

RESOLUTION NO. 24-

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, URGING BROWARD COUNTY, THE BROWARD METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION, AND 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 RESOLUTION NO. 23-302, RESCISSION OF ANY OTHER CONFLICTING RESOLUTION PROVISIONS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, on January 18, 2022, the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, ("City"), adopted Resolution No. 22-20, which urged the Broward County Board of County Commissioners and the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization to adopt construction of a tunnel as the Locally Preferred Alternative for a commuter rail train crossing the New River to the exclusion of a bridge; and

WHEREAS, on December 19, 2023, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 23-302, thereby rescinding and replacing Resolution No. 22-20, continuing to affirm a tunnel as the City's locally preferred alternative for the commuter rail train crossing the New River and, recognizing Broward County as the lead agency for obtaining funding and operation of a portion of the rail project, supporting Broward County in advancing a mid-level bascule drawbridge as an alternative to a tunnel if after collaboration with Broward County it were determined that a tunnel would not a feasible option; and

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 of a preliminary design and engineering study of commuter rail service; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale understands that multiple options have been under consideration including concepts that 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, such a bridge would bisect Fort Lauderdale's downtown and would be detrimental to the vision that the City of Fort Lauderdale has created for the area as a vibrant, cosmopolitan urban core where people can live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS, downtown Fort Lauderdale is the center of an ongoing renaissance that needs to be nurtured, with 21,900 new residential units, 694,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, 327,000 square feet of office space, and 680 new hotel rooms projected to be developed over the next 10 years — on top of the phenomenal growth that has already occurred; and

WHEREAS, downtown Fort Lauderdale has seen an explosive increase in population, growing forty-one percent between 2010 and 2020, and is expected to grow an additional forty-five percent by 2025, thus placing the city center in the top two percent of fastest growing places in the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, there have been academic studies illustrating how bridges and overpasses divide communities and can cause economic harm, and many urban areas such as Boston have decided to redevelop older areas by removing bridges and overpasses in favor of other solutions, and the administration of President Biden is advocating reconnecting communities as part of its infrastructure program; and

WHEREAS, a bridge would overwhelm the city's historic district where many of the few remaining early buildings in the community are located, as they would be directly under the maximum height of a new bridge; and

WHEREAS, a bridge would also impact the picturesque Riverwalk, which serves as the cornerstone of the city's arts, science, and cultural area, and features the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, the Museum of Discovery and Science, the NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, and the Fort Lauderdale History Center; 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 believes that the price of a tunnel could still be further reduced by continuing to engage with world-renowned tunneling experts regarding their prior experience; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Lauderdale believes that the actual construction costs must be considered side-by-side with the social costs of a bridge and the economic development benefits of a tunnel, for the decision reached will have long-term consequences as a legacy project for the community; 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 transit financing routes;

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 Metropolitan Planning Organization, and 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, while continuing to work to reduce the project's construction costs and identify the necessary financing.

SECTION 2. The City Commission directs the City Clerk to transmit copies of this Resolution to the City's state and federal lobbyists, Governor Ron DeSantis, Senate President Ben Albritton, Speaker of the House Daniel Perez, the Broward League of Cities, the Florida League of Cities, the Broward County Legislative Delegation, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization, 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, and any other interested parties.

SECTION 3. The City Commission directs the City's state and federal 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, and to offer their assistance to the Florida Department of Transportation, Broward County, and the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization to reduce project costs and identify financing.

SECTION 4. That Resolution No. 23-302 of the City Commission of the City of Fort

Lauderdale, Florida, is hereby rescinded.

SECTION 5. That any other resolutions, or parts thereof, in conflict with this Resolution are hereby rescinded to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 6. That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect upon final passage.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2024.

Mayor
DEAN J. TRANTALIS

ATTEST:

City Clerk
DAVID R. SOLOMAN

APPROVED AS TO FORM
AND CORRECTNESS:

Interim City Attorney
D'WAYNE M. SPENCE

Dean J. Trantalis _____

John C. Herbst _____

Steven Glassman _____

Pamela Beasley-Pittman _____

Ben Sorensen _____