

1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 Project Background

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved the Draft Central Florida Commuter Rail Transit (CFCRT) North/South Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) on December 15, 2006. Public hearings on the EA were held January 16, 2007 in Volusia and Seminole Counties and January 18, 2007 in Orange and Osceola Counties to give the public an opportunity to express views concerning the local, conceptual design, and social, economic and environmental effects of the proposed Project. On March 12, 2007, the Project received the approval letter from FTA to enter into Preliminary Engineering March 12, 2007 for Phase 1 and Phase 2. On April 27, 2007 FTA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Project.

The CRT Project sponsors include the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in association with the Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (LYNX), Volusia County Public Transit System (VOTRAN), METROPLAN ORLANDO (MPO), Volusia County Metropolitan Planning Organization, the counties of Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Volusia and the City of Orlando.

The Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) Project is proposed to operate on the existing CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) A-Line rail corridor from the existing DeLand Amtrak Station in Volusia County, south through downtown Orlando and Kissimmee until its terminus at the Poinciana Industrial Park at the intersection on US 17-92 and the CSXT tracks in Osceola County. A regional map (Figure 1-1) identifies the Project study area.

This 60.8-mile corridor generally parallels Interstate 4 and US 17-92, and contains some of the area's most intensely and densely developed land use. The width of the study area generally includes the major north-south arterial roadways serving downtown Orlando and other major activity centers, principally Interstate 4, US Route 17-92, and SR 434/Forest City Road in the northern portion of the corridor and State Routes 421, 441, 423, 527, and the Florida Turnpike in the southern portion of the corridor.

In July 2007, the five local funding partners including the counties of Volusia, Seminole, Orange, and Osceola as well as the City of Orlando voted unanimously to enter into Interlocal Agreements with each other and with FDOT. These Interlocal Agreements include commitments by FDOT and the local partners to fund 50% of the capital improvements; to fund the anticipated operations and maintenance deficit; and to create a governance structure for the Central Florida Commuter Rail system.

As a result of requests made by local funding partners and further coordination with Amtrak, several changes to the Project scope have occurred and the above referenced EA has been re-evaluated. These changes, discussed throughout this document, include the deletion of the DeBary/Saxon Boulevard station; the addition of the Fort Florida Road station (a station location that was originally in the Project's Alternative Analysis); minor changes to the configuration/location of the parking at the Longwood station; and the addition of a new station in the City of Maitland. A map showing the location of the stations and the Vehicle Storage and Maintenance Facility (VSMF) is provided as Figure 1-2.

1.2 Need for Supplemental Environmental Assessment

This supplement documents changes made to the approved Central Florida Commuter Rail Transit (CFCRT) North/South Corridor Project EA.

Specific changes that have been made include:

- Provided information on station changes: added Fort Florida Road and Maitland Stations; removal of DeBary/Saxon Blvd Extension Station
- Updated configuration of park-and-ride lot at Longwood Station
- Updated parking information and bus information for new stations
- Updated information on the selected site for the Vehicle Storage and Maintenance Facility (VSMF) within Rand Yard
- Modified/added Right-of-Way and Relocations information for new station sites, and Longwood station modification
- Revised information on pedestrian and bicycle facilities/access
- Revised information on existing and impacted wetlands
- Provided information about contamination impacts for the new station sites, and Longwood station modification
- Updated maintenance of traffic and transit information for new station sites
- Updated archaeological and historical/architectural impacts for the new station sites and Longwood station modification
- Updated public involvement information
- Added FTA requirement for S-Line generalized noise and vibration assessments and at-grade road crossing impacts.

1.3 Purpose

The Project purpose and needs identified in the approved EA have not changed with the proposed design modifications. The Commuter Rail Transit Project proposes an alternative mode of transportation to improve the mobility of travelers along the study corridor, which is the primary travel corridor in the region. This corridor is highly congested and experiences poor highway levels of service all during the day, especially in the morning, mid-day and afternoon peak hours. This traffic congestion inhibits travel mobility, causes longer and more frequent delays, emergency response time delays, impairs air quality, wastes fuel and personal time, stifles economic growth and diminishes the overall quality of life. The proposed CRT Project would connect the region's primary residential communities of Volusia, Seminole, and Osceola Counties, to the urban core in Orange County and the City of Orlando.

The regional transportation system has not kept pace with the area's growth and travel demands. The regional activity centers and the high intensity land uses in the Project corridor are not well connected by the existing transportation network. In addition, the level of public transit services provided within the corridor is insufficient to meet the growing mobility needs of the corridor workforce, visitors, and transit-dependent population. The proposed CRT Project assists in addressing these issues. The Project meets the following goals, which were developed with the public as well as regional and local stakeholder input.

Project Goals:

- Provide an alternative mode of transportation between DeLand in Volusia County and Poinciana Industrial Park in Osceola County to the employment and activity centers within the Orlando Metropolitan area.
- Provide high capacity, fast, convenient and reliable commuter rail service in the congested Interstate 4 corridor thereby minimizing travel time and developing an integrated regional transit system.
- Assist in the implementation of regional and local growth management plans through more intense land uses and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) practices at the activity center station locations.
- Implement a financially feasible multi-modal transportation system that includes commuter rail and the corresponding growth management plans with established goals, objectives and policies in the four counties and respective cities.
- Provide an efficient regional transit system that is consistent with local transportation and community based plans and regarded as a good investment.
- Protect and preserve the environment and improve the areas quality of life.

Since completion of the approved EA, continued support and need for the Project is reflected in the July 2007 approval of the aforementioned Interlocal Agreements.

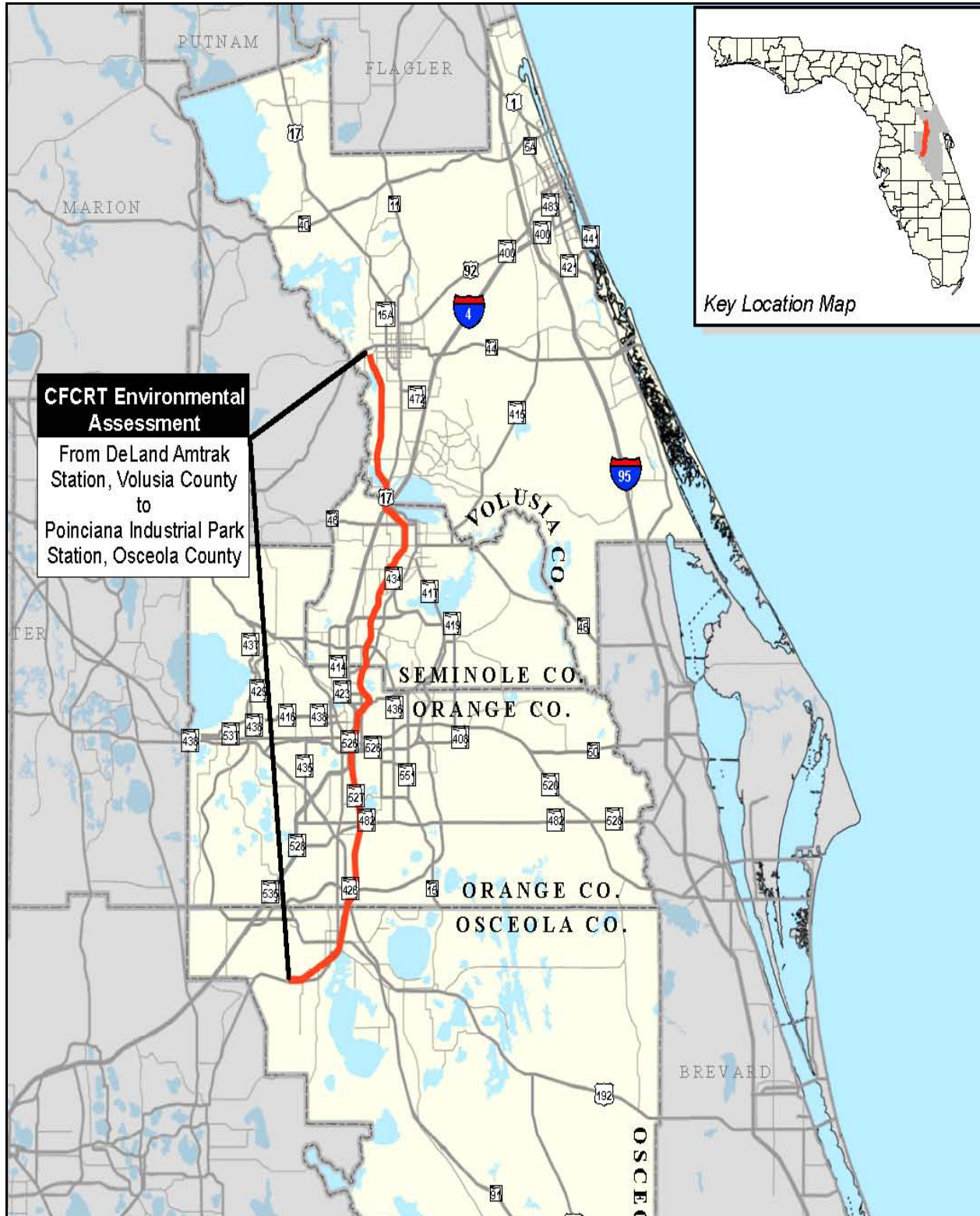


Figure 1-1 Regional Location Map

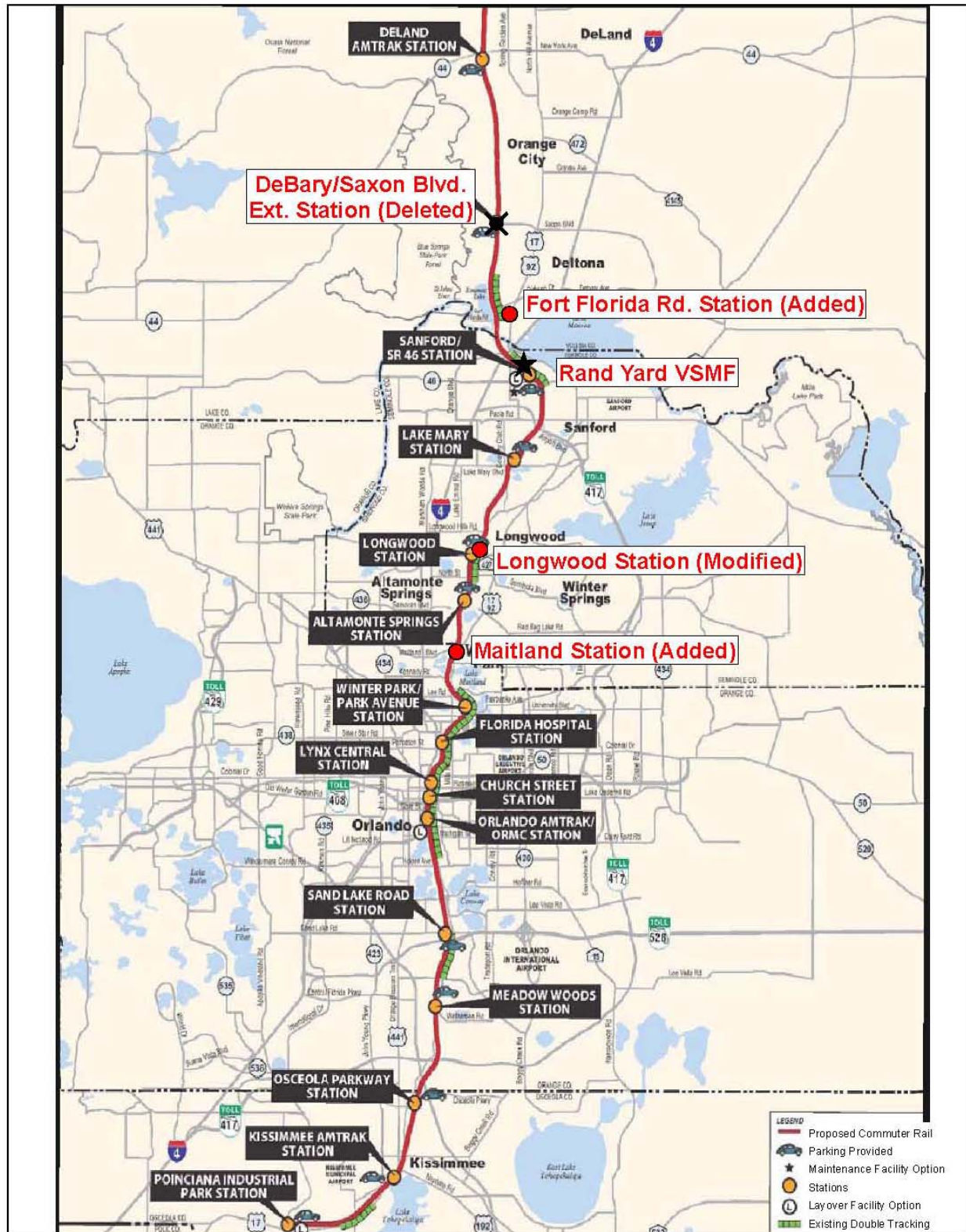


Figure 1-2 Stations and VSMF Location Map

1.4 Description of Project

The Full Build Alternative extends approximately 61-miles from the DeLand Amtrak Station to Poinciana Industrial Park to the south. The limits of the Full Build Alternative have not changed from the approved EA. Refer to Section 1.2 of the approved EA for a description of the CRT Project. Proposed scope changes to the Project description include:

- The deletion of the DeBary/Saxon Boulevard Station in Volusia County;
- The addition of the Fort Florida Road Station at the intersection of Fort Florida Road and 17/92 in Volusia County;
- The selected location of the VSMF at Rand Yard;
- A minor re-configuration of the Longwood Station park-and-ride lot in Seminole County; and
- The addition of the Maitland Station between Greenwood Drive and Sybelia Avenue on US 17/92 in Orange County.

Refer to Figure 1-2 for the location of the above listed changes.

1.5 Needs Previously Considered

Needs were identified and summarized in the approved EA, Sections 1-4 through 1-6, and the role of the EA in project development was discussed. These needs have not changed with the Project scope changes. These topics are well described in the approved EA and include:

- Need for Transportation Improvements: Roadways and Traffic (Existing and Future Conditions) and Transit Services (LYNX, VOTRAN and AMTRAK)
- Needs for Population and Employment
- Land Use - Activity Centers and Development of Regional Impacts

The generalized S-Line analysis is located in Chapter 6.

1.6 Summary

Projections of future population and employment in the region indicate that travel demand will continue to increase in the near and long term. The study area is one of the fastest growing regions in Florida, which is itself one of the fastest growing states in the nation. The regional transportation system consists of an extensive roadway network that is at capacity and is projected to continue to operate at or above capacity, railroad lines that support both freight and long-distance Amtrak passenger service, and a system of local public and private transit services.

A high capacity transit system is essential to provide an alternative to the single occupant automobile, assist in relieving traffic congestion, provide the travel mechanism required to support growth management plans, assist in the maintenance of traffic during Interstate reconstruction, provide a faster method to commuters to travel within and between the region's activity centers and to implement the corridor development plan essential to a

sustainable growth pattern in the region. Without this investment in a balanced transportation system, the traveling public will lack an attractive alternative to auto travel and have no choice but to face increasing congestion and travel time delay in the future. With the effects of continued sprawl development this decrease in mobility will reduce the quality of life in Central Florida and result in negative long-term environmental consequences.