



MADISON OP-ED SERIES

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EDITOR: Please consider this Madison Op-Ed for the Commentary page or for broadcast as a guest editorial. Reprint permission is granted.

WOULD YOU WANT A TRAIN IN YOUR BACKYARD?

Edwin H. Moore

The citizens of Florida will be faced with an issue on the ballot on November seven that has an almost stealthy quality about it. I am referring to the proposed amendment to the Constitution requiring the Legislature to approve the construction of a high-speed train between (or connecting) the five largest population areas. The amendment mandates the state create a train system that will cost billions to construct and much more to operate.

Aside from demonstrating an astonishing disregard for the integrity and purpose of the Constitution of Florida, this proposal expresses a callous disregard for the resources of the State of Florida. It would, if passed, hamstring Florida's future by committing unlimited and unconstrained resources to an ill-defined project. The amendment mandates approval by the Legislature. There is no provision for environmental concerns, no discretion for fiscal concerns, and no latitude for the Governor or the Legislature to meet other needs perceived by them to be more pressing to the

health, safety and welfare of the state. The interests of communities along the route are ignored. Would you want a train in your back yard?

The general revenue available for programs in this year's budget of over \$52 billion was less than \$20 billion. This new project, as envisioned by those who would place it ahead of education, crime and health concerns — normally priority items for the government of Florida — would potentially consume in excess of \$1 billion per year in operating subsidies. Which programs will we need to eliminate, or reduce significantly, to build an empty train to five Florida cities?

There has been, to my knowledge, no thorough study of this issue by any public or private group. There have been no public hearings to determine feasibility. There has been no determination of need. What we have is the ambitions of a few at the expense of the people of Florida, with no deliberation or input from those who are elected to represent them. Projects of this magnitude tend to enrich a few investors or corporations selected to

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We do not need a constitutional train wreck in Florida.

