

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Infrastructure and Security

BILL: SB 676

INTRODUCER: Senator Mayfield

SUBJECT: High-speed Passenger Rail Safety

DATE: January 18, 2020

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Price	Miller	IS	Pre-meeting
2.			ATD	
3.			AP	

I. Summary:

SB 676 creates the Florida High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Act. Specifically, the bill provides a short title, definitions relating to the act, Legislative intent, and applicability; assigns various duties to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT); and imposes certain reporting requirements on railroad companies and the FDOT. The bill specifies that the reporting requirements are for informational purposes only and may not be used to economically regulate a railroad company.

The bill also requires railroad companies to install certain technology and equipment; allocates responsibility for certain maintenance and repair costs to railroad companies; and provides that it does not impair existing contracts with respect to its requirements related to maintenance and repair of roadbeds, tracks, culverts, and certain streets, and sidewalks. The bill also provides for enforcement jurisdiction and requires any penalty for a violation of the bill's provisions to be imposed upon the railroad company that commits such violation.

The bill raises a number of federal preemption issues as discussed in more detail throughout the remainder of this analysis.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the private sector and on state governments, and an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on local governments to the extent that future costs are avoided. See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement for details.

II. Present Situation:

Following general discussion of current and relevant federal and state provisions of law, the present situation for each section of the bill is discussed below in conjunction with the Effect of Proposed Changes.

The Federal Regulatory Framework for Railroad Activities

The reach of federal law and regulations relating to various aspects of rail activities is extensive. Recognition of the need to regulate railroad operations at the federal level to provide uniformity, and Congress' authority under the Commerce Clause¹ to regulate the railroads, is well established.² The U.S. Supreme Court has on numerous occasions recognized the preemptive effect of federal regulation of railroads, a scheme that is “among the most pervasive and comprehensive.”³ State and local regulation is often, but not always, preempted. A number of federal laws apply, but the following relevant federal provisions often involve questions of preemption of state and local efforts to regulate railroad activities.

The Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act of 1995

The Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act of 1995 (ICCTA)⁴ granted to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) exclusive jurisdiction, previously exercised by the Interstate Commerce Commission,⁵ over:

- Transportation by rail carriers⁶ and the remedies provided with respect to rates, classifications, rules (including car service, interchange, and other operating rules), practices, routes, services, and facilities of such carriers; and
- The construction, acquisition, operation, abandonment, or discontinuance of spur, industrial, team, switching, or side tracks, or facilities, even if the tracks are located, or intended to be located, entirely in one state.

Except as otherwise provided, the remedies “with respect to regulation of rail transportation are exclusive and preempt the remedies provided under Federal or State law.”⁷

State or local attempts to intrude into matters directly regulated by the STB; e.g., railroad rates, services, construction, or abandonment, are categorically preempted. ICCTA also prevents state or local imposition of requirements that could be used to deny a railroad the right to conduct rail operations or proceed with activities authorized by the STB. Even if a state or local requirement is not categorically preempted, state and local attempts to impose requirements on railroads may be preempted as applied; i.e., if the requirements unreasonably burden or interfere with rail transportation.⁸

¹ U.S. Const. art. VI.

² See *City of Auburn v. United States*, 154 F.3d 1025 (9th Circuit 1998).

³ See, e.g., *Chicago & N.W. Transp. Co v. Kalo Brick & Tile Co.*, 450 U.S. 311, 318 (1981).

⁴ 49 U.S.C. 10101 *et seq.*

⁵ ICCTA abolished the Interstate Commerce Commission.

⁶ Defined to mean a person providing common carrier railroad transportation for compensation, but does not include street, suburban, or interurban electric railways not operated as part of the general system of rail transportation. 49 U.S.C. 10102(5).

⁷ 49 U.S.C. 10501(b).

⁸ Surface Transportation Board Decision, Docket No. FD 35792, Decided October 29, 2014 (citations omitted), available at: <https://www.stb.gov/decisions/readingroom.nsf/cac42df635267da4852572b80041558c/2c4e7a01a148e0a385257d8200477be9?OpenDocument> (last visited January 17, 2020). However, the Board has determined that the All Aboard Florida rail line is not part of the interstate rail network and does not come within the Board's jurisdiction. See *Surface Transportation Board Decision*, Docket No. FD 35680, available at: <https://www.stb.gov/Decisions/readingroom.nsf/WEBUNID/3742BD042B141CAA85257ADB0079675B> (last visited January 17, 2020).

Thus, ICCTA preempts regulations that unreasonably interfere with railroad operations that come within the STB’s jurisdiction, regardless of whether the STB actively regulates the particular activity involved. ICCTA is broad and far-reaching, but “state and local actions taken under their retained police powers” are not preempted “as long as they do not unreasonably interfere with railroad operations or the Board’s regulatory programs.”⁹

“States and towns may exercise traditional police powers over the development of railroad property, at least to the extent that the regulations protect the public health and safety, are settled and defined, can be obeyed with reasonable certainty, entail no extended or open-ended delays, and can be approved (or rejected) without the exercise of discretion on subjective questions.”¹⁰

A conclusion as to whether a state or local regulation is preempted “requires a factual assessment of whether that action would have the effect of preventing or unreasonably interfering with railroad transportation.”¹¹

The Federal Railroad Safety Act

The purpose of the federal rail safety program is to promote safety in every area of railroad operations and reduce railroad-related accidents and incidents.¹² The program is implemented through mandatory federal safety requirements and through joint efforts of FRA and state inspections to determine compliance of railroads, shippers, and manufacturers with the federal requirements.¹³

The general rule with respect to railroad safety and security calls for national uniformity to the extent practicable. Like the ICCTA, the Federal Railroad Safety Act (FRSA) may also preempt state and local actions. The FRSA in 49 U.S.C. s. 20106 contains an express preemption provision authorizing a state to adopt or continue in force a law, regulation, or order related to rail safety or security until the Secretary of Transportation (as to railroad safety) or the Secretary of Homeland Security (as to railroad security) issues a regulation or order covering the subject matter of the state requirement.

Additionally, a state may adopt or continue a more stringent law, regulation or order relating to railroad safety or security if the law, regulation, or order:

- Is necessary to eliminate or reduce an essentially local safety hazard;
- Is not incompatible with a law, regulation, or order of the United States Government; and

⁹ ICCTA preempts more than explicit economic regulation. While “Congress was particularly concerned about state economic regulation of railroads when it enacted the ICCTA[,]” “[w]hat matters is the degree to which the challenged regulation burdens rail transportation...,” not the label placed on the regulation, economic or otherwise. “The ICCTA ‘completely preempts state laws (and remedies based on such laws) that directly attempt to manage or govern a railroad’s decisions in the economic realm.’” See *Town of Atherton v. California High-Speed Rail Authority*, 228 Ca.App.4th 314, 331 (July 24, 2014) (citations omitted).

¹⁰ *Emerson v. Kansas City S. Ry. Co.*, 503 F.3d 1126, 1133 (10th Cir. 2007), citing *Green Mountain R.R. Corp. v. Vermont*, 404 F.3d 638, 643 (2d Cir. 2005) (internal quotation marks omitted). *Emerson* collects, with citations, a number of examples of circumstances under which ICCTA preemption did and did not apply.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² 49 U.S.C. 20101.

¹³ See 49 C.F.R. 212.101.

- Does not unreasonably burden interstate commerce.¹⁴

The Federal Hazardous Material Transportation Law

The purpose of the Federal Hazardous Materials Transportation Law (HMTL)¹⁵ “is to protect against the risks to life, property, and the environment that are inherent in the transportation of hazardous material in intrastate, interstate, and foreign commerce.¹⁶ The United State Department of Transportation (U.S.D.O.T.) secretary is charged with prescribing regulations for the safe transportation, including security, of hazardous material in intrastate, interstate, and foreign commerce.¹⁷ A number of federal agencies share enforcement. One of the FRA’s primary emphases is on the transportation or shipment of hazardous material by rail.

The HMTL also contains express preemption provisions. Except as otherwise provided, a state or local requirement relating to rail safety or security is preempted if:

- Complying with the state or local requirement and a federal requirements is not possible;¹⁸
- A state or local requirement, as applied or enforced, is an obstacle to carrying out a federal safety requirement or regulation or security regulation or directive;¹⁹
- A state or local requirement relating to any of the following is not substantively the same as a federal requirement:
 - The designation, description, and classification of hazardous material;
 - The packing, repacking, handling, labeling, marking, and placarding of hazardous material;
 - The preparation, execution, and use of shipping documents related to hazardous material and requirement related to the number, contents, and placement of those documents;
 - The written notification, recording, and reporting of the unintentional release in transportation of hazardous material and other written hazardous materials transportation incident reporting involving State or local emergency responders in the initial response to the incident; and
 - The designing, manufacturing, fabricating, inspecting, marking, maintaining, reconditioning, repairing, or testing a package, container, or packaging component that is represented, marked, certified, or sold as qualified for use in transportation hazardous material in commerce.²⁰

Section 5125(d) of 49 U.S.C. authorizes a person (including a state, political subdivision of a state, or Indian tribe) directly affected by a requirement of the state, political subdivision or

¹⁴ The FRSA was amended in 2007 to clarify that the preemption provision does not preempt an action under state law *seeking damages for personal injury, death, or property damage* alleging a party failed to comply with the Federal standard of care established by the Transportation or Homeland Security secretaries covering the subject matter; failed to comply with its own plan, rule, or standard that it created pursuant to a regulation or order issued by either of the secretaries; or has failed to comply with a state law, regulation, or order not incompatible with 49 U.S.C. s. 20106(a)(2)..

¹⁵ 49 U.S.C. 5101-5128.

¹⁶ 49 U.S.C. 5101.

¹⁷ 49 U.S.C. 5103

¹⁸ Labeled the “dual compliance” test. *See* discussion of federal preemption in *Preemption Determination No. PD-18(R), Broward County, Florida’s Requirements on the Transportation of Certain Hazardous Materials to or From Points in the County*, at p. 81951, available at: [https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2000/12/27/00-32885/preemption-determination-no-pd-18r-broward-county-floridas-requirements-on-the-transportation-of-.](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2000/12/27/00-32885/preemption-determination-no-pd-18r-broward-county-floridas-requirements-on-the-transportation-of-) (Last visited October 30, 2017.)

¹⁹ Labeled the “obstacle” test. *Id.*

²⁰ Labeled the “substantively the same as” test. *Supra* note 18.

Indian tribe to apply to the U.S.D.O.T. secretary for a determination of whether such a requirement is preempted.

A state, political subdivision, or Indian tribe may also in some cases apply to the secretary for a waiver of preemption, and the secretary may waive preemption if the given requirement provides the public at least as much protection as do the federal HMTL provisions and regulations and is not an unreasonable burden on commerce.²¹

Recent Federal Railroad Administration Rule

Effective in January of 2019, the FRA issued a final rule amending the FRA's passenger equipment safety standards governing the construction of conventional and high-speed passenger rail equipment. Among other items, the rule adds a new tier of passenger equipment safety standards for interoperable high-speed passenger rail service at speeds up to 220 mph. Under the rule, these trainsets are required to operate in exclusive rights-of-way without grade crossings at speeds above 125 mph, but these trains are authorized to share the right-of-way with freight trains and other tiers of passenger equipment at speeds not exceeding 125 mph.²²

Rail Programs and Activity in Florida

Section 341.302, F.S., prescribes the duties and responsibilities of the FDOT in relation to Florida's rail program. The FDOT, in conjunction with other governmental units and the private sector, is directed to develop and implement a statewide rail program ensuring "the proper maintenance, safety, revitalization, and expansion of the rail system" necessary to respond to statewide mobility needs.²³ The rail system plan must identify the priorities, programs, and funding levels required to meet statewide needs and assure the maximum use of existing facilities along with the integration and coordination of the various modes of transportation in the most cost-effective manner possible.²⁴ The FDOT is required to update the rail system plan every two years and to include plans for both passenger and freight rail service.²⁵ The FDOT is also directed to promote and facilitate the implementation of advanced rail systems, including high-speed rail.²⁶

Commuter Rail

In 1988, the FDOT and CSX Transportation, Inc., (CSX) entered into an agreement under which the department bought approximately 81 miles of CSX track and right-of-way in order to operate commuter rail in South Florida. Today, the commuter rail system (Tri-Rail) is operated by the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority and continues to serve Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.²⁷

²¹ 49 U.S.C. 5125.

²² The final rule is available at: <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/FRA-2013-0060-0016.pdf> (last visited January 18, 2020.)

²³ Section 341.302, F.S.

²⁴ Section 341.302(3), F.S.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Section 341.302(2), F.S.

²⁷ See the Tri-Rail website under the *Destinations* tab, available at: <http://www.tri-rail.com/#> (last visited January 17, 2020).

In addition, in 2007, the FDOT entered into an agreement with CSX to purchase 61.5 miles of track or right-of-way in Central Florida to provide commuter rail service. Known as SunRail, the first phase of the project opened in 2014, connecting DeBary in Volusia County to Sand Lake Road in Orange County and featuring 12 Central Florida stations.²⁸ The FDOT operates the SunRail system, and CSX continues to operate freight trains in the corridor.

SunRail's southern expansion into Osceola County began in 2016 and opened in 2018, connecting Sand Lake Road in Orange County to Poinciana in Osceola County, with a 17.2-mile segment featuring four additional stations.²⁹ Northern expansion plans are expected to link DeBary to DeLand in Volusia County. This project is a 12-mile segment, adding one station to the existing system.³⁰

High-Speed Rail/Florida Rail Enterprise

In November of 2000, the Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment³¹ mandating the construction of a high-speed transportation system for the state. The amendment required the use of train technologies that operate at speeds in excess of 120 miles per hour. The high-speed rail system was to link the five largest urban areas in Florida, and construction was mandated to begin by November 1, 2003. To implement the constitutional amendment, the Florida Legislature enacted the Florida High-Speed Rail Authority Act³² and created the Florida High-Speed Rail Authority in 2002. In November 2004, Florida voters approved repeal of the high-speed rail constitutional amendment.

In 2009, the Legislature repealed the Florida High-Speed Rail Authority and re-named the Florida High-Speed Rail Act as the Florida Rail Enterprise Act.³³ In place of the Authority, the Legislature established the Florida Rail Enterprise as part of the FDOT³⁴ and directed the Enterprise to locate, plan, design, finance, construct, maintain, own, operate, administer, and manage the high-speed rail system in the state.³⁵ The Legislature also created the Florida Statewide Passenger Rail Commission to advise the FDOT on policies and strategies for a coordinated statewide system of passenger rail services, and evaluating passenger rail policies and provided advice and recommendations. The Commission was abolished in 2014.³⁶

Section 341.822, F.S., authorizes the Rail enterprise to plan, construct, maintain, repair, and operate a high-speed rail system, to acquire corridors, and to coordinate the development and operation of publicly funded passenger rail systems in the state. The FDOT is the only

²⁸ See the SunRail website available at: <http://corporate.sunrail.com/stations-trains/phase-1-stations/>. (Last visited October 30, 2017).

²⁹ See the SunRail website available at: <http://corpsunrail.wpengine.com/stations-trains/southern-expansion-stations/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

³⁰ See the SunRail website available at: <http://corpsunrail.wpengine.com/stations-trains/northern-expansion-stations/> (last visited January 17, 2020)..

³¹ Section 19, Article X of the State Constitution.

³² Sections 341.8201 through 341.842, F.S. (2002).

³³ Chapter 2009-271, L.O.F.

³⁴ See s. 20.23(4)(a), F.S.

³⁵ Section 341.822, F.S.

³⁶ Chapter 2014-223, L.O.F.

governmental entity authorized to acquire, construct, maintain, or operate the high-speed rail system.³⁷

The All Aboard Florida Project

Florida East Coast Industries (FECI) was incorporated in 1983 and became the holding company for the Florida East Coast Railway (FECR).³⁸ In 2007, Fortress Investment Group (Fortress) acquired FECI.³⁹ All Aboard Florida (AAF) is part of FECI.⁴⁰ In 2017, Japanese-based SoftBank agreed to purchase Fortress, and Grupo Mexico acquired the FECR.⁴¹

AAF is an express train service, called “Brightline,”⁴² which uses the existing FECR corridor between Miami and Cocoa. AAF will build new track along State Road 528 between Cocoa and Orlando.⁴³ Brightline recently announced a partnership and trademark licensing agreement with the Virgin Group, under which Brightline has been renamed to Virgin Trains USA. Currently, the service operates with three stations, one each in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach, with future plans for an additional station in Orlando.⁴⁴ Brightline also submitted an unsolicited proposal to the FDOT for a high-speed rail connection from Orlando to Tampa.⁴⁵

According to AAF, Brightline will travel at speeds between 79 and 125 miles per hour. Between Miami and West Palm, the trains will travel up to 79 mph; between West Palm to Cocoa, up to 110 mph; and from Cocoa to Orlando, up to 125 mph, with actual speed varying depending on corridor conditions and configurations.⁴⁶

Cities and counties along Florida’s east coast reportedly have existing crossing agreements with Florida East Coast Railway. Under those agreements, the local governments usually have

³⁷ Defined in s. 341.8203(4), F.S., to mean any high-speed fixed guideway system for transporting people or goods, which system is, by definition of the United States Department of Transportation, reasonably expected to reach speeds of at least 110 miles per hour, including but not limited to, a monorail system, dual track rail system, suspended rail system, magnetic levitation system, pneumatic repulsion system, or other system approved by the enterprise. The term is broadly defined and includes a long list of additional items in the definition.

³⁸ See the Florida East Coast Railway website available at: <https://fecrwy.com/history/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

³⁹ See article *Fortress to buy Florida East Coast for \$3.5 billion*, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-floridaeastcoast-takeover/fortress-to-buy-florida-east-coast-for-3-5-billion-idUSBNG23960820070508> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁴⁰ See the AAF website available at: <https://www.gobrightline.com/about-us> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁴¹ See the respective articles, *Fortress Shareholders Approve Proposed Acquisition by SoftBank*, available at: <http://www.4-traders.com/FORTRESS-INVESTMENT-GROUP-42554/news/Fortress-Investment-LLC-07-12-17-Fortress-Shareholders-Approve-Proposed-Acquisition-by-SoftBank-24748345/>, and, *Grupo Mexico Completes Florida East Coast Acquisition*, available at: <http://www.railjournal.com/index.php/north-america/grupo-mexico-completes-florida-east-coast-acquisition.html> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁴² See the Virgin website available at <https://www.virgin.com/news/virgin-and-brightline-form-strategic-partnership> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁴³ *Supra* note 39.

⁴⁴ See the *brightline* website available at: <https://www.gobrightline.com/routes-stations> (last visited January 14, 2020).

⁴⁵ See *FDOT begins process for privately funded Orlando-to-Tampa high-speed rail*, available at: <https://cseengineermag.com/fdot-begins-process-for-privately-funded-orlando-to-tampa-high-speed-rail/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁴⁶ See video of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee workshop on high-speed passenger rail, February 22, 2017, available at: http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/VideoPlayer.aspx?eventID=2443575804_2017021306&committeeID=2914 (last visited January 17, 2020).

financial responsibility for crossing signal installations, capital improvements for track beds and roadway surfaces, crossing maintenance costs, and pedestrian gates and sidewalks.⁴⁷ AAF reportedly wishes to be named a third-party beneficiary in those agreements already in place⁴⁸ and reportedly has accomplished that goal, at least in some cases.⁴⁹ At least one local government has reportedly entered into new agreements with AAF identifying responsibility for safety upgrades and maintenance.⁵⁰

OPPAGA Study - Florida Passenger Rail System Study

The 2018 General Appropriations Act directed the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to contract with an independent consultant to study existing and planned passenger rail, including high speed passenger rail, in the state.⁵¹ To complete this study, OPPAGA contracted with CPCS Transcom Inc., a company that provides consulting services in the areas of transportation and infrastructure, including rail operations and safety. The study examined both various aspects of Florida's passenger rail systems and the FDOT's role in oversight of passenger rail with respect to maintenance, safety, revitalization, and expansion.

The OPPAGA study examined passenger rail systems in Florida under the jurisdiction of the Federal Railroad Administration, including Amtrak, Brightline, SunRail, and Tri-Rail.⁵² The study included three components:

- A detailed inventory and description of the Florida Passenger Rail System focusing on operating passenger railroad companies and planned passenger rail projects.
- An analysis of incident data involving passenger rail operations and grade crossings.
- An overview of jurisdictions that regulate passenger rail operations on a federal, state, regional and local level, including the establishment and expansion of services; reporting of railroad incidents and rectification of safety issues; and maintenance of tracks, crossing and safety equipment.

The report contained various broad recommendations related to passenger rail operations, safety, and railroad policy in Florida with accompanying legislative and FDOT considerations that are summarized in the report, under six categories:

- Updating FDOT's Mandate,

⁴⁷ See Martin County document, *Direct Costs to Treasure Coast from High-Speed Rail* (On file in the Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee).

⁴⁸ See article, *Two votes today could clear way for All Aboard Florida*, available at:

<http://realtime.blog.palmbeachpost.com/2014/10/21/does-all-aboard-floridas-fate-hinge-on-brevard-county-vote/> (last visited January 17, 2020). See also article *Boynton May Sign Agreement With All Aboard*, available at:

<https://www.citizensagainststhe-train.com/content/boynton-may-sign-agreement-all-aboard> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁴⁹ See article, *Miami Certain, Brevard Skeptical but both give approval to fund bonds to advance rail project*, available at: <http://www.floridanotallaboard.net/news/miami-certain-brevard-skeptical-but-both-counties-give-approval-to-fund-bonds-to-advance-rail-project/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁵⁰ See article, *Boynton signs All Aboard Florida agreement against residents' wishes*, available at:

<http://spbc.blog.palmbeachpost.com/2014/10/08/boynton-signs-all-aboard-florida-agreement-against-residents-wishes/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁵¹ See proviso under specific appropriation 2673 of Chapter 2018-9, Laws of Florida, pp. 356-357, available at:

<http://laws.flrules.org/2018/9> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁵² The complete study is available at: <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/18-RAILrpt.pdf> (last visited January 17, 2020)

- Setting New Regulations for Higher Speed Rail,
- Implementing State of the Art Practices,
- Enforcing Railroad Trespass Violations,
- Reviewing Rail Safety Funding Resources, and
- Continuing Research to Promote Public Safety Along Railroads.⁵³

The report additionally focuses on specific “gaps” in existing regulations with respect to certain aspects of operation of passenger service at speeds between 81 and 125 mph. Noting that responsibility for the gaps does or could rest with the FDOT, the report identifies those gaps as follows:

- Grade crossing minimum design standards,
- Certification of new passenger rail lines,
- Fencing,
- Sealed corridor regulations, and
- Railroad noise and quiet zones.⁵⁴

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill implements some, but not all of the OPPAGA rail study recommendations for filling in the regulatory “gaps” identified in the report, along with related provisions. The bill creates the Florida High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Act, assigning various duties to the FDOT related to certain privately owned High-Speed Passenger Rail (HSPR) operations. The bill imposes certain reporting requirements on railroad companies, requires installation of certain technology and equipment, and allocates costs and responsibility for certain rail corridor maintenance, repair, improvements and upgrades. The bill also provides for enforcement jurisdiction under s. 316.640, F.S., relating to enforcement of the traffic laws of this state.

Short Title, Definitions, Legislative Intent, and Applicability (Sections 1-4)

Present Situation

While Florida law does contain definitions relating to a publicly funded passenger rail system and a number of provisions relating to high-speed rail, Florida law currently does not specifically contain a “High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Act” nor any definitions, Legislative intent, or applicability provisions specific to such an act.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 1 of the bill creates s. 341.601, F.S., providing a short title for the act, the “Florida High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Act,” including ss. 341.601 through 341.613, F.S.

Section 2 of the bill creates s. 341.602, F.S., providing the following definitions as used in the act:

- “Department” means the Department of Transportation;

⁵³ *Id* at pp. x-xi

⁵⁴ *Id.* at p. 78.

- “Freight railroad carrier” means any person, railroad corporation, or other legal entity in the business of providing freight rail transportation;
- “Governmental entity” means the state, any of its agencies, or any of its political subdivisions;
- “Hazardous materials” includes all materials, wastes, or substances designated or defined as hazardous by 49 C.F.R. parts 100-199 and its implementing regulations, by 42 U.S.C. s. 9601, or in any state law, rule, or program that regulates handling or transporting of such materials, wastes, or substances;
- “High-speed passenger rail system” (HSPR system) means any intrastate passenger rail system that operates or proposes to operate its passenger trains at a maximum speed in excess of 80 miles per hour and which was not carrying passengers before January 1, 2017.
- “Public railroad-highway grade crossing” means a location at which a railroad track is crossed at grade by a public road.
- “Rail corridor” means a linear, continuous strip of real property that is used for rail service. The term includes the corridor and structures essential to railroad operations, including the land, buildings, improvements, rights-of-way, easements, rail lines, roadbeds, guideway structures, switches, yards, parking facilities, power relays, switching houses, rail stations, any ancillary developments, and any other facilities or equipment used for the purposes of construction, operation, or maintenance of a railroad that provides rail service.
- “Railroad company” means any individual, partnership, association, corporation, or company and its respective lessees, trustees, or court-appointed receivers which develops or provides ground transportation that runs on rails, including, but not limited to any of the following:
 - A HSPR system;
 - A freight railroad carrier; or
 - A company that owns a rail corridor.
- “Sealed corridor” means a railroad corridor that uses safety measures to block all lanes of travel where a roadway crosses a railroad track and that uses pedestrian treatments at grade crossings and controls between crossings to prevent trespassing.

Section 3 of the bill creates s. 341.603, F.S., expressing the Legislature’s intent to encourage the creation of safe and cost-effective transportation options for this state’s residents and visitors, including HSPR systems; and to promote and enhance the safety of HSPR systems within the state to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

Section 4 of the bill creates s. 341.604, F.S., applying the act to any railroad company operating a HSPR system and any railroad company that allows a HSPR system to operate on or within its rail corridor.

FDOT Powers, Duties, and Rulemaking (Section 5)

Present Situation

FDOT Authority to Regulate Railroad Companies/Obtain Information/Keep Records: Except for specific areas referred to in state law (such as rail crossings and federally delegated safety inspections), the FDOT’s regulatory authority over railroad companies is limited in scope. Under the federal regulatory scheme, state or local attempts to regulate railroad companies, including

obligating a railroad to provide information and requiring a railroad to keep records, may or may not be preempted under one or more federal laws.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 5 of the bill creates s. 341.605, F.S., providing the FDOT shall:

- Regulate railroad companies in this state to the extent that such authority is not preempted by federal law or regulation;
- Obtain from any party all information necessary to enable it to perform its duties and carry out the act's requirements;
- Keep a record of all its findings, decisions, and determinations made, and investigations conducted, under the act; and
- Adopt rules to administer the act.

Whether federal preemption applies to these provisions is dependent upon the particular regulation, the information sought, and the record-keeping requirement. For example, if the regulation or requirement is already addressed in one or more federal provisions, an analysis under those provisions must be conducted to determine whether preemption, or any exception to preemption, applies. Research reveals numerous examples of litigation involving such questions, with results turning on the specific words of, and sometimes their placement in, any given regulation. To the extent that any state regulation or record-keeping requirement is not preempted, and the FDOT has state-granted legal authority, the FDOT may exercise such authority. The same analysis would apply to any FDOT rule adopted pursuant to the bill's rulemaking authority.

Hazardous Materials Training (Section 6)

Present Situation

Hazardous material employers are required to train their hazardous material employees and to keep certain records related to that training.⁵⁵ Federal law allows company employees, outside training firms, federal and state agencies, colleges and universities, and any other organization that can meet the objectives of the training requirements to provide hazardous material training.⁵⁶ Computer-based training programs are also available.⁵⁷ Florida law charges the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) with coordinating federal, state, and local emergency management activities to ensure the availability of adequately trained and equipped forces of emergency management personnel before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. Additionally, the FDEM is responsible for implementing training programs to improve the ability of state and local emergency management personnel to prepare and implement emergency management plans and programs.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See 49 C.F.R. 172, Subpart H.

⁵⁶ See the FRA presentation *Developing a Hazardous Materials Training Program, What You Should Know*. (On file in the Senate Transportation Committee.) See also 49 C.F.R. 172.704.

⁵⁷ See the U.S.D.O.T. website available at: <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/training/hazmat/training-modules>. (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁵⁸ Section 252.35(2)(l) and (n), F.S.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 6 of the bill creates s. 341.606, F.S., requiring the FDEM, if a HSPR system operates on a rail corridor or on a set of tracks which is also used to transport hazardous materials, to offer the local communities and local agencies located along the corridor training specifically designed to help them respond to an accident involving rail passengers or hazardous materials.

A review of the FDEM's website suggests that similar training may already be available.⁵⁹

Reporting Requirements (Section 7)

Present Situation

Florida law does not currently address railroad company reporting requirements related to accident reports, liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments, insurance and financial disclosure, or worst-case LNG release impacts.

Accident Reports: With certain exceptions, each railroad is required to submit to the FRA a monthly report of all railroad accidents or incidents that are:

- Highway-rail grade crossing accidents;
- Rail equipment accidents (collisions, derailments, fires, explosions, acts of God, and other events involving the operation of on-track equipment resulting in specified damages); and
- Death, injury, or occupational illness.⁶⁰

Federal regulations prescribe the forms to be used, which must be completed in accordance with the current FRA Guide and submitted within 30 days after expiration of the month during which the accidents occur.⁶¹ The FRA Office of Safety Analysis makes available railroad safety information, including accidents and incidents, inventory, and highway-rail crossing data, on a website that allows queries for accident, casualty, and crossing accident data by state.⁶² Federal regulation authorizes any state to require railroads, for occurrences within that state, to submit to the state copies of accident/incident and injury/illness reports filed with the FRA.⁶³

LNG Shipment by Rail: LNG is classified as a hazardous material.⁶⁴ Current federal regulations prohibit transportation of bulk packaging (e.g., portable tanks, intermediate bulk containers, large packaging, cargo tanks, multi-unit tank car tanks) containing a hazardous material in container-on-flatcar (COFC) or trailer-on-flatcar (TOFC) service except as authorized by 49 C.F.R. 174.63⁶⁵ or unless approved for transportation by the FRA Associate Administrator for Safety.

⁵⁹ See the FDEM's website available at: <https://floridadisaster.org/dem/about-the-division/> and <https://floridadisaster.org/dem/preparedness/training-and-exercise/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁶⁰ 49 C.F.R. 225.11 and 225.19.

⁶¹ 49 C.F.R. 225.11.

⁶² See the FRA website available at: <http://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/OfficeofSafety/default.aspx> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁶³ 49 C.F.R. 225.1.

⁶⁴ See the Table Of Hazardous Materials, 49 C.F.R. 172.101 available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2019-title49-vol2/pdf/CFR-2019-title49-vol2-part172.pdf> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁶⁵ This section of the federal regulations lays out very specific conditions under which bulk-packaged hazardous materials may be transported on the specified cars, based on factors such as the type of transport vehicle, restraint system, container support system, and load configuration. However, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration issued a

The FECR reportedly “has already received approval, and has begun transporting LNG between Port Miami and Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale.”⁶⁶

Insurance and Financial Disclosure: The State of Washington imposes financial disclosure requirements on any railroad company that transports crude oil.⁶⁷ Washington requires any railroad company that transports crude oil in Washington to submit an annual statement containing:

- All insurance that covers losses resulting from a reasonable worst-case spill;
- Coverage amounts, limitations, and other conditions of the insurance;
- Average and largest crude oil train operated in Washington by the railroad company in the previous calendar year;
- Information sufficient to demonstrate the railroad company’s ability to pay the costs to clean up a reasonable worst-case spill of oil, including insurance, reserve accounts, letters of credit, or other financial instruments or resources on which the company can rely;
- The railroad’s calculation of the total cleanup costs for a reasonable worst-case spill based on a statutory formula involving cleanup cost per barrel, crude oil volumes carried, and operating speed.⁶⁸

Research reveals no legal challenge to the Washington regulation. It is therefore unknown whether the regulation would withstand a challenge on grounds it is preempted by federal law.

Worst-Case Release Calculation: The State of Washington reportedly looked to federal rule making by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and the FRA, and to the tank-car derailment and leakage of some 1.6 million gallons of oil in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, in arriving at its regulations.⁶⁹ With respect to onshore oil pipelines, 49 C.F.R part 194 requires such pipeline operators to submit a response plan. Each operator is required to determine the worst-case discharge, providing the methodology and calculations used to arrive at the discharge volume.

notice in October of 2019 proposing changes to the regulations to authorize bulk transport of LNG in certain rail tank cars. See the Federal Register, Vol. 84, No. 206, p. 56964, October 24, 2019, available at

http://www.puntofocal.gov.ar/notific_otros_miembros/usa1544_t.pdf (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁶⁶ See article available at: <http://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/local/shaping-our-future/all-aboard-florida/2017/10/24/Ing-brightline-all-aboard-florida-east-coast-railway-tracks-hazmat-ferromex-grupo-mexico-fortress/791510001/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁶⁷ W.A.C. 480-62-300 available at: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=480-62-300> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁶⁸ Alaska also has financial disclosure requirements relating to claims resulting from an oil discharge that apply to oil terminals, pipelines, offshore facilities, exploration or production facilities, refineries, tank vessels, oil barges, and railroad tank cars, but not expressly to “railroads” or “railroad companies.” See the State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, 18 AAC 75 available at <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/regulations.htm> (last visited January 17, 2020).

Additionally, the State of California in 2014 passed regulations for the transportation of oil on or near the waters of the state requiring owners or operators of facilities where an oil spill could impact waters to apply for and obtain a certificate of financial responsibility issued by the State. However, a complaint filed collectively by certain railroad companies for injunctive and declaratory relief was dismissed on ripeness grounds, and the court never reached the question of preemption.

⁶⁹ See article, *Washington Asks if Railroads Could Afford \$700M Oil Train Spill*, available at:

<http://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article60156446.html> (last visited January 17, 2020).

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 7 of the bill creates s. 341.607, F.S., requiring the following:

- A railroad company operating a HSPR system must provide to the FDOT copies of accident reports filed with the FRA for each train accident that occurs within the rail corridor;
- The FDOT must annually publish on its website a compendium of the reports that include any fatalities, injuries, and accidents occurring within the reporting timeframe which have occurred within a rail corridor where a HSPR system operates; and
- A railroad company that transports LNG on the same tracks or within the same rail corridor used by a HSPR system must annually submit a report to the FDOT containing:
 - All insurance carried by the railroad company that covers any losses resulting from a reasonable worst-case unplanned release of LNG.
 - Coverage amounts, limitations, and other conditions of the insurance.
 - The size of the average and largest LNG train, as measured in metric tons, operated in the state by the railroad company in the previous calendar year.
 - Information sufficient to demonstrate the railroad company's ability to remediate a reasonable worst-case unplanned release of LNG, including but not limited to, insurance coverage, reserve accounts, letters of credit, or other financial instruments or resources on which the company can rely for such remediation.

This section of the bill also requires the FDOT, in coordination with the FRA and other public and private entities, as necessary, to adopt by rule criteria to determine a reasonable worst-case unplanned release of LNG.

Additionally, the bill provides that the reporting requirements are for informational purposes only and may not be used to economically regulate the railroad company.

Accident Reports: Requiring a railroad company to furnish to the FDOT copies of accident reports filed with the FRA for each accident occurring within this state is authorized by federal law.⁷⁰ Whether it is permissible under federal law to require the FDOT to take the additional step of *preparing* a compendium of the reports on fatalities, injuries, and accidents during the specified reporting period for publication on the FDOT's website, in addition to simply publishing the FRA-required accident/incident reports on the FDOT website, is unclear.⁷¹

Insurance and Financial Disclosure: Whether the bill's provisions that the reporting requirements are for information purposes only and may not be used to economically regulate the railroad company would enable it to withstand a challenge based on preemption is likewise unclear given the absence of any challenge to the Washington statute. However, the bill appears to impose no monetary fine and no preclearance requirement; that is, no prohibition against a railroad company's continued operation if, for example, a railroad reported that it had no ability to pay

⁷⁰*Supra* note 56.

⁷¹ If these reports contain confidential commercial information as defined under federal law (trade secrets and confidential, privileged, and/or proprietary business or financial information submitted to the [U.S. Department of Transportation] by any person), a Freedom of Information Act request to the FRA may be required. *See* the FDOT 2020 Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 676 available at <http://abar.laspbs.state.fl.us/ABAR/ABAR.aspx> (last visited January 17, 2020). The FDOT may be unable to comply with the bill's requirement in such cases.

the costs of remediating a reasonable worst-case unplanned release of LNG, or even if a railroad made no report at all.

Minimum Safety Standards for HSPR and Maintenance/Repair of Roadbeds, Tracks, Culverts, and Certain Streets and Sidewalks (Sections 8 and 9)

Present Situation

Compliance with Federal Law and Regulation: Railroad companies are currently required to comply with any applicable federal law or regulation.

Positive Train Control (PTC): The Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (RSIA) required all Class I railroad main lines (lines over which five million or more gross tons are transported annually) handling any poisonous-inhalation-hazardous materials, and any railroad main lines over which regularly scheduled intercity passenger or commuter rail services are provided, to install PTC by December 31, 2015. PTC is defined to mean “a system designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, over-speed derailments, incursions into established work zone limits, and the movement of a train through a switch left in the wrong position.”⁷² PTC systems use digital radio communications, global positioning, and fixed wayside signal systems to send and receive in real time a continuous stream of data about the location, direction, and speed of trains.

The Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015 amended the RSIA, extending the PTC implementation deadline to December 31, 2018; to December 31, 2020, in some circumstances;⁷³ and providing an additional extension for certain qualifying small railroads. The FRA subsequently incorporated the revised deadlines in, made conforming changes to, and removed no longer applicable portions of, the PTC regulations in 49 C.F.R. Part 236.⁷⁴

Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Responsibility: The FDOT is granted regulatory authority over all public railroad-highway grade crossings⁷⁵ in the state, including issuance of permits required to open and close any such crossing. The FDOT is directed, in cooperation with railroads operating in the state, to develop and adopt a program for the expenditure of funds available for the construction of projects to reduce hazards at public railroad-highway grade crossings. Section 335.141(2)(b), F.S., requires every railroad company maintaining a public railroad-highway grade crossing, upon reasonable notice from the FDOT, to install, maintain, and operate at such crossing traffic control devices to provide motorists with warning of the approach of trains. The FDOT’s notice must be based on its adopted hazard reduction program and on construction efficiency considerations relating to the geographical proximity of crossings included in the program. The FDOT must approve the design of the traffic control devices, and the costs of purchase and installation must be paid from the funds in the adopted program.

⁷² 49 U.S.C. 20157(i)(5).

⁷³ A railroad must complete full implementation of its PTC system by December 31, 2020, or the date specified in its approved alternative schedule, whichever is earlier, only if the railroad installs all PTC hardware and acquires all spectrum necessary to implement its PTC system by December 31, 2018; submits an alternative schedule providing for implementation of PTC as soon as practicable, but not later than December 31, 2020; provides written notice that it is prepared for review of its alternative schedule; and received FRA approval. 49 C.F.R. 236.1005.

⁷⁴ See Positive Train Control Systems; Final Rule, Federal Register, Vol 81, No. 39 (February 29, 2016), pp. 10126-10130.

⁷⁵ Defined to mean a location at which a railroad track is crossed at grade by a public road. Section 335.141(1)(b), F.S.

A railroad company must maintain at its own expense any public railroad crossing opened prior to July 1, 1972, unless the maintenance has been provided for through a contractual agreement entered into prior to October 1, 1982. If the railroad fails to maintain a crossing, the governmental entity with jurisdiction, after notice to the railroad of needed repairs and 30 days after the railroad's receipt of the notice, is required to make the repairs. The repair cost becomes a lien on the railroad and its rolling sock, enforceable by filing suit, and any judgment includes a reasonable attorney's fee.⁷⁶

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 130, federal funds are available to states for projects that eliminate rail-highway crossing hazards to both vehicles and pedestrians. State laws requiring railroads to share in the cost of work for the elimination of hazards at rail-highway crossings do not apply to projects using federal funds.⁷⁷ The applicable regulation sets out a railroad's required share of costs in such projects and, in many cases, the railroad has no required share. If a project is not funded through the federal hazard reduction program, it appears state laws requiring a railroad's participation in the cost of rail-highway grade crossing improvements may be permissible, in the absence of any applicable contractual agreement otherwise providing for such costs.

Chapter 351, F.S., contains additional relevant provisions:

- Every railroad company is responsible for erecting and maintaining crossbuck warning signs at all public or private crossings in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).^{78, 79}
- The governmental entity with jurisdiction or maintenance responsibility must install and maintain advance railroad warning signs and pavement markings at public crossings in accordance with the MUTCD.⁸⁰

Prior to the work on the grade or the highway approaches at a public railroad-highway crossing, the railroad or the governmental entity initiating the work must notify the other party to promote coordination and ensure a safe crossing with smooth pavement transitions from the grade of the railroad to the highway approaches.⁸¹

Remote Health Monitoring (RHM): RHM systems provide a variety of uses and are designed to monitor various functions of railroad operations. They generate data related to fuel consumption; engineer compliance with train operation protocols; train speeds, locations, and direction; control

⁷⁶ Section 335.141(2)(c), F.S.

⁷⁷ 23 C.F.R. 646.210.

⁷⁸ Section 351.03(1), F.S.

⁷⁹ The MUTCD is the national standard for all traffic control devices installed on any street, highway, bikeway, or private road open to travel and is intended to obtain basic uniformity of traffic control devices. The FDOT has adopted the MUTCD as directed by s. 316.0745, F.S. Per guidance in the manual, "The appropriate traffic control system to be used at a highway-rail grade crossing should be determined by an engineering study involving both the highway agency and the railroad company." See the MUTCD introduction, p. 748, available at: <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/2009r1r2/part8.pdf> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁸⁰ Section 351.03(2), F.S.

⁸¹ Section 351.141(2)(d), F.S.

system fault detection; and more. These systems can be customized to fit specific requirements.⁸² In its diagnostic safety review of the FECR grade crossings for the All Aboard Florida project in Brevard and Indian River Counties, the FRA recommended that “four-quadrant gate systems *should* include remote health (status) monitoring capable of automatically notifying railroad or signal maintenance personnel when anomalies have occurred within the system.”⁸³ The MUTCD similarly provides that four-quadrant gate systems *should* include RHM but it does not *mandate* RHM inclusion.⁸⁴

Sealed Corridors: According to the FRA, it has “advocated for a minimum of active warning systems with gates, controlled by constant warning time circuitry, on rail lines with speeds of 80 mph and greater,” but new developments have pointed to additional strategies. “The State of North Carolina has pioneered many of the subsequent advances on the North Carolina Railroad under the concept of a ‘sealed corridor.’” According to the FRA, sealed corridor treatment provides an additional layer of safety by blocking all lanes of travel, preventing left turns from parallel roadways that inadvertently result in driving around the tip of the gate arm, and by discouraging those who might attempt to go around the lowered gate. Blocking travel lanes can be accomplished by using one or more of the following:

- Four-quadrant gates,
- Median arrangements, and
- Paired one-way streets with gate arms extending across all lanes of travel.⁸⁵

These improvements “can be paired with selective use of barrier gates at particularly troublesome crossings.” Further, “It should be noted that sealed corridor treatments are also appropriate at crossings with more than two tracks, regardless of speed, and particularly near passenger stations. Additional warning time will be required at these locations to ensure that all road traffic clears the crossing. Pedestrian gates and effective channelization should be provided.”⁸⁶

Crossing Gate Installation Maintenance of Roadbed/Track/Culverts/Streets/Sidewalks: Cities and counties along Florida’s east coast reportedly have existing crossing agreements with Florida East Coast Railway. Under those agreements, the local governments usually have financial responsibility for crossing signal installations, capital improvements for track beds and roadway surfaces, crossing maintenance costs, and pedestrian gates and sidewalks.⁸⁷

⁸² See article *Multi-Purpose Monitoring Technology*, October 6, 2014, available at:

<http://www.railwayage.com/index.php/communications/multi-purpose-monitoring-technology.html> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁸³ See the FRA *On-Site Engineering Field Report – Part 2*. (On file in the Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee.)

⁸⁴ See the MUTCD, Part 8, s. 8C.06, available at: <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/2009r1r2/part8.pdf> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁸⁵ See the FRA *Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Guidelines for High-Speed Passenger Rail*, Version 1.0, November 2009 pp. 8-9 (on file in the Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee).

⁸⁶ *Id.* As noted in the preface, the FRA Guidelines are *not* regulations and do not establish a standard of care; *i.e.*, compliance with the guidelines is *not* required. For more information on North Carolina’s sealed corridor program, see the North Carolina Department of Transportation website available at <https://www.ncdot.gov/divisions/rail/projects/Pages/sealed-corridor-program.aspx> (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁸⁷ *Supra*, note 44.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 8 of the bill creates s. 341.608, F.S., setting out minimum safety standards for a HSPR system.

Compliance with Federal Law and Regulation: This section of the bill requires a railroad company operating a HSPR system to comply with federal laws and FRA regulations. This provision in state law would mirror current federal law.

Positive Train Control (PTC): This section of the bill additionally requires a railroad company operating a HSPR system to install safety equipment that has been approved by the FRA, which at a minimum must include PTC. As the FRA has issued a final rule on PTC, it appears that this provision of the bill may be preempted.

In addition, before operating a HSPR system, the newly created s. 341.608, F.S., requires the railroad company to:

- Install or realign crossing gates, including those at severely skewed, acute-angled locations as identified by the FDOT or the FRA, such that the gates are parallel to the tracks and in accordance with the most recent edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices published by the Federal Highway Administration and adopted by the state pursuant to s. 316.0745, F.S.;
- Equip all automatic public railroad-highway grade crossing warning systems with RHM technology capable of constantly monitoring the highway-railroad crossing to:
- Detect false activations;
 - Detect other crossing signal malfunctions; and
 - Notify the train dispatcher and crossing signal maintenance personnel when a malfunction occurs; and
 - Construct and maintain fencing in accordance with newly created 341.611, F.S., discussed below under the heading, “Fencing Requirements.”

Section 9 of the bill creates s. 341.609, F.S., to impose the following requirements on a railroad company that constructs or operates a HSPR system:

- If the railroad company is required to install safety improvements that modify the width of a roadbed, the railroad is responsible for ensuring the impacted roadbed meets the FDOT’s transition requirements as set forth in the most recent edition of the FDOT’s Design Standards and the Manual of Uniform Minimum Standards for Design, Construction, and Maintenance for Streets and Highways.⁸⁸

The bill provides that this newly created s. 341.609, F.S., as is the case under current law, does not impair any existing contractual agreements between the railroad company operating the HSPR system and a governmental entity within the state.

⁸⁸ The purpose of the manual, adopted by the FDOT as directed in s. 336.045, F.S., “is to provide uniform minimum standards and criteria for the design, construction, and maintenance of public streets, roads, highways, bridges, sidewalks, curbs and curb ramps, cross walks, bicycle facilities, underpasses, and overpasses used by the public for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.” See the FDOT’s website available at: <http://www.fdot.gov/roadway/FloridaGreenbook/FGB.shtm> (last visited January 17, 2020).

Remote Health Monitoring: While the FRA has recommended RHM for grade crossings that will have four-quadrant gates in Brevard and Indian River Counties, research reveals no federal *requirement* for such monitoring systems as part of warning systems at grade crossings. On the one hand, preemption may not apply under the theory that federal law and regulations have not “covered the subject matter,” thus, allowing a state to enact such a requirement. Additionally, the effect may also turn on whether such installation is funded through the federal hazard reduction program. If not, such a state law requirement may be valid for HSPR systems that are not already covered by a contractual agreement that imposes responsibility for such costs.

Sealed Corridors: While the FRA has published guidelines relating to sealed corridor treatments, it has not mandated any such requirements and points to the State of North Carolina as an example of best practices. The sealed corridor provisions in the bill are apparently not preempted by federal law or regulation but may be inconsistent with direction in the MUTCD that the appropriate traffic control system to be used at a highway-rail grade crossing should be determined by an engineering study involving both the highway agency and the railroad company.⁸⁹

Crossing Gate Installation/Realignment, Maintenance of Roadbed/Track/Culverts/ Streets/Sidewalks: To the extent that existing contractual agreements place financial responsibility for crossing signal installations, capital improvements for track beds and roadway surfaces, crossing maintenance costs, and pedestrian gates and sidewalks on cities and counties (and to the extent that no such work is a part of the FDOT’s federally-funded grade crossing hazard reduction program), the bill likely has no effect. Those existing contracts remain in place and are not impaired.

To the extent that no agreements are in place covering a HSPR system, the bill may make railroad companies responsible for these costs (unless funded by the federal hazard reduction program, which provides in many cases that railroads do not share in costs). As an example, see *Adrian & Blissfield R. Co. v. Village of Blissfield*, 550 F.3d 533 (2008), holding that a virtually identical Michigan statute was not preempted by the ICCTA.⁹⁰

Safety Inspections and Inspectors (Section 10)

Present Situation

Section 341.302(8), F.S., authorizes the FDOT to conduct inspections of track and rolling stock, train signals and related equipment, hazardous materials transportation, and train operating practices.

The federal State Rail Safety Participation program uses state safety inspectors in rail safety inspection disciplines. The program emphasizes routine compliance inspections but authorizes states to undertake additional investigative and surveillance activities under certain circumstances. Each state agency is required to enter into an agreement with the FRA that delegates to the state investigative and surveillance authority for federal railroad safety laws. The

⁸⁹ *Supra* note 75.

⁹⁰ The court specifically did not address FRSA preemption.

program includes federal funding to reimburse states for costs of related rail safety inspector technical training.⁹¹

The FDOT has a long-standing agreement with the FRA for participation in the federal program, which is periodically renewed. The agreement lists the FDOT's five certified railroad safety inspectors and their areas of responsibility. The agreement calls for the FRA and the FDOT certified inspectors to singly and jointly conduct investigative, surveillance, and enforcement activities within Florida under the FRSA and sets out the following safety areas or disciplines for surveillance: track, motive power and equipment, signals and train control, operations, and hazardous materials. These inspectors must be capable of composing narrative reports and recording data on standard report forms for submission to the FRA.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 10 of the bill creates s. 341.6101, F.S., requiring the FDOT's railroad inspectors to be certified by the FRA in accordance with the State Rail Safety Participation Program. The inspectors must coordinate their activities with those of federal rail inspectors in compliance with 49 C.F.R. part 212 and any other federal regulations governing state safety participation. Unless otherwise confidential under state or federal law, the FDOT inspectors must report in writing the results of their inspections in the manner and on forms prescribed by the FDOT. The reports must be made available on the FDOT's website for the public to access.

Research reveals no provisions of federal or state law that expressly address the confidentiality of rail inspection reports. Under Florida law, these reports appear to fall within the definition in s. 119.07(12), F.S., of "public records."⁹² Such reports may be available from the FRA if requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).⁹³ The FOIA expressly exempts, for example, trade secrets and commercial or financial information from its application.⁹⁴

The FDOT appears to be in compliance with the requirements of this section of the bill, except that it currently does not publish the reports on its website.⁹⁵ To the extent that federal law prescribes the forms that the FDOT's inspectors must use in completing their inspection reports, any FDOT rule relating to forms may be preempted. Whether publication of the reports on the FDOT's website is permissible under federal law is unclear. See discussion above under the heading, "Accident Reports."

⁹¹ See the FRA website available at: <https://railroads.dot.gov/divisions/partnerships-programs/state-rail-safety-participation> (last visited January 17, 2020). See also 49 C.F.R. part 212.

⁹² "All documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency."

⁹³ 5 U.S.C. 552.

⁹⁴ *Id.*

⁹⁵ See the FDOT's email to committee staff, October 30, 2017 (on file in the Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee.)

Fencing Requirements (Section 11)

Present Situation

Research reveals that while the federal government has studied the use of fencing to restrict access to railroad right-of-way by pedestrians, federal law apparently does not require railroads to install such fencing. A 2014 U.S.D.O.T. technical report expresses the view that fencing along an entire railroad right-of-way would not be reasonable due to the size of the U.S. rail system and necessary access points. The report notes that targeting high-risk areas for fencing may be possible and acknowledges an ongoing debate as to the effectiveness of fencing as a method for increasing rail safety.⁹⁶

Other state jurisdictions do have laws relating to fencing of railroad right-of-way and making railroads liable for damages resulting from the failure to do so. For example, Minnesota requires every railroad company to build and maintain fences on each side of all lines of its railroad, with certain exceptions.⁹⁷ New York requires every railroad to erect and maintain a fence along the boundary line of its right-of-way if, after a hearing, a determination is made that fencing is necessary. The New York transportation commissioner is authorized to prescribe by order the height, length, materials and design of the fencing.⁹⁸ Research reveals no challenge to these state requirements.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 11 of the bill creates s. 341.611, F.S., requiring the FDOT to adopt by rule standards to be used by the FDOT in conducting field surveys of the rail corridor being used by a HSPR system. The field surveys must indicate areas where fencing is necessary for the public's health, safety, and welfare. The field surveys must, at a minimum, identify pedestrian traffic generators, such as nearby schools and parks, and signs of current pedestrian traffic that crosses the railroad tracks. The FDOT must hold at least one public meeting in each community where new or substantially modified fencing is proposed before designs and plans for such fencing are finalized.

If a determination is made that fence is necessary, the railroad company operating a HSPR system must construct and maintain the fence on both sides of its railroad tracks in a manner sufficient to prevent intrusion. The fencing (at least 4 ½ feet high) must be placed one foot inside the edge of the railroad company's right-of-way. Ornamental fencing must be used within urban areas; chain link fencing may be used outside of urban areas. The railroad company must maintain the fencing and is liable for all damages arising from the railroad's failure to construct or maintain a required fence, unless a governmental entity has contractually consented to undertaking the responsibility for maintaining the fence within its jurisdiction.

⁹⁶ See the report, *Countermeasures to Mitigate Intentional Deaths on Railroad Rights-of-Way: Lessons Learned and Next Steps*, available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299545240_Countermeasures_to_Mitigate_Intentional_Deaths_on_Railroad_Rights-of-Way_Lessons_Learned_and_Next_Steps (last visited January 17, 2020).

⁹⁷ Section 219.31, Minnesota Statutes.

⁹⁸ RRD, Article 3, s. 52-B, Laws of New York.

Whether these provisions would withstand a challenge on grounds of preemption by federal law is unclear.

Enforcement/Jurisdiction/Administrative Fines (Section 12)

Present Situation

Section 341.302(7) and (8), F.S., respectively, require the FDOT to develop and administer state standards relating to the safety and performance of rail systems and, in accordance with the applicable federal regulations, assess penalties for failure to adhere to the standards. The agreement between the FRA and the FDOT covering the State Safety Participation program appears to provide the FDOT with authority to assess penalties under s. 341.302, F.S. However, 49 C.F.R. part 212, subpart B, 212.113 expressly reserves to the FRA the authority to assess penalties, issue emergency and compliance orders, institute actions for collection of civil penalties or for injunctive relief, and to initiate all other enforcement actions under the federal railroad safety laws. States may bring an action for assessment and collection of a civil penalty in a federal district court of proper venue if the FRA has not timely acted on a state's request to initiate an action.

Section 316.640 provides for enforcement of the traffic laws of this state and assigns authority to various state, county, and municipal entities for that purpose. Generally, the Florida Highway Patrol, county sheriff offices, and municipal police departments are authorized to enforce all of the traffic laws of this state on all streets and highways. The FDOT is granted authority to enforce on all the streets and highways of this state all laws applicable within its authority.⁹⁹

Section 335.141(4), F.S., grants the FDOT authority to regulate the speed limits of railroad traffic on a municipal, county, regional, or statewide basis as established by an FDOT order; *i.e.*; agency action under the provisions of chapter 120. Any penalty for a violation of s. 316.640, F.S., must be imposed on the railroad company guilty of a violation. The FDOT's jurisdiction to enforce speed limits of railroad traffic is as provided in s. 316.640, F.S. The FDOT advises it does not have a rule regulating train speed limits and does not regulate train speeds in any fashion given case law holding that such state regulations are preempted.¹⁰⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 12 of the bill creates s. 341.612, F.S., providing that jurisdiction to enforce the bill's provisions shall be as provided by s. 316.640, and any penalty for violation of those provisions shall be imposed on the railroad company that commits such violation.

The validity of this provision appears to turn on whether the specific requirement being enforced is preempted.

⁹⁹ Section 316.640(1)(b)1., F.S.

¹⁰⁰ FDOT email to committee staff, March 13, 2017. *See CSX Transportation, Inc. v. Easterwood*, 507 U.S. 658 (1993), holding: "Although, on their face, § 213.9(a)'s provisions address only the maximum speeds at which trains are permitted to travel given the nature of the track on which they operate, the overall structure of the Secretary's regulations demonstrates that these speed limits were adopted with safety concerns in mind and should be understood as "covering the subject matter" in question."

Severability and Effective Date (Sections 13 - 14)

Section 13 creates s. 341.614, F.S., providing for severability of invalid provisions or applications of the act.

Section 14 of the bill provides the act take effect on July 1, 2020.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The fiscal impact to railroads is largely indeterminate, depending on whether given provisions in the bill are federally preempted. Railroads may incur costs associated with the following:

- Reporting requirements (section 7);
- PTC and RHM safety technology installation and use (section 8);
- Railroad-highway grade crossing responsibilities (sections 8 and 9);
- Fencing requirements (section 11); and
- Penalties for any violations (section 12).

To the extent the bill's authorizations in section 12 for the FDOT to assess penalties is not preempted, railroads may incur costs for penalties if violations occur. Railroads may experience increased litigation costs related to preemption, regulatory compliance, and impairment of contract issues.

C. Government Sector Impact:

To the extent that sections 8 and 9 allow a local government to avoid future costs that would be incurred for railroad-highway grade crossing construction, maintenance and repairs, the local government would have an indeterminate positive fiscal impact.

An indeterminate negative fiscal impact to the FDOT is expected for expenses associated with:

- Adopting rules (sections 5, 7, and 11);
- Publishing accident and inspection reports (sections 7 and 10); and
- Holding public meetings (section 11).

An indeterminate negative fiscal impact to the FDEM is expected for expenses associated with providing the required hazardous material training (section 6).

To the extent that there is litigation involving any of the regulatory provisions of this bill, governmental entities may experience increased litigation costs.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 341.601, 341.602, 341.603, 341.604, 341.605, 341.606, 341.607, 341.608, 341.609, 341.6101, 341.611, 341.612, and 341.613.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.