

RESOLUTION NO. 23-

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, RESCINDING AND REPLACING RESOLUTION NO. 22-20, URGING THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO RECOMMEND CONSTRUCTION OF A TUNNEL AS THE LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR THE COMMUTER RAIL TRAIN CROSSING THE NEW RIVER IN THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, AND PROVIDING FOR DISTRIBUTION, DIRECTION TO THE CITY'S STATE LOBBYISTS, RESCISSION OF CONFLICTING RESOLUTION PROVISIONS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale is supportive of the regional initiative to develop commuter rail service along the FEC railroad tracks through Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties in an effort to reduce congestion on South Florida roadways and improve mass transit; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale recognizes the challenges that commuter rail service would create at the crossing of the New River if the additional trains used the current bascule bridge to traverse the waterway, particularly the inordinate burden that would befall the marine industries located upriver in that the bridge would be down so frequently as to impose a severe economic hardship on those companies and their customers; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale is aware that the Florida Department of Transportation ("FDOT") is working on a preliminary design and engineering study of commuter rail service and is in the process of selecting a local preferred alternative for a New River crossing; and

WHEREAS, three of the four options under consideration would build a bridge a mile or more in length through the center of Fort Lauderdale's downtown and as high as eighty feet above ground level at maximum clearance; and

WHEREAS, downtown Fort Lauderdale has a \$35.7 billion annual economic impact, making the city center one of Broward's top three economic engines alongside the County owned Port Everglades and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport; and

WHEREAS, downtown Fort Lauderdale is the center of an ongoing renaissance that needs to be nurtured, with 18,000 new residential units, 600,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, 1.1 million square feet of office space, and 1,000 new hotel rooms to be developed — on top of the phenomenal growth that has already occurred; and

WHEREAS, downtown Fort Lauderdale has seen an explosive increase in population, growing ninety-two percent since 2010, thus placing the city center as one of the fastest growing downtowns in the State of Florida and across the United States; and

WHEREAS, the revitalization of Fort Lauderdale's compact and walkable city center has led the Urban Land Institute and PricewaterhouseCoopers to recognize Fort Lauderdale as one of the top 18-hour cities in the United States over the past three years; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale is pleased that the Florida Department of Transportation has determined that a tunnel could be built for substantially less than originally projected and is technically feasible to construct; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale is also pleased with the support offered to the tunnel concept from key business and neighborhood groups that include the Downtown Development Authority, the Broward Workshop, the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Civic Association; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale believes that the price of a tunnel could still be further reduced by continuing to engage with world-renowned tunneling experts; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale believes that it can work cooperatively with partner agencies to find financial support for a tunnel beyond traditional financing routes; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission of City of Fort Lauderdale adopted Resolution No. 22-20 at its regular meeting of January 18, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 22-20 urges the Broward County Board of County Commissioners and the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization to adopt construction of a tunnel as the Locally Preferred Alternative to the exclusion of a bridge; and

WHEREAS, although the City of Fort Lauderdale sees the need to move expeditiously in the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative and begin seeking federal assistance given the deadlines set in President Biden's infrastructure program, it is the opinion of the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale that the selection of an LPA be delayed until the current analysis of tunnel alternatives and costs being conducted by BDO USA LLP ("BDO") at the request of the City of Fort Lauderdale is completed early next year; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale views the decision on a Locally Preferred Alternative as a pivotal one regarding the future of the community and the downtown and, as such, a review of this final report from BDO is crucial; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale believes any decision on a Locally Preferred Alternative must be based not only on the cost of the option but also on the economic, environmental and social impacts and value to the community at large as well as to our residents and our businesses; and

WHEREAS, given the historic nature of the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative and its impact on the community, the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale urges the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization ("MPO") and the Florida Department of Transportation to jointly host a series of nighttime public hearings after the beginning of 2024 to engage the residents and businesses of the City of Fort Lauderdale in the decision-making process; and

WHEREAS, if the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Florida Department of Transportation were to move forward with a Locally Preferred Alternative before BDO's report is complete, then the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale stands behind its original opinion that a tunnel is the best option for the Locally Preferred Alternative;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. The City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, urges the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, the Broward MPO and the Florida Department of Transportation to delay a selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative for the commuter rail train crossing the New River in the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, until the BDO report is completed and reviewed and a series of public hearings sponsored by the state and county are held.

SECTION 2. If no delay is forthcoming, then the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, urges the Florida Department of Transportation to recommend construction of a tunnel as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the commuter rail train crossing the New River in the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and transmit that recommendation to the Broward County Board of County Commissioners and the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization.

SECTION 3. Also, if no delay is forthcoming, then the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, urges the Broward County Board of County Commissioners and the Broward MPO to adopt construction of a tunnel as the Locally Preferred Alternative.

SECTION 4. The City Commission directs the City Clerk to transmit copies of this Resolution to the City's state lobbyists, Governor Ron DeSantis, Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, Speaker of the House Paul Renner, the Broward League of Cities, the Florida League of Cities, the Broward County Legislative Delegation, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners, the Palm Beach County League of Cities, the Miami-Dade County League of Cities, members of the State Legislature representing the City of Fort Lauderdale, members of Congress representing the City of Fort Lauderdale, and any other interested parties.

SECTION 5. If no delay is forthcoming, the City Commission also directs the City's state lobbyists to advocate for construction of a tunnel as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the commuter rail train crossing the New River in the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

SECTION 6. That all resolutions or parts of resolutions in conflict herewith, be and the same are hereby rescinded to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 7. That this resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED this ____ day of December, 2023.

Mayor
DEAN J. TRANTALIS

ATTEST:

City Clerk
DAVID R. SOLOMAN

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
CORRECTNESS:

City Attorney
THOMAS J. ANSBRO

Dean J. Trantalis _____
John C. Herbst _____
Steven Glassman _____
Pamela Beasley-Pittman _____
Warren Sturman _____