



Are We Being Railroaded?

Kudos to Erik Bojnansky and the January cover story (“[Third Rail](#)”). The recent sale of Florida East Coast Railway to Grupo Mexico’s freight rail unit has to mean an expansion of freight traffic on FEC tracks. There’s no way the purchase would have taken place otherwise.

Grupo Mexico’s rail unit needs access to South Florida ports, and now that they’ve got it, watch for the scale-up of freight runs. If traffic waits at train crossings are now 308 seconds (five minutes), I shudder to think of the tie-ups to come with up to 100 slow-moving freight trains per day, as per the story.

Agreements about shared operations on the tracks notwithstanding, Grupo Mexico’s FEC now owns the tracks. And a Japanese multinational owns All Aboard Florida and Brightline. Is globalization intended to include ownership of vital infrastructure? I don’t think so.

Because All Aboard Florida and FEC reportedly agreed to share control over the track operations, they have the power to shut down public ventures -- as All Aboard Florida did with Coastal Link, even though one of the pitches was that Brightline would connect with it. How telling that All Aboard Florida quashed the hookup *after* the state, county, and City of Miami had contributed \$69 million toward a connecting rail link that Brightline will now use and that will end at a Brightline station.

The companies will also likely determine what municipal, county, and state governments owe them for work on the trains and the tracks (a January 11 Orlando news story noted that one municipality had just received a bill from FEC for \$400,000 for track maintenance). Taxpayers will no doubt be on the hook for crossing and road grading and maintenance, and as many other costs as the private owners can pass along.

Let's hope the watchdogs keep their eye on this so we don't get railroaded further.

Tommy Alvarez-Soto
Miami

Off on the Wrong Track?

Good job, *Biscayne Times*, on the "Third Rail" cover story about the future of train service here. How sad that even its advocates don't expect high-speed rail to fix our traffic nightmare.

That's not really surprising when you consider the fare prices that will quickly grow irksome. No way are they going to keep it at \$10 from Miami to Fort Lauderdale.

It's of interest that the owners of All Aboard Florida and Brightline are heavily into real estate development around their stations. I'll bet this accounts for most of their projected revenue, much more than train fares. Remember the free-for-all that followed FECI's 2012 announcement that it was getting into the "destination" business with big, modern stations and high-rise residential towers. All the usual developer suspects are scrambling to stake out their own properties by the tracks.

Gov. Jeb Bush scrapped plans for federal funding of high-speed rail back in the early 2000s, saying he'd only support private investment. Gov. Rick Scott did the same thing in 2011, for the same reasons. Does it seem a little odd that within a year of Scott's decision, there appeared these ambitious plans for private rail service?

That was followed by the sale to an investment management firm (Fortress) that was acquired by an even larger multinational/investment firm (Softbank), along with the rush of property development and who knows what other concessions to come?

It should be the law that we know who are the players, the investors, the politicians, and state officials who may have been licking their lips about the riches to be had. Don't tell me I'm cynical. This is Florida.

Madeleine Harris
Aventura

Blind Acceptance -- Woof!

Thanks to Janet Goodman for her "Pet Talk" column "[Halo Effect](#)" on blindness in dogs (January 2018). It was very well written, and I agree that some pets may benefit greatly from these devices. Thankfully, many do well without added measures.

Pets, in particular dogs and cats, accept blindness much more gracefully than people. We have a lot to learn from animals.

Teresa Tucci, DVM
Homestead

And on the Bright Side...

Each month I enjoy meeting Miami's latest candidates for the Darwin Awards, exposed in "Biscayne Crime Beat." As a victim of a few car and house break-ins over the years, plus the picked pocket or two, I have some understanding of the miseries of other victims of nonviolent crimes -- although damn it, half of them seem to be a few bulbs short in the common sense and safe pickup departments.

Best of all is the breathtaking brainlessness of some of Miami's fumbling hooligans. I laugh out loud reading this stuff. Hats off to Derek McCann.

*Name withheld so they won't come for me
Miami*

Went Fishing

Miami Shores Cub Scouts Troop #1305 would like to thank Arnold Markowitz (author of "[Five Things Fishing Has Taught Me About Life](#)," October 2017) for taking the time to share his encyclopedic knowledge of fishing with some of our Cubs.

He wields the writing pen with as much skills as the fishing rod, and the Scouts thank him for sharing the tricks of the trade.

*John Ise
Miami Shores*



No Legitimate Complaint There

Well, the *BT* editor got just what Jack King says he didn't want: a political food fight among *BT* readers.

King took a swipe at Trump ("[Trump Keeps Making It Local](#)," November 2017); one *BT* reader wrote in to support King, others wrote in to complain about King's "left-leaning" sentiments and to uphold Trump ("[Letters](#)", December 2017). Then a new batch wrote in to launch spitballs at the right-wingers, and then there was Albert Diaz ("Letters, January 2018). "Be careful what you wish for..." the Chinese are said to have cautioned.

Albert Diaz, writing from his desk in Morningside, said he wanted "impartiality and respect." No one in the world is impartial, about anything, so neither Diaz nor the rest of us were going to get that.

What Diaz really wanted was for people who disagree with him to keep it to themselves. And to their great credits, neither Jack King nor the *BT* editor gave Diaz that.

The other thing Diaz wanted was “respect.” The matter of Donald Trump is about as caricaturish and polarizing as possible, and to have had it addressed as it has been in the *BT* has been about as respectful as possible.

No one argued that King’s “facts” were wrong, so all that can be said is he expressed his opinion, and he made clear what was the support for that opinion. And that opinion, as King expressed it, was highly and specifically relevant to life along the Biscayne Corridor.

Albert Diaz may wish he was reading a gossip column, or a publication about horticulture or cooking, but the *BT* is a monthly news magazine about community interests, many of which have essential political and public policy underpinnings. No one can fault King for having raised the fully relevant issues he did.

What followed King’s piece were letters, and they represented the similarly relevant reactions of *BT* readers, some of whom agreed with King, and others of whom didn’t.

These submissions -- King’s and the *BT* readers’-- were in themselves respectful, in exactly the way Diaz should have contemplated. What’s more, the *BT* editor, who chooses what columns to permit to be published, what letters to publish, and how to title those letters, has shown fairness, balance, and tolerance in what he has allowed *BT* readers to enjoy. And I do mean enjoy. It’s been fun reading, thinking through, and participating.

So Albert Diaz seems to be complaining about something, but really, from his own perspective, he has no complaint. Thanks, Jack King, thanks *BT* readers, and thanks, editor.

Fred Jonas
Biscayne Park