actions many confuse some – because the same group killed plans for a 15-mile rail system from downtown Orlando to the convention center just two months ago. The board backed out of that \$600 million joint plan with the city, saying that the line would have been too costly and would not have attracted enough riders. That left the city to push through a shortened \$325 million, eight-

mile route, between downtown and the Belz Factory Outlet Mall at the southern city line. That move angered some residents, and prompted one group to start efforts to recall Mayor Glenda Hood. But most county commissioners enthusiastically endorsed the airport leg Tuesday, saying they have always thought more people want to get from the airport to the convention center and International Drive than from downtown Orlando to I-Drive.”

November 17, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) - \$1 MILLION DISPUTE MAY LEAD TO LAWSUIT

“To hear Orange County commissioners tell it, the city of Orlando is trying to spend \$1 million in county money pegged to fix roads on light rail – a project that county residents don’t want. To hear city leader’s side, they aren’t using anybody’s money but their own. And they are tiring of the county’s efforts to kill their light-rail project. But what might appear to be another bureaucratic disagreement about light rail this time could end up in court – with taxpayers on both sides possibly footing

the bill.... This complicated money war stems from a deal that the city and county created two years ago. At that time, they agreed to set up a special taxing district around the intersection of Conroy Road and Interstate 4. The \$2.3 million raised by the district was supposed to help pay for a new interchange between the roads. But the state agreed to pay all the costs for the Interchange, meaning the \$2.3 million wasn’t needed. The city and state then agreed to put that money toward the \$325 million light-rail route connecting downtown Orlando and Belz Factory Outlet Mall in south Orlando. But no one asked the county’s opinion. And that’s where (County Commissioner Ted Edwards) Edwards said they went wrong. Edwards persuaded the rest of his board to ask for their share of the \$2.3 million back, because the county board voted earlier this year not to help build the light-rail system within the city. He argued that the money should be spent on other county roads.”

November 19, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – TRAIN WOULD LINK OUR 2 COASTS

“The bullet train is dead, but some heavy hitters are breathing life into the idea of building a different type of rail line across Central Florida. A state transportation panel on Thursday recommended giving \$900,000 to a consortium that wants to study the potential for a rail line stretching from Port Canaveral to Orlando to Tampa St. Petersburg. The consortium includes Walt Disney World, the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce and a group trying to bring the Olympics to

Florida. Gov. Jeb Bush told the Florida Department of Transportation to select promising projects to finance with money that would have gone to the now dead \$6 billion bullet train proposal. The recommendations, finalized late Thursday, must still be approved by the Legislature. Bush killed the high-speed rail project after taking office in January and invited communities to create other transportation plans. A group calling itself the Central Florida Technology Transit Corridor Consortium crafted the Central Florida proposal. As envisioned by team members, the rail line would link Port Canaveral, Orlando and the Tampa St. Petersburg area. It would likely have stops at Orlando and Tampa International airports and a spur to downtown Orlando. At this point, the proposal exists only in the grant request submitted to the state by the consortium. But the notion has attracted some high-profile players, including:

- Florida 2012, the Tampa-based group trying to lure the Olympics to Florida.
- The Florida High Tech Corridor Council, an organization formed to bring high-tech industry to Central Florida.
- Publix supermarkets
- GTE
- The Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Walt Disney World

Disney supports the study because it thinks a Central Florida rail line could ease traffic, making it easier for tourists and employees to visit the parks, said Walt Disney World spokeswoman Diane Ledder.”

November 26, 1999 The Apopka Chief (John Palmerini) – COMMUTER RAIL PROJECT TO GET \$8 MILLION FROM STATE

“The bid for a commuter rail system serving the Apopka area got a big boost when the Florida Department of transportation decided to give the project \$8 million. The \$8 million came from the \$70 million in “Fast track” money that was originally planned to go to a high speed rail bullet train that would have connected Miami, Tampa and Orlando. That \$8 million appropriation was the second largest appropriation in the state, following \$9.9 million given to the Jacksonville Economic Development Committee for aviation industry facilities.”

December 4, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy, Jim Stratton) – FORGET ABOUT LIGHT RAIL

“Orlando’s much-maligned \$325 million light-rail project appeared dead Friday after the state took away its money and Mayor Glenda Hood conceded the train should not be built. ‘It’s not workable. It’s not doable,’ said Hood, who had backed the proposal despite staunch opposition from Orange County and members of her own City Council. The seven-mile system would have linked downtown with a shopping mall on the north end of International Drive. Construction could have started within a year. But state Department of Transportation Secretary Tom Barry informed Hood on Friday that he was withdrawing \$48.1 million tentatively set aside for light rail, along with another \$3.5 million for annual operating and maintenance expenses. Without that money, the city could not afford to carry on. Barry told Hood the plan had generated too much acrimony and precious little support. There was no agreement, for example, for how or whether the line would be extended to serve more of the region. Detractors included state Rep. Tom Feeney, R-Oviedo, Orlando attorney John Morgan, who ran ads critical of light rail, and talk-show host Doug Guetzloe, who launched a recall of Hood based on her support of the train.”

December 10, 1999 Orlando Sentinel (Sandra Pedicini) – VOLUSIA OFFICIALS TAKE UP ISSUE OF LIGHT RAIL

“Now that light rail appears to be dead, Volusia County wants to take a closer look at another way to get residents into the Orlando area: commuter rail. The County Council said Thursday that it wants to explore the possibility of using an existing railroad track that goes into Seminole and Orange counties.... A presentation Thursday by the Parsons Transportation Group said that about 7,000 people a day would use a route running from DeLand to Orlando. Because it would use an existing track, commuter rail could get started fairly quickly, planners said. The cost of starting a system would be \$68 million, and the operating costs would be \$8.5 million a year.”

CHAPTER FOUR – THE 2000’S: NEW DIRECTIONS SOUGHT – STATEWIDE RAIL DIES AGAIN WHILE REGIONAL COMMUTER RAIL ARISES

After the light rail debacle and its problems with CSX, attention turns to commuter rail and the sharing of the CSX-owned mainline tracks through Orlando. CSX maintains steadfast in its safety and liability concerns about the inter-mixing of

passenger and freight trains. Its concerns appear to be justified when CSX is held responsible for an Amtrak accident in 2002 that kills four passengers in a derailment due to faulty track. A break-through comes with the state deciding to buy the CSX tracks and to re-locate some of the freight trains to an alternate line.

Meanwhile, maglev bows out of the picture in Florida, in favor of high-speed rail (bullet train) on conventional tracks. But should it stop only at Walt Disney World after leaving Orlando International Airport on its way to Tampa or should it also stop at International Drive? And can the state afford it? Those questions are studied and debated over and over again.

January 7-13, 2000 The Orlando Business Journal (Jill Kreuger) – OFFICIALS GRAPPLING WITH LIFE AFTER RAIL

“When the state pulled the plug on funding light rail, it also derailed transit plans pegged to the \$325 million project. Now, local officials are scrambling to rethink millions of dollars in planned transportation projects....Because light rail was meant as a regional mass transit system, transportation agencies and local governments incorporated light rail into their own long-range plans. For instance, the Florida Department of Transportation included light rail; in plans to widen Interstate 4. MetroPlan’s comprehensive plans for regional transit include light rail. Lynx, the regional bus system that was to build, operate and maintain light rail, was expecting the passenger train to connect with its own buses....Even if federal funding weren’t affected by the sudden hole in the region’s transit plans, there are other problems. For instance, taking rail out of the Florida Department of Transportation’s plans to widen I-4 could set the project schedule back because prior approvals included rail.”

January 16, 2000 The (Daytona Beach) News-Journal (Mark Schleub) – DEAL MAY PUT MAGLEV BACK ON TRACK

“A company that received \$600,000 from Volusia County to help build a prototype high-speed train now plans to build a train in Virginia, a deal that could bring its Edgewater site out of mothballs. American Maglev Technologies recently announced its intention to build a ‘magnetic levitation’ light rail system on the campus of Old Dominion University in Norfolk. The passenger system will consist of only a single car, and travel less than a mile at a maximum speed of 40 mph – far slower than the 250-mph vision that has sparked interest in maglev technology for decades – but company and university officials hope this test project will lead to

more funding and bigger projects. Leaders in Volusia County have their own hope that the county's speculative investment in American Maglev Technologies, a company that failed to deliver on a promise to create thousands of jobs, may pay off after all."

January 19, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Dan Tracy) – LIGHT RAIL'S \$45 MILLION GOES DOWN THE DRAIN

"Here's what Orlando taxpayers got for the \$45 million spent on the defunct light-rail train: paper. Hundreds and hundreds of pounds of it. Enough, in fact, to fill an entire room of file cabinets. Here's what taxpayers did not get: land. Or a train. Or tracks. Here's where the money went: consultants. They, in turn, created a slew of documents. Among those reports: a final environmental impact study, vehicle and systems designs, engineering reports, architectural renderings and financing options. Six main consulting firms billed Lynx for more than 233,000 hours during the past two years. The hourly rates ranged from \$9.634 for clerical help to \$109 for top executives. The Orlando firm DeLeuw Cather & co., for example, had 14 people on the payroll designing the train cars and figuring out how the system might work. They spent more than 25,600 hours on the task, costing Lynx more than \$5 million. On the day that the project was killed – Dec. 3, 1999 – the six primary consultants had 133 people working essentially full-time on light rail, many of them sitting at desks taking up almost the entire third floor of the Orange County Educational Leadership Center....The major consultants were CG2MHILL of Denver, DeLeuw Cather & Co., Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas of New York City, DMJM/ICF Kaiser Engineers, Inc. of Fairfax, Va., Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehart of Orlando and KPMG Peat Marwick of New York City. Those firms also employed an unknown number of sub-consultants, whose hours were not tracked by Lynx. Sub-consultants were paid by the main consultants with funds from Lynx."

January 26, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Jon Steinman) – CENTER TRANSPORT IDEAS CIRCULATE

"The massive, \$748 million expansion of the Orange County Convention Center is three years from completion, but already there is concern about how thousands of conventioners will get from their hotel rooms to the cavernous hall without choking already-crowded roads. Orange County commissioners on Tuesday urged convention center officials to speed work on a transportation plan that would link the center to International Drive area hotels. Project plans included a circulator system that would provide such a link. The system would not have to be in place by 2003 when the expansion is set to be completed, but commissioners were eager to hear options....Options commissioners will consider in July include a monorail line, a cable-pulled system, a wheel-based train similar to the kind used at Orlando International Airport, and a dedicated bus lane similar to downtown Orlando's Lymmo. The options vary greatly in price. The wheel-based train costs the most - \$60 million to \$65 million a mile – and a dedicated bus lane costs the least: \$6.5 million a mile. Other than wanting the circulator to link the convention center with International Drive and area hotels, no routes have been discussed."

January 27, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – RIDE THE RAILS – IDEA THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY

“What a difference a few months makes. Plans to take light rail from downtown Orlando to International Drive may be dead – but rail efforts heading north actually are gaining steam. In fact, to look at all of the emerging and ongoing plans for rail, one might forget that Central Florida politicians nearly tore one another apart last fall before sending the proposed rail system to its grave. Just last week, local leaders decided to spend \$700,000 in state money studying a route that could take rail from Orlando to Seminole County. And within a few weeks, leaders from all of the region’s towns and counties will be asked to take the first step toward building another system – all the way to Volusia County. But the rail frenzy doesn’t stop there. Add those two plans to Orange County’s efforts to build some sort of monorail around its convention center and the struggling effort to take rail to Lake County, and you have four ongoing rail efforts. That may baffle observers who remember the painfully drawn-out fights over costs and routes that ultimately killed light rail last year. But most local officials are actually pushing for these new studies.The buzz words with these new plans are ‘consensus’ and ‘cooperation’. Transportation planners figure that if all of the cities and counties involved can agree on a route to begin with, then they will be willing to help pay for it. Then the deals won’t fall apart. And in these very early planning stages of projects that would be many years from completion, the consensus appears to be there. Here’s a look at the active efforts:

-Light rail from Orlando to State Road 436 in Seminole County. This is the plan already being studied with state money. It has earned the early support of virtually every local community with a unanimous vote from Metroplan earlier this month. The two communities that protested most a few years ago – Maitland and Winter Park – said that they like any light rail idea – as long as it doesn’t split their communities in half the way the original plan proposed. A plan that follows near Interstate 4 may be the most agreed upon route....

-Commuter rail from Orlando to Volusia County. This idea is much more amorphous so far... That idea has earned high marks with the Volusia County Council, said council Chairwoman Past Northey, who said the cities there might be more receptive to commuter rail, which is heavier and would have fewer stops.

-Commuter rail from Orlando to Lake County. State transportation officials confirmed this week what many people have been whispering locally for months: this plan is mostly pie-in-the-sky right now. Officials say they like the idea of running trains through Eustis, Apopka, Zellwood and Orlando a few times a day. But in a recent memo, state Transportation Secretary Tom Barry called the unspecific plans that didn’t even include agreements with

local governments too vague for state money this year.
-Rail around the convention center. County commissioners on Tuesday agreed that some sort of transit is needed to take convention attendees from one room to another and back to their hotel rooms. Monorail, people movers, cable cars and bus lanes are all being considered.”

January 28, 2000 Apopka Chief (Irene Zabytko) – LOCAL COMMUTER RAIL GETS BUMPED FROM GOVERNOR’S FUNDING

“A Northwest Orange County company’s bid for a commuter rail system serving Apopka and the surrounding areas may have been stopped in its tracks before it even got under way. In a letter written January 19, Thomas F. Barry Jr., Florida Department of Transportation secretary, informed Florida Central Railroad, the Plymouth-based railroad company slated to build the project, that he could not recommend the \$8 million the project was originally set to receive in the governor’s proposed budget. In the letter, Barry said he based his decision on the lack of feasibility or ridership studies for the commuter rail service. The money would have gone to upgrade existing railroad tracks that run from Lake County through Apopka to Orlando. While Barry’s decision at least delays funding for the project, Ben Biscan, vice president and general manager of Florida Central Railroad, was optimistic about the long-term feasibility of the proposed commuter rail.”

February 1, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Robert Perez) – MICA PLUGS COMMUTER RAIL

“As an alternative to Orange County’s failed light-rail project, U.S. Rep. John Mica wants regional officials to support a commuter train that would run from Volusia to Osceola counties along the CSX rail line. The 52-mile commuter rail project could be up and running in as little as three years, giving Interstate 4 motorists a much-needed alternative. Mica, R-Winter Park, presented the plan to about 80 elected leaders and transportation officials Monday at AAA headquarters in Lake Mary. The plan is one way to salvage nearly \$60 million spent on light rail and rail studies over the past 18 years, Mica said. The price tag for the commuter rail system – between \$38 million and \$59 million – would be a fraction of the \$600 million once contemplated for 14 miles of light rail between downtown Orlando and SeaWorld. Unspent federal dollars originally allocated for light rail could cover much of the project’s cost, Mica said.”

February 6, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Charlene Oldham) – MICA PLAN FACES OLD RAIL

“A new plan for a commuter-rail system stretching from Volusia to Osceola County is being called ‘a vision that needs to be fleshed out’. But the vision, provided last week by U.S. Rep. John Mica, may prove so farsighted that it’s blind to current political sentiment. After a bitter fight that ended in defeat for light rail last year, many local officials see roads, not rail, as the immediate answer to Central Florida’s transportation troubles. Despite that, Mica’s plan is one of a handful of proposed rail projects trying to dodge some of the fatal bullets that killed light rail. In touting his 52-mile route, Mica said it could be running within three years and could salvage some of the \$60 million spent on light rail and rail studies. But one key issue – the route the train would take – is not even close to being resolved. Like light rail, the system could follow existing CSX Transportation Inc. tracks. But CSX has not given its blessing to using the tracks, with officials saying they haven’t even seen Mica’s proposal.”

February 9, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Editorial) – MOVING ON OUT

“One year ago, Central Florida was the envy of cities big and small struggling with growing traffic and pleading for federal aid. The federal government had earmarked Central Florida as the only community in the nation it would virtually guarantee financial support to begin building a new rail system. Private financial commitments from International Drive and downtown Orlando businesses had all but clinched the deal. Other communities would get money to expand existing rail lines. But only Central Florida would get cash – as much as \$330 million – to build a brand-new starter line. Oh, what a difference a year makes. Many of those same communities that once coveted Central Florida’s fortunes now are laughing all the way to the bank. President Bill Clinton’s just released his budget for the next fiscal year, and guess what: All the money once promised to Central Florida is headed for other communities just as desperate to solve traffic woes. Baltimore, Chicago, Denver – all are in line for federal support to expand their rail networks. Memphis, Minneapolis-St. Paul, the Hudson-Bergen waterfront in New Jersey – those communities also will benefit from Central Florida’s myopic vision. Portland, Salt Lake City, Seattle and Washington, D.C., will get a share, as well. And, in a particularly ironic twist, Pittsburg will receive some of the cash once destined for Orlando, to expand its rail system. That’s where Paul Skoutelas – the original architect of Central Florida’s light-rail system and the former head of Lynx, the region’s mass-transit agency – now works. The good news is that all those rail experts Lynx hired to advance a rail alternative in Central Florida will have plenty of new job opportunities. The bad news: Central Florida motorists will be left stranded in traffic. The Central Florida-elected officials who squandered the federal

commitment to local transit try to cover their blunder by saying that the money should have been used to build new roads. Clearly, someone wasn't paying attention. Federal law won't allow that. In 1998, congress specifically earmarked money for transit projects and for road-building projects separately. The transit money couldn't be spent to build a highway. But the four Orange County commissioners who ultimately killed Central Florida's light-rail project apparently thought that they knew better. Congress erred, they say. Right or wrong, Congress makes the law of the land. So, like it or not, the money that Central Florida all but had in its hip pocket instead will be spent building stronger communities and mass-transit alternatives to traffic-clogged roads in Denver, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis and so on. Where does that leave Central Florida? Sucking the exhaust fumes of other communities working to solve their traffic woes."

February 23, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Charlene Oldham) – GOP ACTIVIST PUSHES RAIL AMENDMENT

"Barely a year after Gov. Jeb Bush killed a similar proposal, a Republican activist and longtime rail supporter is orchestrating an effort to let voters decide whether the state needs high-speed rail. Retired Lakeland business man C. C. "Doc" Dockery is petitioning to get a constitutional amendment on the November ballot that, if passed, would require the state to start building a high-speed rail system connecting Florida's five largest metropolitan areas by Nov. 1, 2003. Dockery, former chairman of the Florida High Speed Rail Commission, needs signatures from

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435,540, or 8 percent, of the state's registered voters by Aug. 3 to get the issue on the ballot. So far, he said, he has spent about \$177,000 of his own money to gather about 63, 500 signatures. Last week, the secretary of state verified 43,554 signatures from registered Florida voters, enough to forward the petition to Attorney General Bob Butterworth's office."

February 27, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Marianne Arneberg) – GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES

"Central Florida is at a crossroads. And, as usual, cars, trucks, and buses are backed up in all directions. What's the community to do? The economic consequences of doing nothing could cripple the region. For example:

- Traffic congestion cost Orlando more than \$555 million in 1997, or about \$670 per driver, according to the Texas Transportation Institute's 1999 Annual Mobility Report. Those costs included more than 50 million gallons

of fuel and the 41 hours a year the average driver spends stuck in Orlando-area traffic.

- In the past three years, Central Florida has exceeded federal air-pollution standards 35 times – pollution caused in large part by car exhaust. That’s important because the federal government which provides roughly a third of the money used to build new roads in the region, could cut off the cash spigot if the region does nothing to stem pollution.
- Metroplan Orlando, the local agency responsible for transportation planning in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties, has identified \$8.2 billion worth of needed road and transit improvements in Central Florida during the next 20 years. But it’s \$4.5 billion short of paying that tab.
- There is a net increase of about 40,000 new cars and trucks registered each year in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. That’s akin to four lanes of cars parked bumper to bumper on Interstate 4 – between Orlando City Hall and the St. Johns River Bridge. And that doesn’t included similar growth in Volusia and Lake counties.

Now, after rejecting \$330 million from the federal government to build a light-rail system to relieve that pressure, the community is scrambling to regroup. No fewer than eight mass-transit proposals have surfaced to replace the defunct light-rail project. Building new roads tops the priority lists of local leaders. And three different meetings are planned or recently have been held to help regional leaders coalesce around a single transportation ‘vision’ for Central Florida. But that won’t get traffic moving any time soon. ‘Our credibility in Washington is shot,’ said U.S. Rep. John Mica, who successfully lobbied federal lawmakers to support Central Florida’s light-rail project. It was the only ‘new rail start’ President Bill Clinton recommended for federal financing in his budget proposal last year. But now, Mica said, ‘nobody wants to give us the time of day.’

Tallahassee isn’t much more receptive. Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Tom Barry pulled state financing for the project in December because, he said, ‘there wasn’t regional support for a regional system.’...

Even neighboring communities are leery of Central Florida’s mass-transit commitment. A group of Tampa Bay-area elected officials pushing a bid to secure the 2012 Olympic Games have proposed a rail system that would link Tampa with Walt Disney World, Orlando International Airport and Daytona Beach. But that plan would bypass the International Drive tourist area and Universal Studios Escape. Olympic organizer Ed Turanchik in Tampa said that particular alignment was chosen purposefully to ‘avoid the confounding issues’ that arose when Universal and a handful of merchants who first supported light rail decided to oppose the

project as it neared design completion.”

March 19, 2000 Seminole Herald (Bill Kerns) – MICA: DECISIONS NEEDED ON RAIL

“The next two months will be crucial for plans to build a demonstration commuter rail system in Central Florida. Seminole, Volusia and Osceola counties have each endorsed a proposal by U.S. Congressman John Mica (R-Winter Park) to create a 52-mile commuter rail system by 2003 which would run from southwest Volusia County to the Orlando International Airport, with a 10-mile extension to Kissimmee. Orange County is the key holdout for the three-to-five-year federal demonstration project. A transportation bill will be signed by President Bill Clinton prior to Sept. 30, with or without funding for commuter rail in Central Florida. The next round of major transportation funding is in 2003. ‘If we don’t move forward with something, we’ll get nothing,’ Mica said. ‘If I don’t have a decision by the end of May, beginning of June, you can kiss this money good-bye. There are 195 communities that want commuter or light rail. This will be gone in a flash.’

The CSX rail lines which would be used for commuter rail run through the heart of Maitland and Winter Park, causing concern among residents of those cities about how commuter rail would affect the downtown areas. Orlando has similar concerns.”

March 29, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – COMMUTER RAIL STILL LIVES

“A commuter-rail train from Lake County into downtown Orlando cleared its most significant hurdle to date Tuesday when Orange County commissioners agreed to help pay to study the system. The county’s contribution is expected to be matched by Orlando, Lake County, Metroplan Orlando and Florida Central Railroad, the group pushing the plan. The 35-mile routes would follow existing tracks along U.S. Highway 441, through Eustis, Tavares, Apopka and ending in downtown Orlando at Robinson Street near Interstate 4. Although questions still abound about the fledgling system’s costs and benefits, the 6-1 vote was a significant milestone from commissioners who mention mass transit as a punch line for jokes more often than a serious endeavor. Commissioners stressed that their support only was for the study – and included no commitment for the project that could cost anywhere from \$65 million to \$105 million.”

April 14-20, 2000 The Orlando Business Journal (Jill Kreuger) – CONSULTANTS: BEE LINE RAIL ON TRACK

“Gene Garfield’s proposed Bee Line Monorail has lost momentum, but may be regaining speed, say consultants working on the project. Last year, the Florida Department of Transportation agreed to negotiate a land lease with Bee Line Monorail Systems, Inc., the private business group hoping to secure right of way along the Bee Line Expressway, the preferred path for the 54-mile-long magnetically levitated train system. But by September of last year, the company, which is headed by Garfield, had run into funding problems. It missed a state-imposed deadline for the finance plan, as well as a comprehensive ridership and revenue study. Further, before the end of 1999, Bee Line Monorail had missed deadlines for providing the state with a comprehensive ridership and revenue study and traffic analysis. The group asked for additional extensions, which put the project seven months behind its original schedule: Bee Line Monorail expected to break ground the first week in January. Now, ‘We are still not sure when they will begin,’ says Cheryl Harrison-Lee, public transportation manager for the state Department of Transportation’s Central Florida district. In fact, says Lee, the state is still awaiting the Bee Line finance plan, ridership study, traffic analysis and update construction schedule.”

April 28-May 4, 2000 The Orlando Business Journal (Jill Kreuger) – COAST-TO-COAST RAILWAY STALLED?

“A private transportation group made up of some of the state’s biggest businesses has been dealt a setback by state lawmakers. The Central Florida Technology Transit Corridor Consortium wants to evaluate and, if it makes sense, develop a plan for a five-port, five-city rail line linking Pinellas County and Brevard’s Space Coast. However, the new state budget now being negotiated directs the consortium to study only one of two routes through Orlando – and the legislature has cut funding for the project by 20 percent. Although there is still room for negotiation before the budget makes it to the governor, the cuts are a setback for the consortium, which counts among its members such high-powered businesses as SunTrust, Walt Disney World and Publix.”

May 9, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – ORANGE HAS \$12 MILLION FOR RAIL STATION

“One of the Florida Legislature’s biggest-ticket – and least-touted – perks for Central Florida was \$12 million earmarked to build a rail station and transit center near the Orange County Convention Center. But the question now is: Where’s the rail? The answer may come in the form of two rail efforts. One may be a people-mover system built by the county that would help convention attendees’ move around the behemoth complex south of Orlando. The other could be a much, larger, high-speed rail that would ultimately connect Tampa Bay with Port Canaveral. The Legislature also set aside \$900,000 in state money to study that route. To hear county leaders tell it, the state’s \$12 million commitment to a transit center virtually

guarantees that the proposed coast-to-coast rail route will stop in Orange County....The enthusiasm over these rail proposals may be confusing. It was just last year, after all, that local leaders declared political war on one another before ultimately killing the proposed light-rail system that would have connected downtown Orlando and the convention center. But plans for the higher-speed, coast-to-coast system are controversial for another reason: Everyone wants the route to stop in their back yard. Count Walt Disney World and Orange leaders among them. Both groups made repeated behind-the-scenes lobbying efforts to ensure that the proposed Tampa Bay-Canaveral route will bring by thousands of passengers each day. It looks as if state engineers will make the final decision. The cross-state route was originally proposed by a group looking to bring the 2012 Olympics to the Tampa Bay and Orlando region. But then the rail effort took on a bigger life as companies and leaders along the Interstate 4 corridor championed the route as a vital way to connect the cities. An original proposed route would have taken the rail right through Disney's property – but not to the convention center. That plan, however, bothered local officials who use the center as a cash cow, thanks to the hundreds of thousands of tourists and conventioners who flock to I-Drive each year with fat wallets....To settle the debate, Webster (State Senator Dan Webster) decided to change the legislation regarding the coast-to-coast rail during the last week of the session. Instead of allowing politicians to decide where the train will go, he decided that engineers with the state's Department of Transportation should do it.”

June 14, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Maxwell) – I-DRIVE RAIL SYSTEM COULD EASE VISITORS' LIVES, BUT WHO WOULD PAY?

“A proposed rail system around Orange County's convention center could cost anywhere from \$150 million to \$330 million. The questions now are: how big should the system be – and who should foot the bill? The proposed system is Orange County's attempt to offer out-of-towners an easier way to get around the often-clogged tourist mecca that is International Drive. Standstill traffic there can be maddening, and things are expected to get worse with more than 14,000 new hotel rooms and timeshare units slated for construction in coming years. County Chairman Mel Martinez wants to build a system that will help conventioners easily move around the massive center and to and from their hotel rooms. That way, Martinez hopes they will want to come back to the center, which is a cash cow that pumps hundreds of millions of dollars into the local economy each year. The system would help more than just county coffers. I-Drive businesses would benefit as much as anyone. That's why county leaders say they need to decide who should pay for the system. Possible funding sources include the state and federal government, the businesses along the route and the county's hotel taxes, which raise more than \$100 million each year. Martinez vowed that money from local property taxes would not be used ‘under any scheme or circumstance.’ Although commissioners did not take a formal vote on the matter Tuesday, most agreed that

they would rather build an elevated rail system than a much cheaper, expanded bus route with dedicated lanes that could cost as little as \$60 million. That's primarily because train cars in elevated systems would not get stuck in traffic the way buses can."

June 17, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Sandra Peticini) – CSX MAY COME ABOARD
COMMUTER-RAIL PROPOSAL

"Supporters of a commuter-rail system leading from DeLand to Kissimmee got a double dose of good news on Friday. The vice president and general manager of CSX Transportation met with commuter rail supporters and said the railroad will consider allowing its rail line to be used for the project. But before he commits to it, he wants to know how much the commuter rail would interfere with trains already using the tracks and where new tracks would have to be built. Though guarded, the railroad executive's comments were seen as more positive than previous public statements. U.S. Rep. John Mica also told the Orlando-Volusia MPO Alliance that the U. S. Senate has approved freeing up the remainder of money originally designated for the failed light-rail project – between \$15 million and \$23 million – for commuter rail here."

June 30, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Joe Van Leer) – DRIVERLESS BUSES IN FUTURE

"Imagine getting around Altamonte Springs and Maitland within minutes and without fighting traffic. The two cities are studying a transit system that would use space-age buses linked to computers that could allow commuters to order up transportation when they need it. It would work something like this: Lanes would be dedicated throughout the cities for the buses to transport patrons between home, office, retail establishments and recreational areas. People could log on for rides at kiosks, equipped with computers that would be placed in office buildings, businesses, public areas and transit stops. Patrons might also be able to use home and office computers to request transportation. The new bus lanes would be retrofitted into any future road projects, said Frank Martz, Altamonte Springs planning manager. Martz said the lanes would be narrow and shouldn't take too much space from existing roadways...the system, including vehicles, kiosks and computer systems, could cost about \$20 million, Martz said. The city recently received a \$750,000 Federal Transit Administration grant and \$187,500 from Florida's Department of Transportation for a feasibility study that should conclude early next year. The funding also will pay for the conceptual design of the project. Seminole and Orange counties and Altamonte Springs and Maitland contributed

\$60,000 in matching funds. The study will determine rider costs and other details such as the best way the system could run between cities. Martz said the Florida Legislature recently approved an additional \$650,000 for design and engineering, which should be available this month. Lynx, the regional transportation agency, would be a partner in the project and would run the system's operations center. The system would run during peak traffic hours and have regular routes. Drivers, however, could veer off the predetermined course...The system could be expanded into neighboring cities such as Casselberry, Longwood and Eatonville....The cities are planning to come up with a catchy moniker. For now the proposed system is called the North Orange/South Seminole (Intelligent Transportation System) Enhanced Circulator.”

July 11, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – RAILS WIN SUPPORT

“A survey of people who work in Winter Park suggests that almost 28 percent of workers would use a commuter rail line being touted by U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, and some local officials. The survey, conducted by the University of Central Florida's Survey Research Laboratory, questioned almost 3500 people who work in Winter Park. Responses came from 455 people and indicated 27.9 percent of them would be willing to ride commuter rail to their jobs if there were a stop in Winter Park. Another 24.6 percent of respondents said they might ride the system. Their use depended on things such as locations of stops, train schedule and fares. More than 47 percent of those people who responded said they would not ride the system. Mica briefed local officials about the survey's results as part of his ongoing effort to establish a commuter rail line running from Volusia to Osceola counties. The figures were encouraging to rail supporters, but the relatively small number of respondents limited the use of the survey.”

August 9, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – IT'S THE END OF THE LINE FOR MONORAIL PLAN

“For three weeks, plans to build a high-speed monorail in Central Florida have been on a government respirator. On Tuesday, state transportation officials pulled the plug. Saying the time had come for a final decision, Florida Department of Transportation officials killed a deal that granted monorail officials access to state right of way along the Bee Line Expressway. Though Bee Line Monorail Inc. can appeal the decision, the move effectively ends – at least for now – the private consortium's effort to build a \$1.5 billion magnetically levitated rail system linking

Port Canaveral, Orlando International Airport and International Drive. Since mid-July, FDOT District Secretary Mike Snyder has been insisting that Bee Line Monorail provide verification that it had more than \$15 million to keep the project moving. Monorail officials have said the money was ready to go, except for some routine paperwork. Last week, they showed Snyder a letter indicating an investor would put up \$15.45 million to pay company debts, write a financial plan and conduct a ridership study for the project. However, as of late Tuesday, Bee Line Chairman Eugene Garfield was unable to produce proof for the FDOT that the money was in the bank. That promoted the state to call it quits.”

August 28, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LYNX LOOKS AT LIGHT-RAIL ROUTES NORTH OF ORLANDO

“With the bruises over light rail still tender, you might think only masochists would want to revisit the issue. But during the past few months, Lynx has been quietly talking with cities north of Orlando, trying to craft a light-rail route those communities will support. There are no plans – or money – to build a light-rail system now, but many officials think rail will resurface in coming years as roads become more congested. The idea of the northern-route study, Lynx officials said, is to head off controversy and have a preferred route ready to go if and when that happens. At this point, the new study is focusing on routes clustering round

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Interstate 4 and U.S. Highway 17-92. At State Road 436, planners are looking at several options for serving Casselberry and Longwood. The work is exactly what many local officials have demanded since 1997, the year they declared war on a study that concluded the best route for the northern leg of light rail was next to existing CSX lines. Those officials – from Winter Park, Eatonville, Maitland and Altamonte Springs – blasted the decision, saying light rail next to CSX would slice their cities in half, tie up traffic and destroy their quality of life. They also claimed the decision was based on inaccurate land use and growth models. Some of the cities sued, prompting Lynx to suspend work on the northern alignment. Instead, the agency focused on the southern leg of the system – which Orange County eventually killed – saying that without consensus in the north, there was no reason to continue. But putting the northern route in limbo made few people happy. They have pressed for a new study, in part, because they are convinced it will wipe the CSX alignment off the map for good.”

September 13, 2000 Florida Journal (Joni James) – DISNEY AND LOCAL RIVALS BATTLE ANEW OVER ROUTE OF COAST-TO-COAST RAIL

“A consultant’s report has reignited the fight between Disney World and other Orlando tourist destinations over the route of a proposed train linking Florida’s two coasts. The consultant, hired by the Florida Department of Transportation, says the most economical route would serve both Disney and its major hotel and theme-park competitors by having the train’s main line run parallel to Interstate 4. However, Disney disputes that finding as premature. The company is pushing for a route that bypasses its competitors but will settle for one that serves them on a spur, or extension of the line. According to the consultant, a Disney official threatened to not help finance a Disney station if one of its preferred routes isn’t chosen. Disney Senior Vice President Diana Morgan denies the company has made any such threat. ‘We want to be part of finding solutions,’ she says. ‘We just think these (cost projections) are very preliminary.’ Train proponents hope the consultant’s final report, due in June, will be the first step toward getting a train built. But if business leaders can’t work out a compromise before its presented to the Legislature, probably in 2002, both sides are likely to lobby lawmakers heavily for their respective routes, potentially delaying or even killing the plan.”

October 5, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (David Cox) – BUSH SAYS TRAIN COULD DERAIL ROADS

“Gov. Jeb Bush sent a warning to voters Wednesday that a citizens petition making its way to the ballot could jeopardize billions of dollars in transportation projects already approved by lawmakers. That petition – which could force the legislature to pay for a high-speed train linking all of Florida’s major metropolitan areas – won clearance from the Florida Supreme Court on Tuesday. Supporters predict they will have enough signatures to put the proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot Nov. 7. Bush and other state transportation officials fear the \$6 billion or more it could take to build the bullet train would eat away at other coveted transportation projects throughout the state. Their primary concern is the \$4 billion worth of

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projects that transportation officials plan to advance over the next decade. Those projects are the result of legislation that Bush signed into law earlier this year.”

November 9, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – TRAIN’S NEXT STOP UNCLEAR: VOTERS OK HIGH-SPEED RAIL – NOW IT JUST NEEDS FUNDING

“On any other night Florida voters’ approval of a high-speed rail amendment would have been a bombshell, a decision demanding the attention of legislators and other officials. But against the backdrop of the Bush-Gore Election Day epic, rail has been

pushed aside. Legislators and policy makers know the billion-dollar question mark is out there, but as of Wednesday few have been able to rip themselves away from the presidential struggle to focus on it. The result: No one seems entirely sure what happens next. ‘The short answer, we don’t know,’ said Florida Department of Transportation spokesman Dick Kane. What is certain is that voters have dropped the issue in the laps of lawmakers. When the Florida Legislature convenes in four months, members will begin what likely will be a years-long process to decide how to build a system that would link the state’s five largest urban areas. They’ll enter the session knowing that voters approved the rail initiative by a comfortable 53 percent to 47 percent margin. But they won’t know how much the system will cost – probably several billion dollars – where the money will come from or what sort of technology to use.”

November 30, 2000 Orlando Sentinel (Monica Scott) – FUNDING WOES RESOLVED, TRAIN IDEA STILL HAS LEGS

“A proposed commuter rail train from Lake County to downtown Orlando is back on track with a ridership study under way and a funding application before the state. Plymouth-based Florida Central Railroad continues to push its plan for a 35-mile, \$68 million project after recovering from a funding setback earlier this year. Plans are for the rail system to follow existing tracks along County Road 448 through Eustis and Tavares before veering off to tracks along U.S. Highway 441 that would pass through Zellwood, Apopka and Lockhart before ending in downtown Orlando on Robinson Street near Interstate 4. ‘Lake County is quickly becoming a bedroom community of Orlando,’ said Ben Biscan, vice president and general manager of Florida Central Railroad. ‘This will help prevent U.S. Highway 441 from becoming a congested I-4.’ The \$8 million that was earmarked for the project was pulled in January. Florida Transportation Secretary Tom Barry cited the lack of a current ridership study and local government support as the reason.”

January 13, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – RAIL TEAM WAITS FOR CSX COMMUTER-LINE STUDY

“It sounds pretty straightforward. Local officials want to use CSX train lines for a commuter-rail system linking Volusia, downtown Orlando and, eventually, Osceola County. But before seeking millions of dollars for the project, they need to determine whether the CSX lines could accommodate the extra traffic. So they

study's not done. In fact, it hasn't been started. It remains trapped in puzzling bureaucratic limbo whether neither side seems certain of what the other side wants. Public officials say they're not sure why CSX has been dragging its feet on the study, and CSX executives say they will be happy to move ahead if state agencies give them a clear direction. The confusion, made clear at a 90-minute meeting between CSX and state officials Thursday, won't help the project win friends at the federal level. Federal officials are already wary after the death of light rail. At the heart of the problem is a tangle of rail proposals floating around Florida. There's the commuter-rail idea – pushed by U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park – a cross-state rail initiative, a high-speed rail constitutional amendment and a plan to beef up Amtrak service. All of those notions could have an impact on CSX freight operations, and the company wants to know what those consequences might be. It doesn't want to analyze commuter rail in isolation, it says. It wants to conduct a comprehensive review that would describe how all the operations would be intertwined. And to do that, said CSX Assistant Vice President Gordon Mott, CSX needs a lot more information. 'We need to know where would the trains run, how many trains, where are the stops, what are the schedules?' he said 'They've got to give us a plan.' Officials agree that would be ideal, but, right now, it can't be done. Most rail proposals are in relatively early phases. The details of stations, schedules and number of trains haven't been worked out. They want CSX to move ahead on the commuter study knowing full well that it might have to be updated later."

February 6, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LIGHT-RAIL ROUTE TAKES A TURN TOWARD I-4

"If light rail ever gets built north of Orlando, the route will likely be much different from the one that raised such a stink three years ago. Rather than cut through Winter Park and Maitland along CSX freight lines, consultants are studying three options that rely heavily on the Interstate 4 corridor. The proposals mark a significant shift for Lynx – the region's transit agency – and its consultants. By embracing the I-4 corridor, the agency is acknowledging that the CSX route, for sections north of Orlando, is politically unworkable. Winter Park and Maitland officials fiercely fought the CSX route, claiming it would slice their towns in half. And Altamonte Springs leaders worried the CSX route would not serve the heavily developed Interstate 4–State Road 436 interchange. The route alternatives, Lynx officials say, were driven by what communities along the line said was important. Lynx will hold three workshops during the next two weeks to give residents a chance to review the routes. The agency doesn't yet know what each alignment might cost."

February 23 – March 1, 2001 The Orlando Business Journal (Jill Kreuger) – JUST A FEW UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT BULLET TRAINS

"When it comes to the statewide high-speed passenger train, Florida legislators have more questions than answers: who pays for it? And how? Although 2.9 million

voters approved the billion-dollar train last November, legislators say they don't have the money to pay for it without siphoning cash away from other areas such as education or health care. And lawmakers do have to act. The voters adopted the train as a constitutional amendment mandating construction of a high-speed rail system serving the five largest urban areas in the state – to be started within three years. There are plenty of funding proposals making the round. One would pay for high-speed rail with state and private funds, one asks private industry to pay the tab and another suggests voters revisit – and re-vote on – the amendment in two years.”

March 3, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (David Cox) – SORRY, FAST-TRAIN BACKERS, BUT YOUR'E NOT GETTING ROAD MONEY

“If 2000 was the year lawmakers made unprecedented efforts to get traffic on Interstate 4 and other major highways moving, 2001 could be the year they get some travelers moving at warp speed. Until the November election, the big transportation issue for highway-starved Central Florida was finding money to continue a 10-year, \$6 billion plan to improve the state's major highways that was started last year. But controversy rammed into this year's transportation agenda when 53 percent of voters on Election Day approved a constitutional amendment to start building a bullet train by November 2003 to link the state's five major metropolitan areas. Though the state's budget is tight, House Speaker Tom Feeney of Oviedo said lawmakers won't 'undo' the popular road-building program, called Mobility 2000, to help pay for the bullet train. Mobility 2000 will bring \$642 million worth of highway improvements to Central Florida over the next seven years. Many of the improvements that will help relieve congestion on Interstate 4 were not scheduled to begin under the state's old road-construction blueprint until after 2010. If the train is going to get built, legislative leaders and Gov. Jeb Bush say it will need to attract a private investor. If that doesn't happen, legislative leaders may try to sandbag the train by asking voters in 2002 if they're willing to pay higher taxes to build it.”

March 9-15, 2001 The Orlando Business Journal (Alan Byrd) – A MONORAIL THAT NEVER WAS

“Disney's monorail expansion has been derailed. Well, sort of. ‘We never announced such a project, so we can't say it has been cancelled,’ says Disney spokesman Bill Warren. Warren does confirm that for the past year, Disney has been looking at its transportation problems. Anyone who has been to the theme parks knows the roads have become more and more jammed with buses toting millions of resort guests. According to several sources, Disney was looking at a significant expansion of its monorails to help take some buses off the road. The biggest plan called for new lines of monorails connecting all four of the Disney theme parks and Downtown Disney. A second choice? Some sort of light rail

system. The third, and least appealing to several, would have been a new bus system. But the bus system won out. The deal breaker might have been the estimated price tag for new monorails, rumored to be more than \$1 billion. As the company announced a new bus-on-demand system – where buses will be

dispatched to high-demand locations – Walt Disney World disbanded the team working on the transportation project. Disney, as is its policy, won't confirm or deny the project has been killed. 'Any work our company does before announcing it is proprietary,' notes Warren."

March 27, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Jon Steinman) – RAIL BATTLE BEGINS TODAY

"Skeptical lawmakers today begin arguing whether to build a \$22 billion bullet train, but one issue is not open for debate: If this high-speed rail line is ever built, the first leg will run from Orlando to Tampa. The Orlando-Tampa route gained momentum in Tallahassee even though the ballot initiative approved by voters last November mentioned no cities, but vaguely called for connecting 'five urban centers.' Train supporters have hitched their hopes on Central Florida clout, including a Disney-backed bid to win the 2012 Olympics and the fact that this route is anchored by the Legislature's most powerful members. Even that might be a long shot in a tight budget year, with lawmakers fighting over every penny for schools, social programs and tax cuts....Opponents are already using the push for the Central Florida route as evidence that the measure is being manipulated to serve regional interests. The rail initiative was sold as a statewide system, not just a regional link to benefit two urban areas and their Olympic bid, said Steve Liner, a vice president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, which opposed the rail amendment last year. But Floridians could wind up with a straight shot of rail benefiting only the 2012 Olympics bid, sucking up scarce road projects in the process, Liner said."

April 30 – May 6, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Tim Barker) – POPULAR I-DRIVE TROLLEYS ON TRACK FOR EXPANSION

"After three years of operation, International Drive's I-Ride Trolley service is in the midst of an expansion that will cover nearly all of the popular tourist corridor by year's end. The first stage of the expansion began late last year, with the introduction of the so-called Green Line, which runs along Universal Boulevard between Wet 'n Wild and the Orange County Convention Center, with more than a dozen stops at hotels and attractions along the way. A larger expansion will come in October, when two new routes are added, extending north and south of the current service area. The Green Line route had been planned for a while but was

delayed by the work going on around the convention center's expansion site.... Essentially, the Green Line runs parallel to the original route – now called the Gold Line – which runs along International Drive, from SeaWorld to Belz, with 51 stops. In October, the Red Line will send trolleys to a dozen or so hotels and attractions around Major Boulevard, while a Blue Line will serve a similar number of stops, including several time-share resorts, between SeaWorld and Orlando Premium Outlets mall....Business that were not part of the original trolley route requested the expansion. They were eager to be included in a service that has proven quite popular with tourists facing a congested International Drive. Properties included in the service will be part of a special taxing district that pays for the trolleys. Already the original eight trolleys have been replaced by 13 larger trolleys, allowing the service to handle up to 6,500 riders a day. Summer crowds are expected to push

ridership to about 6,000 a day. The new routes will require the addition of three to four new trolleys, which cost about \$250,000 each. The trolleys operate daily from 7 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. The cost is 75 cents for adults and 25 cents for senior citizens. Children 12 and under ride free when accompanied by an adult.”

May 4, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Gwyneth K. Shaw) – BULLET TRAIN SPUTTERS THROUGH HOUSE

“The House narrowly approved a bill Thursday that pushes ahead a bullet train enthusiastically endorsed by voters last fall. Despite a session-long fight by Rep. Randy Johnson to simply study the train for the next year, the House agreed to the plan the senate wanted. The bill, which now goes to Gov. Jeb Bush, creates a nine-member rail authority to plan and manage the rail project, the first leg of which will run between Orlando and the Tampa Bay area. The authority's initial budget is \$4.5 million.”

May 4, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Ludmilla Lelis) – RAILROAD EYES COMEBACK TO COASTAL ROUTE

“For the first time in decades, passengers could ride the railroad to Daytona Beach and the Space Coast next year on a route planned as part of Amtrak's Florida expansion. Amtrak and FEC Railway, the company that owns the railroad tracks along the Atlantic coast cities, announced Thursday an agreement that could bring the service as early as the summer of 2002. The new route would start in Jacksonville and stop in St. Augustine, Daytona, Titusville, Cocoa/Port Canaveral, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Stuart, on its way to Miami. Amtrak also hopes to expand its service into Orlando and Tampa, all of which could double

Amtrak's passenger rail service in Florida, said Amtrak spokeswoman Debbie Hare. However, the project depends on money to pay for improvements to the rail lines to accommodate the extra traffic, as well as new stations for the eight cities along its route. The whole project could cost an estimated \$65 million, Hare said."

May 18-24, 2001 The Orlando Business Journal (Jill Kreuger) – IT'S ALIVE! LIGHT RAIL HEADS FOR I-DRIVE

"It's back. And it's heading for International Drive. A light-rail system linked to the tourism corridor now is formally under consideration, less than two years after a similar proposal died a political death at the hands of Orange County commissioners. An even bigger surprise: Despite light rail's past record, I-Drive business owners appear willing to reach consensus on a route. 'The recommendation to sit down with business leaders before the route is laid out is a very favorable direction,' says Alan Villaverde, president of the Efficient Transportation Committee on International Drive and a critic of the first light rail proposal. Discussion of a southern leg to the rail system is unexpected. The most recent focus has been on studying a possible light rail system running alongside Interstate 4 in north Orange County through Seminole County. However, the same

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North Corridor Alignment Study includes a connection to the Orange County Convention Center, also running alongside I-4 and emptying at the Beeline. That's markedly different from the original light rail proposal for I-Drive, which would have routed the train down the busy avenue; a years-long construction project many feared would disrupt the thriving tourism business. The current proposal, though, appears to take light rail only as far as the Beeline, staying clear of actually building in I-Drive."

June 12, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Sandra Peticini) – MICA TALKS UP COMMUTER RAIL

"Some leaders didn't like what they heard Monday when U.S. Rep. John Mica made his pitch for commuter rail. Volusia officials were disappointed in his recommendation that commuter rail have only one stop in their county. They had been counting on three. And the Volusia County Council member whose district has the most commuters into the Orlando area is starting to doubt whether commuter rail is worth pushing for. The way it's proposed, commuter rail doesn't offer much convenience for Volusia residents and does nothing to get tourists to Daytona Beach, Ann McFall said. 'It's going to help the tourism in Seminole and Orange counties,' she said. 'It's going to help bring them the work force. I just

don't see where it's going to benefit Volusia County.' . . . He (Mica) pitched commuter rail as a bargain, pointing out its price tag – an estimated startup cost of \$50 million to \$100 million, depending on the system. The cheapest alternative would be a system with trains bringing commuters south in the morning and north in the afternoon. In comparison, light rail, which died in 1999, would have cost hundreds of millions of dollars. The federal government likely could pick up about 75 percent of commuter rail's startup cost. . . . he wants Central Florida leaders to move quickly. He envisions environmental studies complete by January, equipment ordered by May, and track improvements started in October 2002. The trains would start running a little more than a year later, according to his plan. But negotiations haven't started with CSX, which owns the railroad tracks that commuter trains would use. And leaders are anxious about how Winter Park's dislike of the proposal could affect its future. Winter Park and Maitland were adamantly against the ill-fated light-rail proposal because they said it would slice their cities in half and disrupt traffic.”

June 14, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – IF RAILS EVER COME, THEY'LL FOLLOW I-4

“If light rail ever gets built north of Orlando, the route will closely hug Interstate 4 under a plan approved Wednesday by Central Florida's lead transportation agency. Metroplan Orlando – a group of elected officials that sets the region's transportation priorities – strongly endorsed a route that would run from downtown Orlando to Altamonte Springs along I-4. Even though there is no money for the project, the designation of the route is a victory for Winter Park, Eatonville, Maitland and Altamonte Springs. For years, they have fought to kill an idea to run the system next to existing rail tracks owned by CSX Transportation. The new route received broad support – it passed on a 16-3 vote – but the debate about it demonstrated how

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divisive light rail can be. . . . Wednesday's vote narrows where light rail would go if it were built, but the meeting didn't push the project closer to reality. It did not provide money to study the idea, and officials didn't say how much each jurisdiction might be willing to kick in.”

August 2, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Melissa Harris) – SENATE APPROVES HIGH-SPEED RAIL CASH

“The U.S. Senate approved a spending bill Wednesday providing \$4.5 million to begin planning a high-speed rail system linking Orlando and Tampa. The appropriation matches money approved by the Florida Legislature earlier this year.

The funding, part of a sweeping \$60 billion transportation bill, is not included in the House version. But House and Senate negotiators are expected to approve the money when they meet to work out their differences, said Gary Burns, spokesman for Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park. The \$4.5 million appropriation is small compared with the estimated \$1.2 billion cost of the Orlando-Tampa link, but it will help the Florida High-Speed Rail Commission begin planning a route, selecting equipment and resolving environmental issues.”

August 30, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Sandra Pedicini) – FAST TRAIN TO START SLOWLY

“The allure of futuristic maglev technology is its ability to move people long distances fast – up to 300 mph. That’s fast enough to take people from Daytona Beach to Tampa in a little less than half an hour. Communities dream of using the trains to link Chattanooga and Atlanta, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. So where’s the country’s first maglev train going? Across a street. Edgewater-based American Maglev Technology will move students at Virginia’s Old Dominion University across campus and a busy road on a track less than a mile long. The company’s magnetically levitated train system will reach top speeds of 40 mph – slower than most highway traffic. On Wednesday, American Maglev Technology held a ground-breaking ceremony in Norfolk, Va. Much of a concrete guideway towering 16 feet over the campus is already in place, but the system won’t be running until fall 2002. The project is hailed by university officials as bringing 21st-century technology one step closer to reality, but it’s a pretty small step....The system, which will bring as many as 100 students back and forth across campus in a little more than two minutes, is a gift to the university. Private investment from companies including Lockheed Martin will pay about half the cost. The rest will come from the state of Virginia, in the form of a loan that’s supposed to be paid back from proceeds of a future revenue-producing maglev system....American Maglev Technology got \$600,000 from Volusia County a few years ago to start up its test track in Edgewater with the promise of lots of high-tech jobs in return. The company struggled, closing the test track in 1996 and looking elsewhere. It had submitted proposals that were rejected by the city of Virginia Beach, Virginia Tech and the federal government. The company has not yet tested this system, something that worries critics. It will begin testing later this year in Edgewater, where it has reopened the plant without county money. The system will also undergo testing in Virginia for several months before students begin boarding.

Should any unfixable flaws be discovered, the company must dismantle the system so that an empty guideway isn’t looming over the campus.”

October 2, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – RAIL LINE’S COST MAY BE TRIPLE ESTIMATE

“The commuter-rail project championed by U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, may turn out to be far more expensive than anyone imagined – perhaps three times the original estimate. Instead of costing \$2 million a mile, as supporters had suggested, a new study linking DeLand, Orlando and Kissimmee will cost between \$5.5 million and \$6 million a mile to get up and running. The total cost of the project, consultants say, will be at least \$225 million, and that would buy only a bare-bones system with a few trains running at 45-minute intervals. More trains or more frequent service would push the price to \$355 million because officials would have to install miles of new track. It could take three years to get either system ready to carry passengers.”

October 5, 2001 Apopka Chief (Michael Shulman) – CITY HEARS COMMUTER RAIL PROJECT REPORT

“Scott Wimberly of the Florida Central Railroad made a presentation on the progress of the Northwest Commuter Rail plan, a \$22 million project that looks to address the needs of Lake County for rail service to downtown Orlando via Apopka and Zellwood. Over track leased by Florida Central Railroad, the concept includes track considerations, the construction of stations, the purchase of rolling stock, and parking adjacent to structures. The buildout would be in two phases with the first including an Orlando to Zellwood leg via Apopka. The second phase would cover Zellwood to Eustis via Tavares. Passenger cars tentatively being considered would cost \$2.2 million each. Wimberly claimed a survey of potential riders for the system showed it would service an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 customers annually paying an estimated \$2 fare. The study estimates track cost at \$11.9 million, stations at \$6.7 million, vehicles at \$13.2 million, and maintaining the system at \$2 million. Transport for passengers would add another \$1.8 million for buses. The project total is estimated at \$35.6 million.”

October 30, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Sherri M. Owens) – WINTER PARK HOPES TROLLEYS HELP SHOPPERS

“Starting this week, it’s going to become easier for residents and visitors to enjoy some of the city’s most popular shopping, dining and cultural offerings without the hassles of traffic and hunting for parking spaces. The city is launching the Wnter Park Trolley Co. on Thursday with vehicles circulating among Park Avenue, Hannibal Square and Winter Park Village. For a 50-cent fare, the diesel-powered trolleys initially will make five stops – three along Park Avenue, one at Hannibal Square and one at Winter Park Village. They will run from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Mondays through Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m. Sundays.”

November 25, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Monica Scott) – COMMUTER RAIL IDEA KEEPS CHUGGING ALONG

“Florida Central Railroad, which has trademark red engines that can be seen chugging through downtown Orlando, is pushing for a commuter-rail line between Orange and Lake counties, though local officials doubt there’s money to pay for it. The project, which would link Apopka, Zellwood and, ultimately, Eustis and Tavares with downtown Orlando would be too expensive and carry few riders, a study by Lynx, the area’s transportation agency, showed last summer. But backers recently said they could get a commuter-rail system operating between the two counties within five years for \$35.6 million. The plan Lynx reviewed pegged the start-up cost at \$64.5 million. The cities and counties would be responsible for constructing, operating and maintaining their stations, consultants for Florida Central told Lake County commissioners. The cost for eight stations along the 33-mile route has been estimated at \$6.7 million. The Lynx report predicted the service would cost about \$4 million a year to operate and carry about 1,700 riders a day by 2005. Ridership was expected to reach 2,800 passengers daily by 2020....Here’s how Florida Central would pay for the project:

- \$11.9 million from the state for tracks
- \$6.7 million from local governments for stations
- \$2 million from Florida Central for maintenance facilities
- \$1.8 million from Lynx for buses
- \$13.2 million from the federal government for the transit vehicles”

December 21, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Linda Kleindienst, Jim Stratton) – TRAIN TRAVEL COULD GROW IN FLORIDA

“Passenger-rail service between Orlando and Tampa and along Florida’s east coast could start in less than two years under a proposal being pushed by Gov. Jeb Bush. Bush announced plans Thursday to spend \$82.5 million to help Amtrak start the new service....The plan includes construction of eight train stations – at St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Titusville, Cocoa, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Stuart – and a new rail connection between the Florida East Coast Railway and the existing South Florida Rail Corridor in Palm Beach County. The FEC line is used only for freight traffic, and Florida’s east coast has been without passenger service for more than 30 years. By spring 2003, the first Silver Meteors are expected to roll along the new coastal route connecting Jacksonville and Miami. Miami passengers have to travel through Orlando to get to Jacksonville. The agreement with Amtrak also calls for direct service to begin between Orlando and Tampa. Nazih Haddad, the state’s manager of passenger rail development, said that was killed about eight years ago. Today, Amtrak passengers traveling to Tampa either bypass Orlando altogether or get off the train in Orlando and take a bus the rest of the way....Amtrak

City. The coastal corridor would be part of a Miami-to-New York route that already runs through Jacksonville. Construction will include 23 miles of additional siding track that will allow passenger and freight trains to pass each other. Haddad said the plan will not satisfy the requirements of the high-speed rail amendment passed by voters last year. That orders the state to begin building a rail system connecting Florida's five largest urban areas by 2003. The trains must be capable of speeds of at least 120 mph. The Amtrak trains top out at about 80 mph. When fully implemented, Amtrak will provide six trains a day in each direction from Jacksonville to various cities in the state – including two per day in each direction on the FEC tracks from Jacksonville to West Palm Beach. The trains will continue to Miami along the South Florida Rail Corridor, which is used by Amtrak passenger trains and Tri-Rail.”

December 31, 2001 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – LATEST RAIL PLAN TAKES THE FAST TRACK

“In a struggle that has featured lots of politicking and a little name calling, the battle over where to build a cross-state rail line appears to be tipping Orange County's way. The Florida Department of Transportation will deliver to the governor and top lawmakers this week a report that says the system should link Central Florida's biggest attractions with a single line – the option preferred by the county – that generally follows Interstate 4 and the Bee Line Expressway. The report is a blow to Walt Disney World, which was pushing routes that would have left the Orange County Convention Center – and nearby Universal Orlando property – off the route entirely or served it with a spur leg of the system....The governor and the Legislature now will have to decide whether to pursue the \$1.2 billion project. They'll also have to figure out how it would fit with a recently passed constitutional amendment that requires the state to begin building some sort of high-speed rail network by 2003....One group that has backed the proposal so far is a consortium of businesses including Disney, GTE and Publix. That group has been chasing a cross-state rail system since late 1999, saying a new system tying Orlando to Tampa-St. Petersburg could ease traffic, fuel the economy and beef up Florida's bid to lure the 2012 Olympics. Disney has supported the idea of the rail line, but it has insisted on a route that would link its property to Orlando International Airport via State Road 417, the Central Florida Greenway. Instead, consultants with STV Inc. are recommending that the line start at the airport and head west to the convention center. It would then turn south along I-4 on its way to Disney. From Disney it would continue on to the Lakeland-Tampa area. STV has proposed a system

capable of traveling 150 mph and has recommended that the first phase of the line run from Orlando International to Union Station in Tampa. Initially, it had considered a system that would run all the way from St. Petersburg to Port Canaveral. The route conclusion is welcome news to Orange County officials. They jumped into the fight months ago after learning that the consortium was pursuing the route that would have bypassed the convention center. The convention center, one of the largest in the country and a potential Olympics site, plans to add 1 million square feet to its exhibit hall by 2003. Ensuring it was served by any new rail line was a 'no-brainer' in the words of one state transportation official. A convention-center route also suits the county's transportation plans. But

from the beginning, Disney has opposed any route that would link its property and the convention-center area. It's not the center that worries the tourism giant, but some 2,000 nearby acres owned by Universal Orlando. Universal plans to build at least one theme park and 10,000 hotel rooms on its property, and by 2012, the total number of rooms along International Drive is expected to double to more than 40,000. The last thing Disney wants is for its customers to be able to step on a train and, within minutes, be dropped at the doorstep of its rival. To prevent that, Disney fought for a rail route that would have linked its property directly to the airport via the Greenway. When local officials objected, the company said it would support a two-leg system, one that went from the airport to Disney and one that went from the airport to the convention center. But the so-called 'button-hook' route would have added more than \$400 million to the project's cost. Few officials and planners felt two lines made sense when a single line would do the job. In fact, state consultants said the only reason they studied that alternative was because the state told them to. Consultants have been leaning toward the I-4/Bee Line option for weeks. It's cheaper, they point out, and it serves all of the area's big traffic generators – which isn't to say the I-4 alternative is perfect. In Polk County, for example, state transportation officials would have to change short-term plans for widening I-4 to create a rail envelop along the interstate. The work, officials said, would cost \$165 million and is not in the department's five-year plan. While the public debate about the rail route has focused on technical issues such as ridership and costs, private discussions have been snippy. Officials and International Drive business leaders say Disney has been selfish and has been ignoring the needs of the region. They claim Disney point man Tom Lewis, a former top state transportation official, has been trying to influence the study since it began. A state consultant said earlier that Lewis called him 'naive or stupid,' and several sources said Lewis, at one point, referred to Orlando's other tourism attractions as 'parasites.' Lewis was out of town and could not be reached for comment. But Disney spokesman Bill Warren said if Lewis used that term, 'I don't believe for a minute that he said it in any derogatory way.' Warren said the term 'parasitic marketing' is common in the tourism industry and

simply refers to the fact that smaller businesses try to lure some of the tourists who come to an area primarily to visit a major attraction such as Disney. During the route debate, Disney has even suggested it might develop its own ‘competing system’ – it hasn’t said what type – to link its theme parks directly to the airport. A consortium memo says more than 800,000 people annually use some form of transit to get from Orlando International to Disney. If the company captured that market with its own system, it could hurt the cross-state rail line’s ridership and economic feasibility. Consultants predict about 3 million people a year would use the cross-state system. The bickering over routes will not end when the state Department of Transportation presents its report to the governor, the House speaker and the Senate president later this week. Those leaders and their legislative colleagues can expect to be lobbied by consortium members, other businesses and local elected officials. Already there is some concern that disparate interests – the same disease that killed light rail – might doom the proposal. ‘We absolutely have to figure out how to build consensus on this,’ said Randy Johnson, R-Celebration, chairman of the House transportation budget committee.”

January 18, 2002 The Apopka Chief (Michael Shulman) – COMMUTER RAIL FUNDING IS STOPPED IN ITS TRACKS

“City Council, at its Wednesday, January 16, meeting, rejected a request for help in funding a proposed commuter rail that would serve Apopka. In a presentation at Wednesday’s City Council meeting, Central Florida Railroad head Ben Biscan said Apopka’s share of making his firm’s commuter rail concept a reality would be \$125,000. His presentation proposed Orange County’s share would be \$230,000. The council rejected his request to adopt a resolution in favor of the project. Although strong support for the concept of commuter rail to provide transport for Apopkans to and from downtown Orlando has been evidenced in the past by the city, the council shied away from going on record in support of the financial aspects of Biscan’s current plan. Biscan told The Apopka Chief the proposed 17-mile route would provide passenger transport every 30 minutes, reaching five stations between Apopka and downtown Orlando....The concept of commuter rail has been actively pursued since 1991 when Florida Central Railroad included it in an investment plan. In 1999, the fast track application was tentatively approved for \$8,000,000 by a state agency but, in 1999, the Florida Department of Transportation set aside that award pending a ridership study which was completed in 2001....Estimated annual operating expenses would be \$2,110,000. Apopka’s share would be \$125,000 against Orlando’s \$230,000 and Orange County’s \$325,000 portions. The rest would be covered by fares. Mayor John H. Land suggested that the portion being

identified as Apopka's responsibility was not equitable when compared to the relative population of Orlando and Orange County."

February 8, 2002 The Apopka Chief (Michael Shulman) – COMMUTER RAIL PROJECT GETS CITY ENDORSEMENT

"The City Council approved a resolution at its meeting on Wednesday, February 6, which could result in construction of a commuter rail depot in downtown Apopka. Florida Central Railroad had asked the city to support the railroad's efforts to provide commuter rail using an upgrade of its existing track system. The City Council had declined to pledge support at a meeting in January but did so this month by approving Resolution 2002-01. The resolution states that the city of Apopka will continue to support any improvements to our transportation network; supports the railroad in pursuit of the Northwest Commuter Rail Project; will negotiate with government units and the railroad to determine the city's fair share of costs; and will evaluate and determine the possible construction of a downtown commuter rail depot. The old, unused station near the intersection of Park Avenue and Station Street could be a location for such a depot."

March 2, 2002 Orlando Sentinel (Sandra Pedicini) – 1ST NOWHERE FAST

MAGLEV TRAIN GOES

"A sneak peek Friday at the county's first commercial maglev train was underwhelming for some of the dignitaries who came to see it. The train didn't go anywhere. It simply floated half an inch about its steel and aluminum track and

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shifted ever so slightly back and forth....Metropolitan Planning Organization officials who organized the event thought the train would move up and down the 3,200-foot-long track and take people for rides. No such luck. Officials from Edgewater-based American Maglev Technology decided at the last minute to simply levitate the train. They called MPO director Karl Welzenbach on Thursday, saying they had come across an unexplained 'glitch' and might have to settle for floating the train above the track. American Maglev officials insisted they had no technical problems signaling any potential delays for their project. The glitch, they said, was a concern about liability. Moving the train any significant distance requires sending electricity through a metal rail along the track. Officials said they worried that unsupervised visitors might touch the rail; and electrocute themselves."

April 10, 2002 Orlando Sentinel (writer not identified) – HIGH-SPEED TRAIN DRAWS 11

PROPOSALS

“Eleven companies Tuesday expressed interest in building a high-speed train in Florida, even though there is no guarantee that the project will receive the necessary funding. The Florida High Speed Rail Authority will sort through the preliminary proposals from the firms and will commission a study on potential ridership. The first leg of the route, from Tampa to Orlando, would cost an estimated \$1.2 billion to \$6 billion. The second phase of the project would stretch from Orlando to Miami. Proposals were received from companies including Siemens Transportation Systems, Inc. and American Maglev Technology Inc., whose members include Lockheed Martin and Halliburton.”

May 9, 2002 Palm Beach Post (Mike Branom) – RIDERSHIP STUDIES ORDERED FOR FLORIDA’S BULLET TRAIN

“The potential usage of bullet trains spanning Central Florida will be examined in detail by two evaluations commissioned Wednesday by the Florida High Speed Rail Authority. The in-depth ridership studies will cover demand for a proposed rail line connecting St. Petersburg and Orlando, with stops in Tampa and Lakeland. That would be the first leg of a passenger rail network authorized by Florida voters in November 2000. According to authority member C.C. ‘Doc’ Dockery, the studies are needed for funding purposes....A less-detailed study on an Orlando-to-Miami line also was commissioned during the authority’s meeting at the Orange County Convention Center. Undertaking the analyses will be Orlando-based consulting firms HNTB Corp. and Parsons Transportation Group. HNTB, which also is doing the Orlando-Miami study, and Parsons have been working for the authority since October. HNTB will be paid about \$527,000 for its two studies; Parsons will receive \$108,000. The difference in payment stems from Parsons’ focus on environmental issues, while HNTB provides consulting of a general nature. The studies will determine potential ridership using a set of varied assumptions, such as frequency of service and growth along the Interstate 4 corridor. ‘It won’t be a single forecast,’ said Tom Biggs, associate vice president for HNTB. In January, a less detailed study by HNTB determined that a St. Petersburg-Orlando train, running 14 times a day at speeds up to 150 mph, would carry 3.5 million passengers annually

by 2010. By 2036, that number was predicted to more than double to 7.7 million passengers a year. Biggs said the new studies, following adjustments to assumptions surrounding tourist traffic and short distance travel, will have improved forecasts. Also, they will attempt to predict who would use the train....Meanwhile the authority recently received some good financial news from Tallahassee. On

Tuesday, a House-Senate conference committee approved \$5.8 million for the authority in the coming fiscal year. That amount is what the Senate sought, and is \$1.8 million more than the House had allocated. Also, the legislature will give another \$3 million if federal funds are available, but only if the state provides a matching amount.”

May 24 – 30, 2002 The Orlando Business Journal (Chad Eric Watt) – FIRST MAGLEV TRAIN MAKES TRACKS FOR VIRGINIA

“The nation’s first-ever magnetic levitation train soon will depart Volusia County for coastal Virginia – by truck. Beginning in June, 8-year-old American Maglev Inc. will haul and install the train and track currently used at its Edgewater operation to the campus of Old Dominion University. By September, company leaders hope the two-car train will be shuttling students across the Virginia Beach college campus. American Maglev’s vehicle is designed to glide on an elevated guideway, above road traffic and even overpasses. That helps the company around a federal mandate that requires ground-level trains to be built to survive the impact of a tractor trailer. Going with a fiberglass car instead of steel (required of ground-level trains) makes the work of lifting and propelling the train easier. And it makes building a system much cheaper. Nationally, installing a light-rail system like the one in Dallas averages \$43 million per mile. A light-rail system proposed for Orlando once was projected to cost roughly \$40 million per mile. American Maglev, though, puts the per-mile cost of its system at about \$20 million a mile. Several factors have helped keep costs down. The cost of the computing power required to balance the train’s magnetic fields has come down significantly. And American Maglev can use just a bit of existing rights of way to run its tracks. The guideways need only 15 feet of clearance left and right to install...The finished system will connect a parking area, the central campus and a new sports arena being built at the college.”

July 12, 2002 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – HIGH-SPEED MIAMI LINE BOGS DOWN IN PLANNING

“If the state ever builds a high-speed rail network, the leg linking Orlando and Tampa will generally follow the Interstate 4 corridor. But the route between Orlando and Miami – for now at least – is less clear. Members of Florida’s High Speed Rail Authority heard Thursday that the Miami-Orlando leg could go up Interstate 95, could follow Florida’s Turnpike or use parts of existing rail corridors. The preferred path probably won’t be identified until at least 2004...Two year ago, Florida voters passed a constitutional amendment requiring the state to begin building a high-speed rail network by 2003. The system must be capable of speeds of at least 120 mph. The first leg, which could cost between \$2 billion and \$7 billion, would run from Orlando to Tampa. Planners are studying that leg in detail,

but it is expected to rely on the I-4 corridor. The state hopes to have that segment up and running by 2007. In Central Florida, the system would probably have stations at Orlando International Airport, the Orange County Convention Center and Walt Disney World. For the Orlando-to-Miami leg, planners say the system could run east from the airport along the Bee Line Expressway, then shoot south to Miami along I-95. That was the route planners were leaning toward when Gov. Jeb bush killed that state's last high-speed rail proposal just after taking office in 1999....Another possible route has the system running south from Orlando along the Turnpike until it reached the Fort Pierce area. From there, it would turn due south and head down the I-95 corridor. It offers faster travel times between Orlando and Miami, but it serves fewer places. The third route would use existing freight tracks: heading north from Miami. Near West Palm Beach, the system would cut diagonally across the state, turn toward Auburndale then cut back toward Orlando. It's the most circuitous of the routes being studied. While planners and the state push to begin construction by the 2003 deadline, the fate of the multibillion-dollar system remains in limbo. The governor has shown little enthusiasm for the proposal and some legislators have even suggested putting the question on the ballot again next year – a proposal known euphemistically as the 'are you sure you want this?' referendum."

August 5, 2002 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – CSX INSURANCE BILL COULD STOP RAIL PLAN

"The company that could make or break Central Florida's plans for commuter rail wants the region to buy a \$500 million insurance policy to protect it from lawsuits – a demand that could account for half the yearly costs of running the system. CSX Transportation says it wants protection from lawsuits if a commuter train operated by a public agency – most likely Lynx – is involved in an accident on company-owned tracks. CSX, skittish about recent passenger derailments, is demanding commuter rail agencies carry at least \$500 million in liability insurance. Consultants and industry officials say such a policy could cost anywhere from \$2 million to \$5 million annually, money that would come out of an operating budget estimated at between \$6 million and \$10 million....CSX is particularly sensitive this year to liability issues. In the past four months, two passenger trains have derailed while traveling on CSX tracks. A Putnam County derailment in April killed four people and injured 159 others. On July 29, another Amtrak derailment outside of Washington, D.C., injured nearly 100. Federal investigators are trying to determine whether the derailments were caused by problems with the tracks. In each case, train engineers reported seeing buckles in the rails moments before their trains crashed."

September 27, 2002 Orlando Sentinel (Tamara Lytle) – \$8 MILLION MAY BOOST COMMUTER RAIL

"Central Florida would receive \$8 million to buy commuter-rail cars under legislation pushed Thursday by U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park. Since the region has not decided whether commuter rail is the answer to congestion woes,

the money could end up being lost. This happened with an earlier project for light rail that died despite a promise of \$345 million in federal aid....If Central Florida opts not to start a commuter rail, the train cars will go to another city, Mica said. Once the budget is signed into law, the cars could arrive from the assembly line in two years.”

November 20, 2002 Orlando Sentinel (writer not identified) – STATE SNATCHES RAIL STUDIES FROM LYNX

“The state has taken over three rail-planning studies from Lynx, saying the region’s transit agency doesn’t have the resources to move them ahead quickly enough. Mike Snyder, Florida Department of Transportation district secretary, said Lynx is too busy handling the fallout from a recent trip by 17 employees to Las Vegas to pour enough energy into the work....FDOT will manage two commuter-rail studies and one light-rail study for the next several months. The studies will help regional officials decide which project Central Florida should seek federal money for – choices that must be made by February or March. Once those decisions are made, the studies will be returned to Lynx for completion. Lynx is battling to keep its place as Central Florida’s regional transit system. The agency is under fire for sending so many staffers and board members to the transit conference in Las Vegas, where some were captured on tape at the gambling tables during business hours.”

January 6, 2003 Common Dreams News Center (writer not identified) – WORLD’S FIRST COMMERCIAL MAGLEV LINE DEBUTS IN SHANGHAI

“The traditional, long-aspired dream of Chinese philosophers to be able to ‘run with the wind’ became a reality in Shanghai on Tuesday. The Shanghai Transrapid Maglev Line made its inaugural ‘VIP’ test run in this rising modern metropolis in east China with Premier Zhu Rongji and his German counterpart, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on board. The 10-billion-yuan (1.2 billion-US-dollar) project is the first-ever magnetic levitation (maglev) system for commercial use in the world....The system uses magnets to propel it at speeds of up to 430 kph (270 mph). The train will run on a 66 km (40 mile) S-shaped link between Shanghai and its new international airport.”

January 16, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (John Kennedy and Jim Stratton) – VOTERS MAY REVISIT HIGH-SPEED RAIL

“Gov. Jeb bush said Wednesday he would ask Floridians to kill the voter-approved bullet train linking Orlando to other major cities if the public cost of the project becomes too high. Almost four years to the day after Bush erased an earlier high-speed rail venture because of cost concerns, the Republican governor said a similar fate could await the latest plan if proposals from the teams seeking to build the system demand too much public money. The Florida High Speed Rail Authority expects to receive proposals from at least two international teams by Feb. 10. If Bush doesn’t like what he sees, he said, he will ask the Legislature to put the

measure back on a statewide ballot in 2004, this time with a price tag on the project. He did not say what level of public spending he would find acceptable.”

January 30, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Sandra Pedicini) – BUDGET PROBLEMS STALL MAGNETIC TRAIN

“The sleek train lying abandoned on campus is called ‘maglev’ – short for magnetic levitation. But students at Old Dominion University have their own name for the futuristic vehicle: ‘Mag left.’ American Maglev Technology, the company that assembled the train in Volusia County and hopes to build more at a plant in the town of Edgewater, has indeed left in search of more money – with its prototype unfinished. Disappointment has stretched from Volusia, where officials want to see the company build more trains and provide more jobs, to Norfolk, where students expected to start getting maglev rides months ago. The Old Dominion project is out of money. The vehicle sits idle on the end of its track. During tests when it has run about 10 to 15 mph, the train vibrated and rattled like a car running over a rumble strip. This is not what university officials had in mind when they signed a contract with the Marietta, Ga.-based company to build the nation’s first magnetically levitated train system....AMT’s competitor has left it in the dust. On New Year’s Eve, a German company called Transrapid International debuted a maglev system in Shanghai, China, that runs at more than 260 mph. Back at Old Dominion, the AMT vehicle’s panels lie strewn on the ground. Sections of track are missing from the guideway. Three boarding stations are unfinished shells of concrete, steel and wood.”

February 7-13, 2003 The Orlando Business Journal (Noelle Haner-Dorr) – OSCEOLA FAVORS DISNEY ROUTE

“Osceola County has weighed in on a proposed high-speed rail route linking Orlando and Tampa and the ‘ears’ have it. A group of municipal officials and

community groups say they'll support Walt Disney World's bid for a route starting at Orlando International Airport and stretching along the Central Florida Greenway to a 50-acre site just east of Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex. The reason: They fear another route would cut off Osceola County from a light-rail network that will link to the faster city-to-city system."

February 11, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – HIGH-SPEED RAIL BIDDERS UNVEIL COST TO TAXPAYERS

"The top contenders to build and operate the first leg of the state's constitutionally mandated high-speed rail system say it will cost taxpayers between \$2.1 billion and \$2.7 billion during 30 years to get the line up and running. Two international teams vying for the job estimate that's how much public financing they will need if Florida moves ahead with its ambitious and controversial rail plan. But to make the deal palatable to skeptical legislators and a hostile governor, the groups, in bids made public late Monday, say they will bring buckets of cash to the table and, under most

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scenarios, run the system without annual subsidies. Generally, the public is expected to finance the construction of the system. The private teams cover its yearly operating costs....The team led by Fluor Transportation and Bombardier says it will spend between \$945 million and \$1.3 billion during the 30 year-period. Global Rail Consortium, a group led by a Korean high-speed rail company and the Arcadis design and engineering firm, say they will spend between \$1.7 billion and \$2 billion in private money. Though Global Rail and Fluor-Bombardier are considered the most likely candidates to get the job, two other teams also submitted proposals. Georgia Monorail said it can build the leg linking Orlando to Tampa for between \$404 million and \$644 million in public money. Industry experts, however, are skeptical about monorail because there are relatively few in operation. Another technology is even more unusual and untested. Et3.com, based in Crystal River, wants to use vacuum tubes and small capsules to whisk riders to their destinations at speeds, it claims, between 300 mph and 4,000 mph. Its system would cost about \$1.2 billion....In Central Florida, officials will be scrutinizing the numbers behind the two possible alignments. At first blush, the figures are as different as the routes. Fluor-Bombardier says it can build and run the GreeneWay route with \$2.3 billion in public money. The Bee Line route, it said, would cost \$2.7 billion. But Global Rail's projections are reversed. It said the Bee Line, at \$2.16 in public financing, is the cheaper route. The GreeneWay, it said, would take \$2.5 billion in public money. Global Rail's ultimate numbers on the Bee Line, however, may change. It calculated its cost and revenue assuming Walt Disney World would be putting up to 2 million people a year on the train. Disney, however, has said that if the system runs along the Bee Line, it will not put its

visitors on the train. They'll continue to be shuttled from the airport to the theme park on Disney-run buses. Disney-bound passengers, and the fares they would pay, are considered critical to the system's success. The state's high-speed rail authority board is not expected to endorse a route or team until next fall. If the project eventually moves ahead, trains are not expected to run until 2007. The rail authority, however, has a more immediate concern. Gov. Jeb Bush is not a high-speed rail supporter, and he has not included any money for the project in his proposed budget. He has also threatened to put the issue back on a statewide ballot if he is not satisfied with the proposals of the teams competing to run the system."

April 23, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton, John Kennedy) – HOUSE REJECTS BUSH ON RAIL REVOTE

"The House on Tuesday derailed Gov. Jeb Bush's push for a revote over whether to build a costly high-speed train network. The House rejected the proposal (HJR 309) by a 61-57 vote – far short of the three-fifths vote required to put the bullet train back on the ballot in 2004. It was a stinging rebuke for the second-term Republican governor, who called on lawmakers last month to give voters a chance to reconsider the amendment. The first leg of the multi-billion-dollar system would stretch from Orlando and Tampa, with all the state's major cities eventually connected. ... While Republicans hold an 81-39 advantage in the House, party affiliation meant nothing during Tuesday's lengthy floor debate. The bill required 72 votes in the Republican-led 120-member House to put the measure on the ballot. A similar majority would

have also been needed in the 40-member Senate, where it narrowly came out of the transportation committee Monday."

April 25, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – BELEAGUERED LYNX TURNS RAIL PLANS OVER TO STATE

"The agency that has spear-headed the region's long-running push for a rail system is now officially out of the rail business. Lynx, the area's transit system, formally turned over rail-planning duties to the Florida Department of Transportation. The move comes about six months after the state first stepped in because Lynx was not making enough progress on rail work. At that point, the switch was supposed to be temporary. Lynx was struggling through a public-relations disaster brought on by its trip to Las Vegas, and officials thought agency leaders didn't have the time or manpower to focus on rail planning. Acting Lynx Executive Director Howard

Tipton said it is clear to him that many local elected officials still don't want the agency, which continues to rehab its reputation, in charge of a project that is so expensive and so politically explosive. A light-rail line running from Altamonte Springs to International Drive could cost more than \$1 billion. A commuter rail from DeLand to Orlando could cost \$100 million....The move is a significant shift for the agency. For years, it chafed at the notion that it is 'just a bus system.' In the late 1990's, agency officials eagerly pursued a rail project, knowing that such a mammoth undertaking would raise Lynx's profile within the transit community. Ultimately, Orange County commissioners pulled the plug on the \$600 million rail proposal in late 1999. Soon after that, however, Lynx again began doing rail planning at the request of Metroplan Orlando, the region's lead transportation planning agency. It continued in that role until late last year when the state stepped in."

May 4, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Stratton) – FAST-RAIL FUNDING TRIGGERS TRANSIT TUFF

"The billion-dollar rail project that has bedeviled state lawmakers is attracting an unlikely group of critics. Transit officials around the state are warning that proposed high-speed legislation will drain the pot of money now used to run Florida's local bus and rail systems. By their estimate, 43 percent of the state money now used to pay for bus routes, rail lines and transit stations will be gobbled up by the constitutionally mandated high-speed rail project. Transit agencies say they're not opposed to high-speed rail, but they're worried about how the state would fund it."

May 14, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Bob Mahlburg) – 'TRIANGLE' TRAIN PLAN LOSES STEAM

"Orlando's hopes for the so-called 'triangle' train route suffered a major setback Tuesday, but state lawmakers appeared willing to keep a statewide high-speed train ordered by Florida voters alive for another year. Lawmakers stripped about \$10 million from the House budget for a route that would link Orlando International

Airport to Walt Disney World and the International Drive tourist corridor. The idea is being pushed by Rep. Randy Johnson, R-Winter Garden. But about \$7 million remains in the proposed budget in the House and Senate to build high-speed train stations and continue planning for the Tampa-Orlando leg of the statewide high-speed route. Johnson, chairman of the powerful House Finance and Tax Committee, said he has not given up on his proposal....the triangle route would let tourists fly into Orlando, visit attractions and fly home without ever driving on

Central Florida's clogged roads. The transit triangle, anchored by a high-speed leg from the airport to Disney, also would give the region an alternative train system if the high-speed rail plan is not built, Johnson said."

June 4, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – ORANGE LUKEWARM ON I-DRIVE RAIL CASH

"Hoping that the state's proposed high-speed railroad gets built, Orange County commissioners put in their two cents Tuesday that it should stop at the convention center – but that's about all they put in. Commissioners reaffirmed that they want the bullet train to arrive from Tampa along a route favored by International Drive businesses, rather than one pushed by Walt Disney World. But throwing in \$20 million in tax money as an incentive to help state planners decide? That proved far more difficult for commissioners. After much wrangling Tuesday, they approved a watered-down offer with no guarantees....International Drive businesses, including Universal Orlando, asked the Orange County commissioners to sweeten the Bee Line alternative by making a convention center train station eligible for \$20 million in redevelopment money. The commission went along, but only after Teresa Jacobs and Homer Hartage revised the deal, saying they weren't thrilled that I-Drive businesses weren't putting up money of their own."

June 19, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – BUSH HINTS AT VETO OF RAIL CASH

"Gov. Jeb Bush may be about to derail a proposed high-speed train linking Orlando and Tampa that voters approved three years ago. The governor has never liked the idea of the bullet train and has long threatened to veto planning money for the 125-mph railroad. A new e-mail exchange with one lawmaker suggests he's ready to do so. If Bush uses a line-item veto to remove \$7.2 million earmarked for high-speed rail planning next year, the train could be out of business for good, said Frederick Dudley, chairman of the Florida High Speed Rail Authority. Bush plans to sign the state budget, with line-item vetoes, next week. The bullet train could cost \$2.2 billion to link Orlando and Tampa by 2009, and 10 times that much to eventually connect other Florida cities. Florida already has spent \$20 million on planning. Last year, Bush threatened to veto future money specifically because of a broad, train-related tax exemption he wanted removed from state law. The exemption was not removed during this year's legislative session."

June 24, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (John Kennedy) – VETO SLOWS HIGH-SPEED RAIL

“Gov. Jeb Bush vetoed \$7.2 million for Florida’s high-speed rail Monday, threatening the future of the voter-approved train that’s supposed to connect Orlando, Tampa and other major cities. The rail money was clearly the most prominent of a handful of vetoes by the Republican governor who also signed into law a \$53.3 billion state budget for the fiscal year that begins next week....Despite Bush’s veto, about \$4.9 million remains in the budget for building train stations that could be used for high-speed rail in Tampa and Orlando. Bush said that means the state is complying with a constitutional amendment requiring the rail system be built. The amendment was approved in 2000 by 52 percent of Florida voters.”

July 10, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – LIGHT RAIL PUT ON FAST TRACK FROM AIRPORT

“A proposed light-rail train running from Orlando International Airport to International Drive is getting a boost from state officials who want to speed up the planning. The Florida Department of Transportation announced Tuesday it will pull the plug on a preliminary \$330,000 study for a light-rail route connecting the airport and I-Drive. Instead, DOT planners will develop a more comprehensive \$900,000 study that could make the route eligible for federal funding in a couple of years. The change of plans rattled a few municipal and county leaders who worry it could be a first step to pushing an airport light-rail route ahead of other rail plans. Among them is the proposed intercity, high-speed train that could stop at both the airport and I-Drive. Orange County Chairman Rich Crotty embraced the move Tuesday, in part because he doubts the voter-mandated state bullet train – mired in financial uncertainty and politics – would ever come to I-Drive. Crotty also acknowledged that an airport route could move ahead of another light-rail proposal that for years has been discussed as first in line, one that would head north from I-Drive to downtown Orlando and then to Altamonte Springs. That railroad was rejected by Orange County voters in 1999 but planners have since reworked it, and it has re-emerged as a possible project if local officials can find money to pay for it....Altamonte Springs Mayor Russ Hauck said the study could help push the airport light-rail line ahead of the one from I-Drive to Altamonte Springs. That route went through years of debate, and local business and municipal leaders split over it before voters rejected it. Since then, elected officials and planners settled on a new route, mostly along I-4 instead of following railroad tracks, and they reached a broader political consensus for it. Some local leaders also have pushed for the airport train, but not with the same intensity, and those plans have progressed more slowly.

July 15, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – CONGRESSMAN GIVES COMMUTER RAIL A PUSH

“The agency that runs commuter-rail trains in South Florida might become a surrogate mother to a train that could one day run in Central Florida. The Florida Department of Transportation wants to move ahead with plans to purchase a

prototype commuter rail manufactured by Colorado Railcar and has arranged for Tri-Rail of South Florida to test it on its West Palm Beach-to-Miami line. If the train works in Miami, and Central Florida pulls together a commuter-rail system in the next few years, then the train would be brought here to run on existing tracks between DeLand and downtown Orlando. The strategy, pushed by U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, could shave years off federal timetables while the region contemplates piecing together a train system to carry commuters between western Volusia and Seminole counties and Orlando....Plenty of uncertainties remain. State and area leaders in Central Florida would have to form a local rail authority such as Tri-Rail. They would have to negotiate with CSX Transportation to use that company's commercial railroad tracks and make arrangements with cities such as DeLand, Winter Park and Orlando to create up to a dozen stops. And the local agency would have to come up with the bulk of the \$150 million to pay for a full commuter-rail system....Last fall, when Mica got permission to put a Colorado Railcar train on CSX for a demonstration, CSX officials insisted that while they allowed the demonstration, that should not signal the company has any commitment to actually installing the train. CSX wants to be sure commuter trains would not get in the way of freight business.”

August 6, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Tamara Lytle) – RULING BLAMES WRECK ON RAILROAD

“Shoddy maintenance of tracks by CSX Transportation caused the Amtrak auto-train derailment that killed four people in Florida last year, the National Transportation Safety Board ruled Tuesday. ‘It could have been prevented,’ said Ellen Engleman, chairwoman of the NTSB. ‘It’s truly a maintenance issue on the entire accident. This is something the rail companies know how to do. We’re saying, ‘Do it.’ The northbound train hit a heat-induced buckle in a curve of track near Crescent City at 56 mph April 18, 2002. The last half of the train derailed, killing four of the 446 people on board. Thirty-six others were seriously injured, and 106 people had minor injuries. CSX owns and maintains the tracks along which Amtrak runs the auto train from Sanford to the Washington, D.C. area. The NTSB recommended that CSX:

- Change its standards and procedures for track maintenance and institute a quality-control program to make sure surfacing operations are up to the company standards. Engleman said the inadequate maintenance done by CSX did not even meet the company's existing standards.
- Set up consistent rules for rail anchors, which brace the track to keep it from dangerous expansion in hot weather.
- Establish procedures for resurfacing to account for temperature changes that can affect the track.

September 19, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – TRANSIT OPTIONS POSE A PUZZLE

“If Orange County voters go for a half-cent sales-tax increase to fix roads, they’ll also be approving \$400 million for a transit system that has yet to be revealed. The Mobility 20/20 sales-tax referendum would raise \$2.6 billion if voters approve it Oct. 7. While most of the money would go toward improving and expanding I-4 and 50 other streets and highways, the second-largest chunk would be used for an unspecified mass-transit plan. That plan could well be a revival of serious efforts to build a light-rail transit system in the county, four years after the last effort fell in an explosive political fight at the Orange County Commission. Or it could be a proposed commuter train to ride tracks north-south through much of Central Florida. State and local transportation planners are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to study the commuter rail and two separate light-rail lines, and Orange County leaders eagerly await the results. Until the options are studied and sorted, which will take a year or more, those political leaders insist they can’t say whether transit money would buy Orange County a light rail, a commuter rail, both or neither....Such uncertainty opens a big target for critics, who say voters deserve answers to costly questions, such as where the system would run, who would ride it, how much it would cost, and what government would front operating subsidies that could oversee tens of millions of dollars a year.”

October 9, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (George Curcio) – 2 POST-MORTEM ON MOBILITY 20/20

“The immediate analysis of Mobility 20/20’s defeat has cited reasons such as voters’ ‘distrust’ of government and their failure to truly ‘understand’ the issues involved. Such explanations, however, ignore what is really occurring at the ground level politically....Why did Mobility 20/20 fail? Because the solution put forth by Crotty and Dyer said taxpayers were responsible for funding an inadequate solution to a problem not of their own making, but of that made by officials like them. The general population would like to see Crotty and Dyer offer responsible solutions. Until such solutions are proffered, voters’ cynicism will

continue to grow at the expense of both major political parties, as evidenced by the Mobility 20/20 defeat.”

October 28, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – DIRECT-TO-DISNEY RAIL LINE CHOSEN

“The state agency planning to bring a high-speed train into Orlando was unwilling to gamble that Walt Disney World was bluffing. So the High Speed Rail Authority gave Disney what it wanted Monday – a train route that would go from Orlando International Airport directly to Disney, bypassing its attraction rivals on International Drive. In return, the authority expects to get what it wants – millions of Disney visitors paying to take a short trip from the airport to Disney on a bullet train that is intended to one day connect all of Florida’s major cities. The authority voted 7-1 Monday to pick the route along the Central Florida GreeneWay (State

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Road 417) instead of the Bee Line Expressway (State Road 528) if the state builds the first leg of the high-speed rail line between Tampa and Orlando. It also picked Fluor-Bombardier to design, build and run the \$2.2 billion system. All along, Disney said if the Bee Line route, which would have ferried tourists to Orange County’s newly expanded convention center and the hotels and attractions on I-Drive, were chosen, Disney would not cooperate....The selection of the GreeneWay route came after Disney promised to discontinue its airport-bus system and encourage visitors to take the train. The authority’s studies say that could deliver more than 2 million riders per year, paying fares the train needs if it is ever to break even financially. Disney also pledged land for a train station at Disney....The authority’s studies showed that the GreeneWay route has the potential to attract 4 million riders per year, including those heading between Orlando and Tampa. However, that assumes Disney can deliver its visitors to the train. Studies showed the Bee Line route might generate only 2.5 million riders a year. The financial issues remain huge regardless. For the system to work, Florida would have commit up to \$75 million per year, and the federal government would have to match that. But whether the train – which ultimately would link Orlando, Tampa and Miami and possibly Jacksonville, Naples and Tallahassee – ever gets built remains in question. Though voters mandated a high-speed rail to link the cities when they approved a 2000 amendment to the state constitution, there are deep political sentiments against the plan, starting with Gov. Jeb Bush. If the system gets built, the train could start making runs between Tampa and Orlando International Airport, with stops at Lakeland and Disney, by late 2009....In picking Fluor-Bombardier to build and run the train, the authority threw in a twist. It told Fluor-Bombardier it prefers the trains and tracks of the other bidder, Global Rail Consortium. So the

authority wants to persuade Fluor-Bombardier in contract negotiations to abandon the jet-powered train it proposed and switch to an electric train. The authority also wants Fluor-Bombardier to provide dual tracks like Global promised. The decision left both Fluor-Bombardier and Global Rail officials perplexed. Fluor-Bombardier's leaders said they would be willing to switch to a double track but expressed great reluctance to give up the jet train Bombardier Transportation has pioneered. Meanwhile, Global Rail officials seethed after the decision and said they would consider challenging it in court. Fluor-Bombardier was picked mainly because authority members were more comfortable with the corporate and financial stability and clout of the two large international companies in the partnership, compared with what was offered by the 30-company partners that make up Global Rail."

November 22, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (writer not identified) – LOSING TRAIN BIDDER PROTESTS

"The losing bidder for the contract to design, build and operate a proposed bullet train line connecting Orlando and Tampa has filed a protest, declaring that the winning proposal by Fluor-Bombardier is 'fundamentally flawed.' Global Rail Consortium, a South Korean-based partnership of nearly 30 firms, should be awarded the contract to construct the constitutionally mandated high-speed rail line, Tallahassee attorney Paul Sexton said Friday. Last month, the Florida High Speed Rail Authority rejected Global Rail's bid to build the line, which is estimated to cost as much as \$2.6 billion. The authority said it liked the consortium's technology

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better but was leery of its finances. Sexton contended that Fluor-Bombardier failed to meet the requirements set forth in the authority's request for proposals. Sexton also said the authority didn't respond to Global Rail's protests that Fluor-Bombardier's bid was inadequate. Sexton's office filed the protest this week with the Florida Department of Transportation."

December 11, 2003 USA Today (Larry Copeland) – SOUTHEAST CONSIDERS HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE – FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BUILD IT; PRIVATE COMPANY WOULD THEN RUN IT

"It used to be possible to zip from one city in the Southeast to another along interstate highways that were seldom crowded outside major metropolitan centers. But two decades of unprecedented growth have changed all that. Today, a driver heading from here to Birmingham, Ala., or from Charlotte to Columbia, S.C. is likely to encounter the same congestion long familiar to motorists in other regions. Now, in a rare effort of regional cooperation, six Southeastern states are joining to push for

an alternative – an ambitious, high-speed train network that would connect the region and link it with Washington, D.C. Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee and their allies in Congress recently won \$750,000 in federal funds to study the possibility of such a system. Business leaders in the region, who are spearheading the effort, are touting the rail proposal's unusual financing scheme. The federal government would pay for building the rail network at an estimated cost of about \$6 billion. But once the tracks were completed, a private company would operate it, using its own rail cars and without government subsidies. Proponents say this part of the proposal makes it attractive to skeptical members of Congress, who are reluctant to back an Amtrak-like system requiring continuing subsidies.”

December 13, 2003 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – TRAIN COULD STALL AT CATCH-22

“The proposed commuter train to run through Central Florida may be caught in a planning loop that could jeopardize federal money. On Friday, county planners from Seminole and Orange – two of the four counties the train could eventually serve, along with Volusia and Osceola – expressed pessimism that they could get local approvals for the train until they know more about costs. The Florida Department of Transportation partially answered that question at a meeting of regional planners Friday. New studies show the tracks, trains and stations would cost about \$155 million. Annual operating cost, for an initial route from DeBary to downtown Orlando, would be \$10 million. Eventually, the system would be extended south to Poinciana. But an unknown and likely big part of the eventual cost is how much money CSX Transportation wants for letting the train use company-owned tracks to carry commuters up and down the Interstate 4 corridor. Yet planners with the Florida Department of Transportation said they cannot negotiate a price from CSX until they have firmer commitments from the counties, cities and regional planning agencies. ‘It sounds like a Catch-22,’ said Dave Grovdahl, director of transportation planning at Metroplan Orlando.”

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April 10, 2004 Orlando Sentinel (Jason Garcia) – UNIVERSAL BOOSTS DRIVE TO KILL TRAIN TO DISNEY

“Universal Orlando is backing efforts to kill a cross-state bullet train with a six-figure financial contribution nearly six months after state rail planners bypassed the International Drive tourist corridor and mapped a route straight to Walt Disney World. Outmuscled by Disney – which demanded that the train speed from Orlando International Airport directly to Central Florida's tourism behemoth before heading to Tampa – Universal and a number of tourist attractions along I-Drive are

pledging support to a group trying to overturn the constitutional amendment with a new vote this fall. It won't be easy. They need to collect 488,722 certified signatures in less than four months to get the initiative before voters on the November ballot. Florida voters approved the measure in 2000. However, Universal alone already has contributed \$220,000 to the effort, company officials said – all but \$50 of what Palm Beach based 'Derail the Bullet Train,' or DEBT, has raised so far. The group's latest campaign-finance report will be released next week....High-speed rail opponents, most notably Gov. Jeb Bush, have long blasted the multibillion-dollar project as exorbitantly expensive, threatening to siphon money from other vital projects. Bullet-train supporters counter that opponents exaggerate the costs. But local critics are more upset by the route. By having the train go directly from the airport to Disney, they say, the rail authority is letting Disney freeze out everyone from Universal and SeaWorld to the Orange County Convention Center. Disney spokesman Bill Warren said the company opposed the Bee Line route only because it would have prevented any future light-rail system from including Osceola County.”

April 24, 2004 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – VIRGIN STEPS ABOARD PRIVATE TEAM TO RUN HIGH-SPEED RAILROAD

“Virgin wants to run Florida's high-speed railroad, should it ever get built. The British conglomerate, which runs railroads in the United Kingdom, an airline, a travel company and various entertainment companies, announce Friday that it has agreed to drive the trains planned between Tampa and Orlando and eventually Miami. Virgin would fill a critical hole in Florida's private train team. The company picked to design and build the project, the Fluor-Bombardier partnership, has no one experienced at running a railroad....Virgin's entry also may add pizzazz to a project bogged down in political disputes about critical but unglamorous matters, such as taxpayer financing, constitutional law and state transportation priorities.

May 18, 2004 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – RAIL PROJECT NEEDS MORE MONEY FAST

“The state panel planning a bullet-train system between Tampa and Orlando is under pressure to find much of its money this summer, so the authority is pressuring the system's private contractor to pony up what it can. The Florida High Speed Rail Authority is about \$2.3 billion short of the \$2.6 billion it needs because the Florida

Legislature and the federal government continue to refuse to contribute. If the authority wants to build the system by the 2009 deadline mandated by voters in 2000, it better start looking fast for new sources of money, said state Sen. Jim Sebesta, R. – St. Petersburg.... With no federal and state money in sight, that leaves preferred contractor, Fluor-Bombardier in the position of having to reconsider its financial commitment. Fluor, a Canadian partnership, was picked to design, build, operate and finance the train system last summer in large part because of the financial package it offered. Fluor's pledge included a \$250 million bond guarantee against operating costs and a \$50 million letter of credit. Since November, the authority and Fluor have been negotiating the final terms and negotiators insisted they are close to a final contract. But Monday, the authority told Fluor to restate its financial commitment, with the assumption that Fluor might find more money or more private investors."

June 10, 2004 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – COMMUTER TRAIN EARNS 2 CRITICAL ENDORSEMENTS

"A proposed commuter train running from DeBary to downtown Orlando and eventually to Kissimmee won two key endorsements Wednesday. The proposed train, which planners envision daily carrying 2,400 people in and out of Orlando by 2009 and 6,000 passengers eventually, was approved by Metroplan Orlando, the transportation planning agency for Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties, and by Lynx, the region's transit agency. These approvals allow the Florida Department of Transportation to go forward with an environmental-impact study for the project, which will allow the state to apply for federal funding to help pay for it.... However, the planning agency's approvals do little to address two potential roadblocks for the train. CSX Transportation has not said what money and other concessions it might want for the train to run on CSX tracks. And no one has figured out how to pay for it.... The initial 27-mile leg of the railroad, which could have seven stations, is projected to cost at least \$155 million to set up and \$10 million a year to run, though no one knows how much CSX demands might add to the cost. When the rail is extended to Kissimmee, it would cost at least \$332 million to set up and \$14 million a year to run. Planners estimate the first leg would attract up to 2,400 boardings a day initially and about 3,000 by 2025. The southern leg could add another 3,000 boardings a day. The federal government could contribute up to 50 percent of the initial costs, and the state another 25 percent. That would leave the counties and cities responsible for about \$38.75 million for the initial start-up costs, plus the operating costs."

July 30, 2004 Orlando Sentinel (Wes Smith) – ANTI-TRAIN ITEM MAKES BALLOT

A citizen's initiative aimed at repealing Florida's proposed high-speed rail system won a spot on the November ballot Thursday, but proponents of the bullet train vowed to keep fighting.... The petition drive caught a 'groundswell of support' with more than 650,000 Floridians signing to place the repeal measure on the November ballot."

February 15, 2005 Orlando Sentinel (Jason Garcia, Scott Powers) – DYER, CROTTY GIVE NEW LIFE TO LIGHT RAIL

“Orange County and Orlando leaders have launched a new bid for a light-rail system that would link Orlando International Airport, International Drive and the city’s downtown – resurrecting the controversial \$1.3 billion project the county killed six years ago. County Mayor Rich Crotty and Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer have asked Congress to find money for a local light-rail train as it puts together its transportation spending plan for the next six years. As part of the arrangement, the city and the county appear poised to unite behind a plan to build the train’s first leg between the airport and the Orange County Convention Center on I-Drive, resolving one of the key disputes that doomed earlier light-rail efforts.”

March 11, 2005 Orlando Sentinel (Jim Abrams) – TRANSPORTATION BILL CLEARS HOUSE

“The House approved a mammoth highway and transit bill Thursday that aims to reduce traffic congestion nationwide and bring jobs to every lawmaker’s home district. The White House said the bill was ‘long overdue’ but warned, as the measure moved to the Senate, that it would be subject to a presidential veto if it rose above the \$284 billion the House approved....The bill also authorizes a light-rail project for Orlando and puts an additional \$8.9 million aside for a Central Florida commuter-rail project Mica has touted. The light rail – which would run initially from Orlando International Airport to International Drive – did not receive any specific funding in the bill. But the authorization means it will be eligible for federal aid in the future. Mica had won a promise for \$330 million in federal aid for light rail in the 1990’s, but squabbling among local officials doomed the project. The new highway bill puts the light-rail project back to where it was about 10 years ago, Mica said.”

April 16, 2005 Orlando Sentinel (Jason Garcia) – COUNTY ENVISIONS I-DRIVE TRANSIT HUB

“One day, tourists arriving at Orlando International Airport may be able to catch a train to International Drive, where they pick up their luggage and take a shuttle ride to their hotel. Locals could park their cars in a garage and hop on a bus or trolley to visit I-Drive shops and restaurants. Those possibilities could become reality under a plan to build a transportation hub just south of the Orange County Convention Center. County officials are moving ahead with design plans for the hub, which ultimately could incorporate everything from bus terminals and rental-car lots to monorail and train stations. Officials already have dubbed it the ‘Gateway to Downtown Orange County.’...County commissioners approved a \$2.2 million deal

earlier this week to have a consultant begin design plans. The money comes from a state Department of Transportation grant. The hub would be built on 50 acres of county-owned land straddling the Bee Line Expressway. Bureaucrats and business leaders have struggled for years to ease traffic on the car-choked tourist strip. Officials have looked at everything from installing bus-only lanes to a monorail, but

plans have stalled on drawing boards....county officials think that building the hub will relieve the problem and give the county an added advantage if the I-Drive area becomes a stop on future rail lines.”

April 1-7, 2005 The Orlando Business Journal (Noelle C. Haner) – AIRPORT LIGHT-RAIL ROUTE BACK ON DRAWING BOARD

Light rail is back on the drawing board in Central Florida. This time, a route between the Orlando International Airport and the Orange County Convention Center is being proposed as the first leg of a \$2.6 billion system, which also would include a north-south route from Altamonte Springs to International Drive. ‘If there ever is to be light rail, this is probably the premiere route in terms of ridership and connectivity of places that will generate traffic,’ says Orange County Mayor Rich Crotty. And, it appears this time around, the project may have a fighting chance. First, U.S. Congressman John Mica (R-Florida) has secured an unspecified amount of financial support in the U.S. House of Representatives for the project as part of Congress’s latest attempt to authorize transportation funding nationwide for the next six years. More importantly, it appears officials with the city of Orlando and Orange County – after decades of heated debate – finally agree the airport route makes sense as the first leg of light rail....The reason for the local consensus? Because the reconfiguration of Interstate 4 through downtown Orlando is not scheduled for completion until 2013, no date has been set to start work on the north-south light-rail route – which is to be built within the I-4 right of way. This opens the door for the airport route to be built first, according to Dave Grovdahl, director of transportation planning for Metroplan Orlando. ‘Metroplan’s board has said it won’t push a particular route,’ he explains. ‘But we are interested in proceeding with whichever segment has the money and support behind it.’ The current consensus on light rail in Orlando has been a long time coming. Grovdahl says the debate began in the late 1950s with talk of a five-mile experimental monorail system that would have run between what was then the Martin Co., downtown Orlando and the then-McCoy Air Force Base. Over the years, proposals have taken a number of forms, including a system in the early 1980s that would have focused on Orlando’s major activity centers, including the airport, the Walt Disney World Resort, International Drive and downtown Orlando. However, with every proposal

came issues about state and local funding and the disagreement about which segment of the system would be built first – downtown to I-Drive or the airport to I-Drive. The debate came to a head in 1998, when Orlando county officials and voters shot down a local option sales tax referendum that would have paid for the first segment of light rail to go from Altamonte Springs through downtown Orlando to I-Drive. ‘Orange County firmly believes the airport route should be the first leg,’ notes Grovdahl. The developments come at a time when the Florida Department of Transportation is in the midst of finishing up studies on both proposed routes for light rail in Orlando. When they are released later this month, current ridership projections will be available, but Crotty believes the results will indicate the airport route definitely is the best choice for light rail’s first leg development. ‘The benefit of the route is you have two huge activity centers of travel using the service,’ explains Crotty. In fact, he notes 32 million people used the airport last year, and in January alone, more than 190,000 visited the Orange County Convention Center.

Officials with Orlando International certainly are ready for light rail. According to Jeffrey Fuqua, chairman of the board of the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, the airport has the infrastructure to support light rail at both terminals.”

June 18, 2005 Orlando Sentinel (Jackie Hallifax) – HIGH-SPEED-RAIL PANEL TRIES TO GET EVERYONE ON BOARD

“The board charged with overseeing creation of a Florida high-speed train is still chugging along, more than half a year after voters yanked the bullet-train provision from the state constitution. The High Speed Rail Authority even welcomed a new board member Friday as it elected a new chairman and extended contracts for the consultants who have carried out the planning process during the past few years. The consultants are working on the final details of a document needed to get federal approval for the first leg of a high-speed train from Orlando to Tampa. But with unrelenting opposition from Gov. Jeb Bush, the train itself seems shelved – at least for now. So far, drafting the plans has taken about four years and cost about \$14 million. Once the federal approval is granted, it’s good for three years.”

July 13, 2005 Orlando Sentinel (Scott Powers) – ORANGE’S SUPPORT FOR TRAIN PLAN WARMS

“The Central Florida commuter train plan gained momentum Tuesday as Orange County commissioners showed interest in some of the side benefits of the plan, setting the stage for a decisive vote next month. If the system gets developed, a train could start carrying commuters between DeBary in southern Volusia County

and Orlando by 2009, and between Orlando and Poinciana in Osceola County by 2011. There would be up to 15 stations. Orange commissioners have never been sold on the idea that Orange County residents would ride the train enough to make it worth the \$44 million the state wants from the county, and last month several criticized the idea. But Tuesday they focused on other benefits of the proposal, including the prospect that freight trains would have to be routed around greater Orlando to make room for commuter trains. No vote was taken Tuesday, and none was planned until August. But after receiving assurances from George Gilhooley, District 5 secretary for the Florida Department of Transportation, Orange County Mayor Rich Crotty said he was encouraged the county may sign on....Gilhooley said the state needs all four counties to commit this summer or it cannot start developing the system. Volusia County committed last week, and state officials are expecting support from Seminole and Osceola counties in the next couple of weeks. Under the plan, federal and state governments would pick up 75 percent of the estimated \$473 million cost. The state needs the four counties to pay the rest, as well as to split the operating deficits that could run \$5 million a year. Gilhooley said the state intends to bear the full cost of gaining control of the CSX tracks through Central Florida from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. each day. With that control, the state could route most or all freight trains to either go through Ocala or to travel at night....Commissioners also focused on train service to a station near Sand Lake Road, which Crotty hopes might eventually receive light-rail trains running east and west between Orlando International Airport and International Drive.”

September 2, 2005 Daytona Beach News Journal (Bob Koslow) – COMMUTER RAIL HITS BUMPS

“A proposed commuter rail system could be derailed because a new federal transportation bill prohibits toll lanes along Interstate 4. State leaders, however, say they’re determined to continue fighting for the rail system to help commuters and alleviate I-4 congestion....A Central Florida commuter rail line on 61 miles of CSX tracks through Orlando could help transport 30,000 West Volusia commuters to jobs outside the county and serve as an alternate to driving congested I-4. Everybody seems to want it. The federal government pledged to pay half the \$473.5 million construction cost, with Florida paying 25 percent. Volusia, Seminole, Orange and Osceola counties committed this summer to pay the remaining \$117.3 million. But now there’s a snag. U.S. Rep. John Mica – an avid rail supporter, but equally strong opponent to toll lanes on the interstate – added language to the recently approved six-year federal transportation bill that prohibits toll lanes on the interstate in the Orlando area. Toll lanes and commuter rail might seem like separate issues, but in this case they’re linked. The original deal hinged on getting commuter rail up and running by 2009 so it could help ease congestion of a planned widening project on I-4. The widening isn’t supposed to start until

2012, but a deal was worked out to move it up three years with the state Turnpike Authority kicking in \$350 million in exchange for building toll roads on the interstate. The timing was critical because having the rail online in 2009 while I-4 is all torn up would qualify the project for a federal grant that would pay all of its operating costs. If I-4 isn't torn up when commuter rail begins, the counties would be on the hook for the costs to run the train – an estimated \$5 million a year. That's enough to cool enthusiasm for commuter rail among local supporters.”

January 3, 2006 Orlando Sentinel (Wes Smith) – EDGEWOOD BUCKS TIDE ON RAIL PLAN

“This small lakeside community just south of downtown Orlando has earned a reputation for defeating powerful foes. But one of Edgewood’s most noted giant-killers – a former mayor- is on the other side in its latest clash, this one with state, federal and local backers of the \$473 million Central Florida Commuter Rail system. ‘Unfortunately, I think Edgewood officials knee-jerked on this,’ said former Mayor Jim Muszynski, who supports the commuter-rail plan. Edgewood, a bedroom community of 2,300, earned a feisty reputation more than a decade ago after it won an eight-year battle to defeat a proposed \$500 million Central Connector roadway. The six-lane toll road would have linked downtown Orlando with the Beach Line Expressway by running through the middle of the 2-square-mile city. In what some see as a similar fight brewing, Edgewood council members voted last month to make their town the first in the region to take a stand against the planned Central Florida Commuter Rail. The town is exploring legal options to stop it. But transportation officials doubt that any one city could bring the project to a halt....The council’s resolution opposed the current draft of the commuter-rail plan because of ‘inadequate communication’ about the project, the potential for worsened traffic problems caused by more trains through town, the potential negative impact on property values, and the threat of long-term costs for

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taxpayers....But Edgewood’s former mayor thinks reason has abandoned his town’s present leadership. Muszynski said those who fought the toll road always envisioned a commuter-rail system as a more appealing solution to traffic congestion.”

January 19, 2006 Orlando Sentinel (Kelly Griffith) – CSX TO BUILD HUB IN WINTER HAVEN

“CSX Corp. plans to build a hub for truck, rail and warehousing operations here in a

move local officials hope will spin off thousands of new jobs in the long term. CSX ships everything from fertilizer to orange juice to phosphate on 1,750 miles of track with major rail yards in Jacksonville, Tampa and Baldwin. The new center would be a place for rail cars and trucks to load and unload, and also would have warehouses for a variety of goods.”

February 24, 2006 Orlando Sentinel (Sandra Mathers) – WINTER GARDEN ANTI-RAIL MEASURE FAILS

“After a commuter-rail pitch by Orange County growth and transportation officials, city commissioners voted 3-2 Thursday not to approve a resolution opposing it. The resolution, introduced by (Commissioner Rod Reynolds) Reynolds, was designed to tell the county that the city did not favor a proposed commuter-rail project through Orange, Seminole and Volusia counties. The rail plan is being supported by the county and Orlando. Only one city, Edgewood, has formally opposed it. Citing figures released Thursday showing the project would cost each Winter Garden resident more than \$15,000, Reynolds called the sum ‘quite a price tag’ for a system he said would not benefit city residents. The figures came from Florida State University professor Dr. Randal Holcombe, chairman of Gov. Jeb Bush’s Council of Economic Advisors.”

August 2, 2006 Orlando Sentinel (Jay Hamburg, Etan Horowitz) – DEAL FINALLY MADE ON COMMUTER RAIL

“Gov. Jeb Bush today announced a nearly \$491 million deal that will bring commuter rail to Central Florida, capping a 20-year dream to relieve gridlock in one of the nation’s most congested regions. He arrived at 12:50 p.m., about 15 minutes later than expected, on board a two-car, double-decker train that rolled up on tracks next to the downtown Orlando Lynx station. ‘Establishing commuter rail will ease congestion, which will improve the quality of life of people both on and off the road,’ Bush said. The project requires a mix of federal, state and local money, as well as private investment. But with funding mostly lined up and details over routes and stops just about worked out, only minor negotiations remain before construction can begin. Trains could start running between DeBary and Orlando by late 2009. An extended route into Osceola County is scheduled to be completed by 2013. During a news conference after his arrival, Bush announced a deal with CSX Transportation, which owns the 61 miles of track on which the commuter trains

would run. The state will buy the tracks for \$150 million and in exchange would improve existing freight lines so that CSX can increase its capacity and move some

of its trains away from urban areas, possibly farther from downtown Orlando.”

August 9, 2006 Orlando Sentinel (Christopher Sherman) – ACTIVISTS IN WINTER PARK
FRET ABOUT RAIL

“Some of the same Winter Park activists who elected a new mayor, stalled a huge downtown condominium project and pushed a big-building moratorium have found a new foe: a commuter-rail stop downtown. The city’s village-character defenders have started an e-mail campaign aimed at mobilizing residents to question a commuter-rail stop in Central Park. A city task force is studying the idea of a station, but the city gave its initial support to the project last year. Some fear it could spur more condo construction around the park and eventually leave the city with a bill it may not be prepared to pay. Higher-density growth is typically encouraged around rail stops, commuter-rail proponents say. Stations can revitalize depressed areas and become another amenity in the marketing arsenal of nearby condominium developers.”

October 6, 2006 Orlando Sentinel (Travis Loller, Associated Press) – SOUTHERN CITIES
HOP ABOARD COMMUTER RAIL

“Driving on Nashville’s interstate highways used to be no problem compared to the sprawling gridlock faced by drivers in other Southern cities such as Atlanta and Houston. But now a booming economy in Music City has brought the inevitable traffic congestion, and four-lane interstates have grown to six, eight and 10 lanes – all crowded during rush hour. Regional planners have been looking at rail as an alternative people-mover for more than a decade, and in September, Nashville opened the Music City Star – Tennessee’s first commuter rail line. Nashville is not the only traditionally car-centered city looking for a way out of its traffic problems. Across the country, smaller cities not known for public transportation are looking to commuter rail to ease congestion and air pollution. At least 31 cities have commuter-rail projects in planning or development, according to a January 2006 report from the American Public Transportation Association. Many are medium-sized cities, such as Nashville; Austin, Texas; and Charlotte, N.C. Plans for a commuter-rail line are under way in Central Florida, with the first leg – from DeBary to Orlando – slated to open in late 2009. A second, Orlando-to-Poinciana route is planned for 2013....Commuter rail is a popular option because it uses existing freight lines, which is cheaper and faster than purchasing right of way and laying tracks for a subway or street-car system or even building a dedicated bus lane. The Music City Star was built for about \$40 million and operates one line with six daily round trips traveling the 32 miles between the city of Lebanon and Nashville’s downtown. The first day of operation saw 784 riders, many of whom said they were sightseers. Riders decreased to about 500 on the next two days.”

February 2, 2007 Orlando Sentinel (writer not identified) – VOTERS TO DECIDE 2 RAIL QUESTIONS

“Winter Park city commissioners voted Thursday to put two questions related to commuter rail on the March 13 ballot instead of three. The two questions will ask voters whether they want a commuter-rail stop built on city-owned property, and whether it should be built with city funds. The commission dropped a question about whether city funds should be used for maintenance costs. A commuter-rail stop could be built on right of way without city money, and Orange County could maintain such a stop.”

March 3, 2007 Orlando Sentinel (Jay Hamburg) - \$250M GIVES COMMUTER RAIL MOMENTUM

“Federal officials have pledged \$250 million to help Central Florida build commuter rail – a major boost that promises to keep the project on track, U.S. Rep. John Mica announced Friday. The money will pay for preliminary engineering of the 61-mile long line running through Volusia, Seminole, Orange and Osceola counties.”

March 15, 2007 Orlando Sentinel (Jay Hamburg) – COMMUTER RAIL PICKS UP SPEED

“When Winter Park said yes to a commuter-rail station, the vote signaled the first public endorsement for the major mass-transit system and delivered momentum to a project that’s ready for the design boards. Within the next two months, Central Florida’s elected officials are poised to formalize their pledges to pay for a portion of the \$600 million rail system that will run from DeBary to Poinciana. And on Monday, federal officials, who are contributing half of the project’s cost, gave Florida transportation engineers the nod to begin preliminary designs of the 61-mile route.”

May 4, 2007 Orlando Sentinel (Jay Hamburg) – STATE IS PUTTING RAIL LINE IN GEAR

“The state will take the first concrete step toward building Central Florida’s commuter rail in the next few months when it starts buying land to build station parking lots. The Florida Department of Transportation announced Wednesday that it has approval to acquire right of way along the 61-mile rail line running from DeLand to Poinciana. The agency got clearance from the Federal Transit Administration for the purchases after studies showed the new rail cars and parking lots wouldn’t harm the environment.”

May 31, 2007 The Tampa Tribune (Billy Townsend) – RAIL HUB DELAY MAY AFFECT

OTHER PROJECTS

“State planners have taken steps to slow the approval of a massive 1,250-acre CSX rail hub and distribution center planned for southeast Winter Haven. The hub is the

backbone of a half-billion-dollar deal put together last year by former Gov. Jeb Bush’s administration that would reorganize freight rail traffic throughout the state and bring commuter rail to the Orlando area. It’s unclear what that will mean for the Orlando project, but CSX spokesman Gary Sease said Wednesday that the facility is ‘a necessary part of the overall plan.’ ...Now, the state’s change of mind could delay the project for years. The center’s approval process had moved forward rapidly since plans for the 1,250-acre complex were announced publicly in January 2006. The land is owned by Winter Haven and would be purchased by CSX. An eager Winter Haven City Commission unanimously approved zoning for its first phase in August. Approval for a development of this size and intensity typically takes years. By splitting the project into two pieces, however, CSX and Winter Haven had avoided time-consuming regional reviews. The first piece is the new hub, which is the center’s engine. CSX claimed it fell just below the 320-acre threshold that would make it a ‘development of regional impact,’ or DRI, triggering an extensive multi-agency review process. Based on the acreage of the first phase, CSX asked to be ‘cleared’ of regional status. The state Department of Community Affairs obliged in a letter dated April 12, 2006, and again last month. In recent weeks, however, opposition to the speed of the approval had grown among other Polk governments, including the Polk County Commission and Lake Wales City Commission, both of which sent letters to DCA asking it to reconsider its DRI clearance. That effort apparently paid off. Information from those contacts with local governments is what prompted the revocation of clearance, rather than any formal legal challenge, said Jon Peck, a DCA spokesman. The specific issues DCA cited are 20 additional acres purchased for a highway access road for the first phase and a map produced by CSX showing a 930-acre phase two adjacent to the hub.”

FINALE OR JUST THE BEGINNING?

At this point in mid-2007, the future of the commuter-rail system is not certain. Will CSX impose onerous liability and service costs on the project? Will local governments agree to their local funding shares? Can agreement be reached on who will own and operate and maintain the system after FDOT?

If commuter-rail does suffer the same fate as the other rail proposals in Central Florida, is the idea of rail transit here forever dead or will it again re-generate itself in another form as it has so many times in the past.

On the other hand, if commuter-rail is successful, will light rail be the next system to follow-on? Will it be in the corridor between the Orlando International Airport and the Orange County Convention Center as well as the Interstate-4 corridor?

And after that, will the high-speed bullet-train proposal re-generate itself? Is it significant that the High Speed Rail Authority, although in-active, remains in-place in the state legislation?

Many more newspaper articles are sure to follow as these questions are debated and resolved.

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