

Brightline, S. Fla. poised to benefit from Trump's \$1 trillion infrastructure plan

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South Florida's goal to transform into a car-optional region could receive a sizable boost should the Trump administration's proposal to invest \$1 trillion into America's infrastructure turn to reality, says a local infrastructure expert.

A direct beneficiary of the capital injection would be Coral Gables-based Florida East Coast Industries, whose passenger rail project Brightline could be enhanced by improved public resources, says attorney **Mitch Bierman, a partner with Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman.**

Brightline will run between Miami and West Palm Beach, with stops in Fort Lauderdale, when completed later this year. The Orlando leg is expected to debut in 2019.

"When you consider the overall impact of a program like Brightline, it's greatly enhanced if each of the locations it serves has broadened public transportation infrastructure so full advantage can be taken of Brightline while connecting with other great public transportation options," Bierman said.



A rendering shows plans for All Aboard Florida's Miami Central station.

Station offers a blueprint for how improved transit infrastructure would enable optimal use of the intercity rail system, Bierman says. Located in downtown Miami, It connects all major mass transit systems: Metromover, Metro Rail and Tri-Rail.

"Say you get to Miami Central Station from Broward and you have to get to Homestead. You can quickly jump on the Metrorail without it maybe stopping at Dadeland," Bierman said. "We're very hopeful that as a community, especially the business community, that we could see a nice chunk of that infrastructure spending come to South Florida."

Given its experience developing for-profit transit systems, Florida East Coast Industries could be a prime candidate for public-private partnerships, Bierman said.

"The knowledge these private companies can bring to public transit is very valuable. These guys are doing these projects all over the world," he said. "A lot of public transportation heads have experience, but not the same breadth."

The serendipitous nature of the timing isn't lost on Michael Reninger, the former president of Brightline, who earlier this month ascended to the role of executive director of Florida East Coast Industries.

"The national attention in investment into our infrastructure has never been greater ... We feel we have a unique set of capabilities given that we're the only company in the country that is starting with a blank piece of paper ... and is now delivering a private-sector transportation solution," he said in an interview with the *Business Journal* at the time of his promotion.

Reninger said there are no public-private partnerships officially in the works but "there are possibilities."

Efficient public transit systems are consistently touted as economic drivers. The American Public Transportation Association projects that a \$200 million portion of the \$1 trillion infrastructure package alone would create and sustain 10 million jobs nationwide over a 10-year period. It'd also pump about \$800 billion into the country's gross domestic product over 20 years.

"This additional investment is the key to addressing the nation's aging public transportation infrastructure," said Richard White, CEO and acting president of American Public Transportation Association, a nonprofit comprised of more than 1,500 public- and private-sector transit organizations.