



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 26-042

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*
DATE: February 18, 2026
SUBJECT: **New River Crossing - Letter to Broward County Mayor Mark D. Bogen**

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to provide the City Commission with an update on the New River Crossing, specifically associated with the required response to Broward County.

On February 3, 2026, during the City Commission Conference meeting, the City Commission received an update on the New River Crossing initiative. The presentation included project background and efforts completed to date following prior Commission direction reaffirming a tunnel as the locally preferred alternative for a future commuter rail crossing of the New River. City staff reviewed coordination with Broward County, engagement with tunneling industry experts, collaboration with Brightline and the Florida East Coast Railway, and potential grant funding and financial strategies to support construction, operations, and maintenance. The City Commission directed staff to prepare a response for submittal to Broward County.

In response to the City Commission's request on February 3, 2026, I transmitted a letter from Mayor Trantalis (Attachment) to Broward County Administrator Monica Cepero on February 17, 2026. Note that the original submittal deadline of February 13, 2026, was extended to February 17, 2026.

For further information, please contact Milos Majstorovic, PE, Director of Transportation and Mobility, at 954-828-5216 or mmajstorovic@fortlauderdale.gov

Attachment: February 17, 2026, Letter to Mayor Bogen

c: Shari McCartney, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
City Manager's Office
Department Directors



Dean J. Trantalis
Mayor

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February 17, 2026

Honorable Mayor Mark D. Bogen
Broward County Board of County Commissioners
115 S Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

Dear Mayor Bogen:

Thank you for the continued collaboration between Broward County (County) and the City of Fort Lauderdale (City) in advancing the Broward Commuter Rail Project (BCR). The City shares the County's commitment to delivering this transformational investment in regional mobility consistent with the PREMO vision and recognizes the system's importance as a critical north-south spine supporting economic vitality, resiliency and connectivity in the region including our residents and businesses.

Consistent with this commitment, the City Commission adopted Resolution 25-71, reaffirming the tunnel crossing of the New River as the City's Locally Preferred Alternative and directing staff to advance the tunnel concept through industry engagement, interagency coordination and development of a viable financial and delivery strategy. We appreciate the County's willingness to defer identification of a preferred crossing method and to provide the City with the opportunity to further evaluate and substantiate a feasible tunnel solution.

It was great to see the regular coordination that City staff had with County staff regarding funding strategy, corridor risks, project development steps and project readiness for both BCR South and BCR North. The discussions focused on managing legislative uncertainty, refining financial feasibility, advancing federal eligibility and determining the market's appetite for delivery and financing. This ongoing partnership reflects a shared commitment to advancing the project responsibly.

As requested in the March 3, 2025, letter from Broward County, the City made great progress in advancing the tunnel concept. As identified within this response letter, and supported by the supplemental materials, the City has gained industry interest in the project, identified key criteria to advance the project and started developing financial strategies to deliver the tunnel concept. The intent of this communication is to provide a high-level overview of the City efforts. These efforts have included developer procurement and tunneling industry engagement and the development of a financially sound plan for construction and operation/maintenance. The efforts also have included stakeholder outreach and coordination.

Developer Procurement and Tunneling Industry Engagement

The City has undertaken extensive outreach to the private sector to secure a qualified development/tunneling industry partner capable of delivering the project through a public-private partnership (P3) structure. City staff participated in the 2025 AIAI Public-Private Partnership Conference, met with the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Build America Bureau, conducted industry webinars and hosted a dedicated Tunnel Industry Day.

The City hosted an Industry Day on July 28, 2025, which included staff presentations from the City, Broward County, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the USDOT Build America Bureau. The agenda comprised one-on-one breakout session opportunities with qualified firms and industry experts to further discuss the project, understand their interest and gain industry feedback on potential next steps and associated timelines. Based on feedback from other agencies, stakeholders, members of the public and industry experts, Industry Day was a very successful event. Attachment 1 contains the Industry Day flyer, sign-in sheet and presentation.

The City of Fort Lauderdale conducted a formal solicitation via a Request for Information (RFI). The RFI was issued on Oct. 27, 2025, and aimed to elicit formal responses for subsequent market analysis as a follow-up to the discussions held during Industry Day.

The City invited qualified firms to share feedback on project delivery methods, innovative technologies, financing mechanisms and timelines to aid in developing future procurement strategies for the construction of the tunnel. The RFI generated 13 responses from globally recognized concession developers, design-build contractors, tunneling specialists and engineering firms with direct experience delivering complex rail and tunnel projects.

The RFI respondents expressed a strong interest in pursuing the tunnel project. Several teams have indicated their readiness to advance toward formal proposals with defined economic terms, lifecycle cost commitments and operations and maintenance responsibilities. Attachment 2 summarizes the RFI findings and provides detailed responses from each respondent.

City staff has engaged directly with USDOT through the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on funding opportunities and maintained dialogue with experienced tunnel builders expressing interest. Staff has also conducted outreach to state and regional partners, including County leadership, to ensure alignment and sustained support.

Financial Plan

The City recognizes that the current federal and state funding environment is increasingly competitive and requires projects to demonstrate clear economic value, cost certainty, and risk mitigation. Accordingly, the City is pursuing a diversified strategy that combines federal credit assistance, discretionary grants and private participation. After evaluating available tools, the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program has been identified as the most viable primary financing mechanism, at this time, due to its rail eligibility, flexible terms, and capacity to fund up to 100 percent of eligible costs. The Transportation Infrastructure Finance and

Innovation Act (TIFIA) and competitive grant programs such as Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI), Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD), Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA), and National Infrastructure Project Assistance (MEGA) will be pursued as complementary sources to reduce overall borrowing needs.

The City has explored the feasibility of potential revenue opportunities, including associated implementation processes, timelines and approval requirements. These efforts have identified options such as establishing a special taxing district and/or implementing special assessments along the railway corridor to help offset capital and operating costs for the project.

These mechanisms could be applied within the City of Fort Lauderdale's municipal boundaries or potentially implemented county-wide to support the broader Broward Commuter Rail initiative. However, to bring these concepts to life, an additional level of research and detailed analysis will be required during the project development phase to define specific structures, revenue projections, and governance frameworks.

Regional Infrastructure Accelerator Federal Funding

The City of Fort Lauderdale continues to champion the tunnel concept as the preferred solution for the New River crossing, recognizing that its benefits extend well beyond tangible engineering considerations. A tunnel preserves the character downtown and its riverfront, safeguards significant upriver marine industry operations, preserves the City's historic district and minimizes disruptions to pedestrian and vehicular mobility. These elements are critical to the City's economic vitality and quality of life.

These advantages, including enhanced urban aesthetics, long-term resiliency and compatibility with future growth, underscore why the tunnel alternative remains central to the City's vision for sustainable transportation infrastructure. To substantiate these benefits and advance the project, the City has pursued federal funding opportunities aimed at further defining, documenting and memorializing the value of this approach.

For example, in October 2023, the USDOT Build America Bureau awarded the City \$974,000 in grant funding through the Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) program for technical assistance with the New River Crossing project. The current grant kicked off in April 2025 and covers tasks such as economic development, environmental review, public benefit, property impacts, traffic and congestion. This effort is ongoing and is anticipated to be completed within the next six months.

On June 25, 2025, the City applied for the second round of RIA funding for \$2 million. The Notice of Funding Award is still pending. The City application included funding to focus on geotechnical investigations in support of Geotechnical Baseline Report (GBR) and are in alignment with the feedback received from the industry experts during the RFI process.

The preliminary \$887.9 million construction cost estimate prepared in 2024 is a Class 4 estimate, consistent with the County's Class 4 estimate for the bridge alternative. This level of estimate is appropriate for early planning and conceptual design.

As the project advances, completion of geotechnical investigations, expanded scope development and preliminary engineering will enable the City to refine costs to a higher level of accuracy. These activities will strengthen financial credibility, improve lender and grant confidence, reduce contingencies and risk, and support a more reliable financing structure.

Contingent upon receiving the grant award, the City will initiate geotechnical investigations, advance preliminary engineering and refine the project cost estimate. We remain committed to resuming coordination with FECR and Brightline as soon as uncertainties regarding corridor approvals are resolved.

In parallel, the City will continue engaging qualified developers and industry experts to advance the tunnel alternative. Additionally, we will further develop a robust financial structure and pursue grant opportunities to support the project. Together, these efforts will enable the City and County to deliver a viable, future-ready solution that meets the region's transportation needs for generations to come.

Stakeholder Outreach and Coordination

The City understands that meaningful engagement with local stakeholders including the Broward Workshop, Downtown Development Authority and neighborhood civic associations is essential to the success of any crossing alternative. As part of the City's efforts, engagement was conducted to ensure that the voices of the business community, property owners, residents and civic leaders were fully represented.

These groups stand to be directly affected by construction impacts, long-term mobility outcomes and the broader economic implications of the selected alternative and provided critical insight throughout the process. Their perspectives help ensure that the project supports downtown's economy, protects neighborhood quality of life and aligns with community priorities such as walkability, waterfront access, and urban design.

The City recognizes that any New River crossing alternative must be developed in close coordination with FECR and Brightline. The City engaged both entities during preparation of the City's 2024 tunnel alternative analysis to identify operational, safety and access requirements among others.

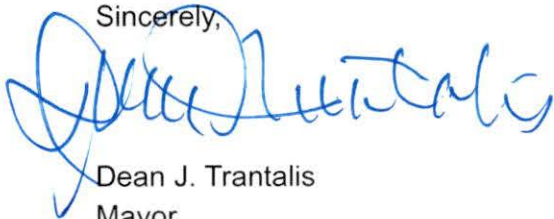
FECR emphasized the need to maintain uninterrupted freight service and business continuity throughout construction and operations, while Brightline identified requirements related to passenger service reliability, station interface and system safety. More recently, coordination has been constrained by ongoing litigation between the two entities concerning their joint-use agreement. Although this matter remains in arbitration and introduces uncertainty regarding corridor approvals, the City continues communication with both parties and is incorporating appropriate schedule and delivery contingencies to ensure any proposed alternative remains operationally feasible and compliant.

This response is being provided to comply with County's deadline. The City is excited about the progress thus far and our efforts to date demonstrate steady momentum and a clear path forward.

As I have outlined, the City of Fort Lauderdale remains fully committed to advancing the tunnel alternative and will continue to make meaningful progress toward that goal.

We value our partnership with Broward County and look forward to continuing our collaborative work to deliver a solution that best serves our community and the region. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.

Sincerely,



Dean J. Trantalis
Mayor

cc: City Commission
Rickelle Williams, City Manager
Ben Rogers, Assistant City Manager
Milos Majstorovic, PE, Director, Transportation and Mobility Department
Monica Cepero, County Administrator
Kevin Kelleher, Deputy County Administrator

Attachments:

1. Industry Day Overview
2. Request For Information (RFI) Overview
3. Prior Correspondence