

# Orlando Sentinel

## EDITORIAL

### **We think: Charlie Crist rightly adds SunRail to his to-do list**

February 5, 2009

Commuter rail's missing piece finally fell into place. Now, the project just might fly.

Gov. Charlie Crist's long-in-the-making but unequivocal embrace Wednesday of the project that's slated to run from DeLand through Orlando to Poinciana could give SunRail the final boost it needs.

The project doesn't appear to need the governor's help to clear the House, which approved the project last year and looks poised to do so again this year. But it stalled last year in the Senate, and some senators still need convincing of the project's worth before they'll support it.

Enter Mr. Crist.

Last year, he didn't try to get the lawmakers aboard commuter rail until the last day of the legislative session, an effort that proved too little, too late. Some believed the attempt reflected his ambivalence or apathy, even, on commuter rail.

As recently as December, Mr. Crist said he'd probably push harder for commuter rail because "most issues" concerning it are attractive to him.

But that's now history. Mr. Crist's ready to roll. "We're going to make it go," he said Wednesday.

"SunRail is just the kind of transportation project that Florida needs to create thousands of jobs and generate millions in additional revenue for Central Florida and all of Florida," the governor said.

Indeed, his office noted that it should almost immediately create several thousand jobs, and infuse more than \$1 billion into Florida's economy over the next 30 years.

Establishing a commuter-rail line through Orlando also should spur other rail lines, serving Tampa and Jacksonville.

Commuter rail's most prominent booster also lauded the project's environmental benefits.

We've got to get it "approved as soon as possible," said Mr. Crist, adding it's about doing "what's right not only for Central Florida but for all of Florida."

"Who could be against SunRail?" he asked.

Sen. Paula Dockery.

Increasingly desperate Paula Dockery.

Her shrill, sky-is-falling, facts-don't-matter letter to the governor Tuesday might well have stiffened the governor's resolve to champion commuter rail.

Ms. Dockery, a Lakeland Republican, claimed there's no federal money to help pay for commuter rail. Hardly. Corrine Brown, chairwoman of the House subcommittee on railroads, and John Mica, the House transportation committee's ranking minority member, note Washington has committed to pay more than \$300 million.

Ms. Dockery said SunRail won't relieve congestion. But she conveniently missed the point driving all mass-transit options: They don't remove congestion so much as provide commuters with cleaner, more-affordable alternatives to getting stuck on gridlocked roads.

And Ms. Dockery claimed SunRail could forever devastate Florida, much like the building of the interstate-highway system in the 1950s harmed the nation. Interesting. Who today vilifies President Eisenhower for building the interstate system? And no one, save Ms. Dockery and a few of her backers, will likely bemoan Mr. Crist's decision to help build a transit system that provides commuters with a similar convenience -- one that gives them a terrific option for getting from here to there.

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, Rep. Dean Cannon and Sens. Lee Constantine, Mike Haridopolos and Andy Gardiner also deserve credit for getting commuter rail on Mr. Crist's to-do list.

Mr. Crist now will work to get it on the list of other lawmakers whose support will be needed to make it run.

Bravo, governor.

Copyright © 2009, [Orlando Sentinel](#)