

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0918

June 10, 2022

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

Dear Rear Admiral McPherson:

As the U.S. Coast Guard's Seventh District works on proposed rule USCG-2022-0222, I write today to raise concerns that actions taken by the Coast Guard will dangerously restrict boaters' access, including that of law enforcement. Boat access under this bridge is already severely impaired and will only get worse when traffic increases along the railway to accommodate the expansion of Brightline. Specifically, I am requesting that the bridge be closed no more than 30 minutes combined for any 120-minute period.

To expand on this, in 2018, before plans were in place that would increase train traffic along Florida East Coast Railway, boaters in my community who live on the west side of the St. Lucie River railroad bridge were already having issues accessing the Intracoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean. At my behest, the Coast Guard conducted a study to address the lack of access boaters face, and you offered a clear recommendation in WAMS #07301: regulations for the St. Lucie River railroad bridge should be modeled off of the regulation in place for the New River Bridge in Fort Lauderdale, Florida at the time.

The New River Bridge's regulation in 2018, issued in 2016, clarified that the bridge should be "open to maritime traffic when trains are not crossing" and that "the bridge shall not be closed more than 60 minutes combined for any 120-minute time period." This was needed for safety reasons and boater access. At a minimum, the Coast Guard should stand by your recommendation as you write the regulation for the St. Lucie River railroad bridge.

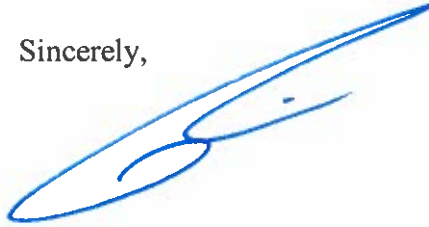
As I discussed on a call with your staff recently, however, a lot has also changed in Florida since 2018. Our state is much more populated now, and the population of boat-owners has increased, too. Given the growth of boating along the Treasure Coast, this rulemaking presents an opportunity for the Coast Guard to go farther than what was fitting in 2018. Specifically, I now believe that having the bridge closed no more than 30 minutes combined for any 120-minute period is necessary.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the Coast Guard getting this right for our community. What has drawn so many people to call the Treasure Coast home is the access to our beautiful waterways, yet current management of the St. Lucie River railroad bridge is inequitable

and in no way takes into account the Coast Guard's historic position that maritime traffic should receive the right of way (see [33 CFR §117.5](#)). This must be fixed.

I look forward to working with you as you continue in the rulemaking process, and I appreciate your careful consideration of the concerns of the tens of thousands of my constituents who take advantage of the Treasure Coast's beautiful waterways.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Mast", is written over the word "Sincerely,". The signature is stylized and slanted upwards to the right.

Brian Mast
Member of Congress