

ROGERS.RACHEL.S15

From: Beth Dillaha [bethdillaha@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, April 06, 2008 8:53 PM
To: DOCKERY.PAULA.WEB
Subject: RE: Central Florida Commuter Rail

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Dear Paula:

It would be good to speak with you. I attended all the Commuter Rail Task Force meetings here in Winter Park for more than one year. I corresponded with Representative Davis for one year as well. I am extremely well versed and knowledgeable about Commuter Rail.

This past Friday, our City hosted an event (our City Commission did not arrange this) for James Simpson, FTA official from Washington. I believe he is the individual who will decide whether John Mica will receive his half billion from the federal government for the Commuter Rail project in Central Florida. This event was held by invitation only: no citizens were invited. The cities with rail stops / stations were represented, the Orlando Chamber of Commerce was represented as well as FDOT and other transportation officials. Mr. Mica had Mr. Simpson at his side the entire time. Mr. Simpson was given a tremendous sales presentation.

The majority of our City Commission does not support Commuter Rail. Hence, none of us (three of us were present at this event) were introduced to Mr. Simpson by John Mica even though our Welcome Center hosted the event.

I do want you to know that a Planning Consultant was present (works with Metro Plan and on a city project). He told me the Commuter Rail project was a "done deal" and that Senator Dockery would be taken care of (acquiesce) as you will be approved for a project (don't know those details) that would cause you to change your position on Commuter Rail.

Please use Representative Davis' editorial. If you want to use my name, I would like to speak with you first. I walk a fine line since there was a referendum here on Commuter Rail. It narrowly passed and passed for reasons I mentioned. The majority of citizens do not want a rail stop in our historic Central Park. You should also know that John Mica asked us if we'd like to get rid of our Amtrak stop so we can build a Commuter Rail station instead. In 2007, over 27,000 passengers took Amtrak to visit Winter Park. That is 20% more than in 2006. If Mr. Mica et al truly believed in the concept of Commuter Rail and the importance of "saving our environment" and getting cars off the road, I don't believe he'd be eliminating Amtrak. This Commuter Rail project is about development and dollars.

At a time when our state government is slashing its budget including funding for education, I find it appalling that the state would spend this kind of money on an unnecessary project that *may* benefit 9000 individuals in Central Florida at the expense of the rest of the state. We already have severe water shortages from the unchecked growth in Orange County and have established an unsustainable region in the state. This topic makes the newspaper on a daily basis. How we will be able to double the population here with the help of Commuter Rail and intensive densification and maintain any quality of life is something I can't quite understand.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Best regards,

Beth
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