

All Aboard warns Tri-Rail's tie-in downtown faces May 17 deadline

By CATHERINE LACKNER

If all of the entities involved in bringing Tri-Rail into downtown Miami can't finalize financial agreements by May 17, All Aboard Florida may withdraw its offer to have commuter service operate out of its MiamiCentral terminal.

So said a May 2 letter from Alice Bravo, director of Miami-Dade County's Transit and Public Works department, to Jack Stephens, executive director of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, the agency that operates Tri-Rail.

All Aboard Florida, a wholly owned subsidiary of Florida East Coast Industries, "has advanced construction of the commuter rail platforms and is incurring significant costs since the station has gone vertical and columns have been erected," Ms. Bravo's letter said. "If we are not able to execute agreements by the aforementioned date, All Aboard Florida has advised us that they will be forced to cease construction on the commuter rail infrastructure.

"Without a definitive plan of action and inter-agency coordination to pursue new agreements, we could forfeit this unique opportunity to bring commuter rail to the central business district."

"For several months, Mayor



'Without a definitive plan of action and inter-agency coordination to pursue new agreements, we could forfeit this unique opportunity to bring commuter rail to the central business district.'

Alice Bravo

Gimenez has been leading efforts to identify a funding solution for Tri-Rail's downtown station," said Francois Illas, vice president at Florida East Coast Industries. "We appreciate his leadership and the specific schedule put forth. We are in the process of confirming the other partners' commitments to the timeline so we can continue construction at the station. If this timeline is not met, we will have no choice but to stop construction immediately on the Tri-Rail

station."

Within the next two weeks, contributing entities such as the commissions of Miami-Dade County and Miami, Miami's community redevelopment agencies, the Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust, Miami's Downtown Development Authority, Bayfront Park Management Trust and the county's Transit and Mobility Committee must sign agreements to move the project forward, Ms. Bravo's letter said.

"Miami-Dade County would like to expedite the approval of the necessary documents to honor our collective partnership with All Aboard Florida and help them seek reimbursement for the costs they are currently incurring," Ms. Bravo's letter adds. "Miami-Dade County stands ready to help facilitate coordination between the agencies."

"We would certainly encourage all funding parties to work together in order to expedite this project to the benefit of the citizens of Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, the Southeast Overtown/Park West and Omni community redevelopment agencies, Miami DDA and Bayfront Park Trust," Mr. Stephens said. "The governing board of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority has done all in its power to see that this project comes to fruition."