



SUWANNEE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
Florida's New Frontier

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Mr. Joe McHugh
VP Government Affairs & Corporate Communications National Railroad Passenger Corporation
60 Massachusetts Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. McHugh,

As the Director of Suwannee County Economic Development Office and on behalf of the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners, we want to accentuate the importance of Live Oak, FL to become a destination point for the restored passenger rail service from New Orleans, LA to Jacksonville, FL. Live Oak has many advantages to offer in support of establishing our community as a station stop, benefits that include premier events and a strategic location within the state. Live Oak was born from the rail system and we now urge you to consider restoring her heritage and legacy.

Suwannee County is home to one of Florida's most diverse Agri-business communities ranging from one of the country's leading environmentally friendly sawmills to poultry production and sales; crop production and distribution; and light manufacturing. In addition too many small boutique businesses, retirement and medical services as well as varied professional, financial and music entertainment. To further enhance the City's and County's goal spur economic activity and attract new businesses and industry the Amtrak station will serve as the catalyst for economic development and growth.

From an economic development standpoint, ***this stop would bring more visitors from the Orlando area, especially tourist visiting Florida, to experience our great springs, trails and the river (Eco-Tourism)***. This could be an excellent source of transportation for concert goers at The Spirit of The Suwannee Campgrounds and Music Park. The Amtrak stop will create a positive synergy for the downtown of Live Oak and surrounding area. Right now our major assets here in Suwannee County are our HWY interchange system, I-10/I-75; CSX mainline; easy access to Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Gainesville and Valdosta; awesome quality of life both for work and play! This station will serve a population well over 120,000 population, hundreds or communities in two states (GA & FL).

Investing in the Live Oak Station can be an investment in the future of our community. A renovated train station can inspire real estate growth, dining and entertainment development, tourism and local economic spending. Stations offer a return on investment for years to come. As alternative modes of transportation emerged over the years, some stations have been neglected. Fortunately, many communities actively exploring station redevelopment as a means to stimulate economic growth and revitalization are seeing success in ways they never imagined.

Across the country, Amtrak has served as an economic boost for towns and cities such as Hattiesburg, Miss. and Normal, Ill. who invested in stations to yield sizable economic benefits such as:

- Multi-million dollar private developments in surrounding areas to include housing and retail
- Restored parks and civic and private buildings
- Investments in art centers hosting world class performances
- Housing improvements including increases to home values
- Tourism growth

We feel this will serve as a similar economic boost for downtown Live Oak and the surrounding businesses and real estate development, creating hundreds of jobs and opportunities. Then Live Oak can be another one of your Amtrak's success stories.

A number of the state/nation's leading production and sales companies, and entertainment venues have established their operations in Suwannee County, FL in order to take advantage of its global connectivity, an experienced workforce and strong business climate. Some of these companies are: Klausner Lumber One, operator of the ***world's largest sawmills by output***; Pilgrim's Pride Corporation, the second largest poultry producer in the world; Precision Turning Corporation, over 25 years' experience on CNC Swiss Screw Machines- Specializing in the fields of Medical, Dental, Aerospace, Fiber Optics, Valves, Gas & oil and More; Suwannee American Cement LLC; Townsend Farms; and one of the nation's leading Music Parks, The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park and Campgrounds, ***voted the outdoor best live music venues in the U.S.***

Suwannee County is full of natural wonders. ***The Suwannee River is one of eight magnificent waterways in North Central Florida. It proudly boasts to be the "diving capital of the world;"*** over 70 clear, fresh springs stand in stark contrast to the tannin-colored river water. There are many types of fish that thrive in its waters, including sturgeon, and the river provides a habitat for many species of wildlife. The river originates in the Okefenokee Swamp in southern Georgia, meanders some 240 miles through North Central Florida, and empties into the Gulf of Mexico on Florida's western shore. ***What a "Point of Destination" international and domestic visitors to the North Central Florida area.***

We most definitely support the partnership between Amtrak and the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) to run a daily service train from New Orleans to Orlando, and then a supplemental service from Mobile, Ala., to New Orleans. If the project goes through, SRC officials estimated the service would cost about \$5.48 million annually to run, but the projected 138,300 yearly passengers could generate between \$12.25 and \$12.72 million in revenue.

Thank you for supporting our request for a Live Oak Station and stop, once again this will serve as an economic engine for the Live Oak/Suwannee County Communities.

With warm regards,

Dr. Alvin B. Jackson, Jr.

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