

Florida Rejects High-Speed Rail Money - Again, So LaHood Will Just Spend Elsewhere

Robert Poole | March 4, 2011

Florida Gov. Rick Scott made the right decision in once again (and for the final time, hopefully) turning down \$2.4 billion in federal funding for the proposed Orlando-to-Tampa rail line. The line could have cost Floridians up to \$3 billion more than advertised, since there is good evidence the cost estimate was low-balled. And it would have required ongoing operating subsidies because it didn't meet even the basic criteria for a successful high-speed rail line. Yes, Orlando is a major tourist attraction. But Tampa and Orlando are highly spread-out cities and don't have large central business districts that the majority of people seek to reach. The route scored at the bottom of American high-speed rail possibilities in terms of ridership potential. At 84 miles, the system was too short, and the medium-speed train was going to be too slow, to compete with the convenience of car travel. And, of course, the system couldn't hope to attract people away from flying, because people simply don't fly between Tampa and Orlando. Gov. Scott made the right call.

The bad news: It doesn't look like Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is learning anything. He's promising to simply divert the \$2.4 billion in taxpayer money to other states' rail projects. If the Obama administration is serious about rebuilding the nation's infrastructure they should stop pushing shiny, medium-speed trains and shift the funding to cost-effective transportation projects that will move goods and people—as Gov. Scott requested. The nation needs plenty of infrastructure upgrades. And the most needed infrastructure projects will all demonstrate high benefit-cost ratios that will either interest the private sector in building them or make them self-supporting via user fees. High-speed trains aren't needed and aren't cost-effective. A serious Transportation Secretary would focus on getting people and goods moving, not ribbon-cutting ceremonies for medium-speed trains.

Supreme Court of Florida

FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2011

CASE NO.: SC11-396

THAD ALTMAN, ET AL. vs. HON. RICK SCOTT, GOVERNOR

Petitioner(s)	Respondent(s)
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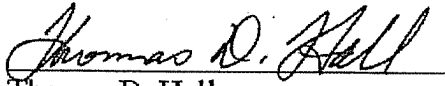
On March 2, 2011, petitioners filed with the Court an "Emergency Verified Petition for Writ of Quo Warranto, or in the Alternative, for Writ of Mandamus, or other Equitable Relief." The petition was filed as an original proceeding pursuant to article V, section 3(b)(8) of the Florida Constitution. The emergency nature of the petition is based on an alleged March 4, 2011, federal deadline by which to "accept" \$2.4 billion in federal grant funds for construction of a high speed rail project. The petitioners allege that Governor Scott has exceeded his constitutional authority and violated the separation of powers under the Florida Constitution. The Court has reviewed the petition, response, and reply, has heard oral argument, and has considered the factual allegations and legal arguments. Based on the limited record before the Court and a review of the federal and state law relied on by the parties, the Court has determined that the petitioners have not clearly demonstrated entitlement to quo warranto, mandamus, or any other relief. Accordingly, the emergency petition is hereby denied.

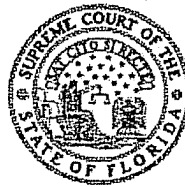
NO MOTION FOR REHEARING SHALL BE PERMITTED.

CANADY, C.J., PARIENTE, LEWIS, QUINCE, POLSTON, LABARGA, and PERRY, JJ., concur.

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Test:


Thomas D. Hall
Clerk, Supreme Court



vm
Served:
CLIFTON ADAMSON MCCLELLAND, JR.
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J. ANDREW ATKINSON
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