

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commander
United States Coast Guard
Seventh District

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FEB 17 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Mast
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Mast:

I am in receipt of your letter dated February 15, 2023, regarding maintenance/rehabilitation of the Florida East Coast Railway (FECR) Bridge which crosses the Okeechobee Waterway/St. Lucie River in Stuart, FL.

The Coast Guard has completed its review of the proposed Brightline/FECR maintenance project, including the temporary deviation to the operating schedule of the FECR drawbridge. I have decided to approve the temporary deviation which will allow the draw-span of the FECR drawbridge to remain in the closed position for up to 21 days from May 1, 2023 to May 22, 2023.

The Coast Guard, in considering the temporary deviation, conducted extensive outreach to our local, state, and federal maritime partners, to include the Army Corps of Engineers, Customs and Border Protection, local Marine Patrol units, and the local Coast Guard Station. We also engaged with local marine interests, to include evaluating concerns of local marinas and the Marine Industries Association Treasure Coast (MIATC). We have determined through our outreach that our maritime law enforcement partners will be able to make appropriate arrangements to be able to continue to respond to any incidents in the area. We recognize that closures of any length are not ideal. In lieu of potential unplanned closures that could result from deferred maintenance, the maritime community has indicated to us that it is amenable to the adjustments that the Coast Guard was able to achieve to the maintenance schedule and timeframe of this project.

The Coast Guard remains dedicated to our responsibility of protecting the rights of navigation on our nation's navigable waters and understands that any obstruction to those waterways is impactful. We also remain mindful of potential unplanned impacts of neglected maintenance of bridges which intersect our waterways. Coast Guard drawbridge regulations require bridge owners to maintain the working machinery of drawbridges in good working order. Planned maintenance of the working machinery of drawbridges may, at times, affect accessibility to our navigable waters. We will continue to do our due diligence to ensure advance notification is provided to the maritime community to allow for proper planning in preparation for the 21-day bridge closure.

Sincerely,

Brendan C. McPherson
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Commander, Coast Guard Seventh District

REP. MAST,
PLEASE LET ME KNOW
IF YOU DESIRE A CALL
TO DISCUSS.
B. McPherson

Copy: COMDT (CG-BRG)
CG SECTOR Miami