

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 19, 2023

Rear Admiral Brendan C. McPherson
Commander
U.S. Coast Guard Seventh District
100 MacArthur Causeway
Miami Beach, FL 33139

Dear Rear Admiral McPherson:

Yesterday afternoon we spoke regarding Brightline's planned closure of the St. Lucie River railroad bridge for 21 days in mid-April to early May. As you noted, a complete and total closure of the St. Lucie River railroad bridge for three weeks will create significant barriers to navigation and, ultimately, significant economic impact for the marinas and other water-based businesses in the area. I want to ensure that everything possible is being done by Brightline and the Coast Guard to minimize issues for our community and insulate our businesses from being hurt due to no fault of their own.

As the Coast Guard works with Brightline to schedule the necessary maintenance prior to Brightline's increased service, consideration must be given to what a closure lasting multiple weeks will do to the businesses who rely on the waterway. Marinas, boat and yacht repair shops, commercial fishermen, law enforcement and emergency service agencies, and barge and boat recovery companies need both sides of the St. Lucie River to be accessible. As you said, there is no good time for a complete closure of the waterway, but the time frame proposed by Brightline is an important one for marinas in the area because many boats are coming in from the Atlantic or are crossing over from the Gulf of Mexico for the summer. Additionally, total closure of the bridge severely limits what fueling stations are available to boaters and cuts some of those businesses off from a significant portion of their customer base.

One point of concern from our call was your clarification that the Coast Guard does not do a formal economic impact assessment when approving maintenance deviations. I believe a closure expected to last three weeks warrants a formal analysis of the harm it will inflict, and it is concerning to me that the Coast Guard has failed to calculate the level of economic impact this deviation would have on our community. Ensuring the St. Lucie River railroad bridge is in good repair is certainly important, but Brightline and the Coast Guard must do what it takes to conduct the repairs as unobtrusively as possible.

In order to assure our community that Brightline is not costing our businesses that rely on access to the water several weeks of revenue in order to save themselves money, please provide Brightline's written request for a deviation from the current bridge operating schedule and the Coast Guard's written response. Additionally, if Brightline made earlier deviation requests that

were denied, please outline what those requests were. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter and your commitment to continue engaging with Brightline until a better maintenance plan is developed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Brian Mast', written over a large, light blue oval scribble.

Brian Mast
Member of Congress