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Hi David,

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Mary

[Port Commissioner Allender pushes Cape rail route](#)**Port Commissioner Allender
pushes Cape rail route**

Canaveral Port Authority Chairman Jerry

Allender is pushing a plan for cargo rail through Air Force property.

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Port Commissioner Allender pushes Cape rail route



Dave Berman, FLORIDA TODAY 11:32 p.m. EDT September 14, 2015



(Photo: FLORIDA TODAY FILE PHOTO)

Canaveral Port Authority Chairman Jerry Allender is trying a new tack in his push to get a rail link to Port Canaveral.

Allender says he will ask fellow port commissioners to support a public-private partnership in an effort to persuade the U.S. Air Force to allow access to Cape Canaveral Air Force Station that would enable a rail connection from the port to the mainland.

Port officials say they need a rail link to the port to help expand their cargo business, because importers and exporters want that option.

Additionally, Port Canaveral's potential partner — the West Palm Beach-based Gilbane Renuart & Larkin Group — is proposing an agreement with the Air Force to lease up to 2,000 acres at the 16,000-acre-plus Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.



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One of the leaders of the proposed project, Owen Larkin, said the proposal calls for about 500 acres of Air Force land north of the port's channel, in what's known as the Middle Turning Basin area, to be used by the port to expand its cargo operations.

In addition, up to 1,500 acres of Air Force land along Phillips Parkway at the Air Force station would be used for other development, potentially an industrial park east of the parkway and an office park west of the parkway.

Initial plans call for the rail route to parallel the existing six-lane Phillips Parkway, cross over the NASA Causeway East onto Kennedy Space Center, follow NASA Parkway East and link with existing KSC tracks. The 16 miles of new track would be about evenly split between Air Force and KSC property.

Larkin said, under his group's proposal, the Air Force would be able to use revenue generated by the user agreement for upgrades at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station under a still-to-be-determined funding mechanism. Some of the money could be used to help relocate or dismantle facilities at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station to accommodate the rail line, he said.

The federal Surface Transportation Board is examining three potential rail routes from the port — through the Air Force station; new tracks along the State Road 528 corridor; and 11 miles of new track over the Banana River and through the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge that would connect with 17 miles of existing line at KSC.



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There has been vocal community opposition to the Banana River route from a coalition that includes environmentalists, fishing-charter and nature-tour operators, and Merritt Island residents fearing a range of environmental and quality-of-life issues would develop if the rail lines were built.

The Brevard County Commission this month unanimously approved a non-binding resolution opposing the Banana River route, and encouraging the Port Authority to pursue the Air Force station route.

Allender initially had expressed concern about that resolution, put forth by County Commission Vice Chair Jim Barfield.

In an Aug. 26 statement issued by the port, Allender described Barfield's resolution as "not only is misguided, but also premature," and one that "demonstrates a lack of experience and thoughtful leadership."

But Allender now supports the resolution's goal of focusing on the Air Force station route for rail.

"To me, we need to vigorously pursue that option right now," Allender said. "It's time to bring it to the forefront. It's time for us to consider the possibility of working with them. It's time for the port commissioners to take an aggressive stance."



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(<http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/2015/09/04/brevard-commissioners-vote-opposing-port-rail/71486812/>)

Larkin said his group for the last two years has been involved in "very quiet and very discreet" behind-the-scenes discussion with Air Force officials about reuse options for underutilized sections of Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, under what's known as an enhanced use lease process.

He said those discussions have included Brig. Gen. Nina Armagno, who until recently was commander of the 45th Space Wing at Patrick Air Force Base and director of the Eastern Range. That command includes responsibility for processing and launching government and commercial satellites from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. Larkin plans to continue those discussions with Armagno's successor at Patrick, Brig. Gen. Wayne Monteith.

Larkin's group also recently made a presentation to the Air Force Civil Engineering Center leadership, which would have oversight of such projects.

Larkin said the proposed rail route would have a relatively short 700-foot crossing over water, would be lower cost than other rail proposals the port is considering, would have a lower environmental impact and would provide direct benefits to Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.



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Pros and cons of Port Canaveral's three proposed rail plans

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Larkin's business partner is retired Air Force Gen. Gene Renuart, who was commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and the U.S. Northern Command.

They hope to make a presentation to port commissioners at the Canaveral Port Authority's Sept. 23 meeting, at which they will detail the potential cost of such a rail route.

Port Canaveral Chief Executive Officer John Walsh has indicated that the Air Force has raised a number of concerns about having commercial rail access through the Air Force station.

Among the potential issues: safety, security, hazardous material transport, traffic, vibration and limits on hours of rail operation.

Larkin said he believes any hurdles can be overcome, and that a "harmonious" relationship among the port, the Air Force and his group would benefit all the entities.

Optimistically, Larkin hopes to get Air Force approval for the project and begin rail line construction in two years, and have the rail line operating two years after that.

"This group has made great strides in trying to work with Air Force personnel," said Allender, who also is chairman of the Space Coast Transportation Planning Organization. "I think that it's necessary for us to have this option available. I personally have a strong feeling it can be accomplished."

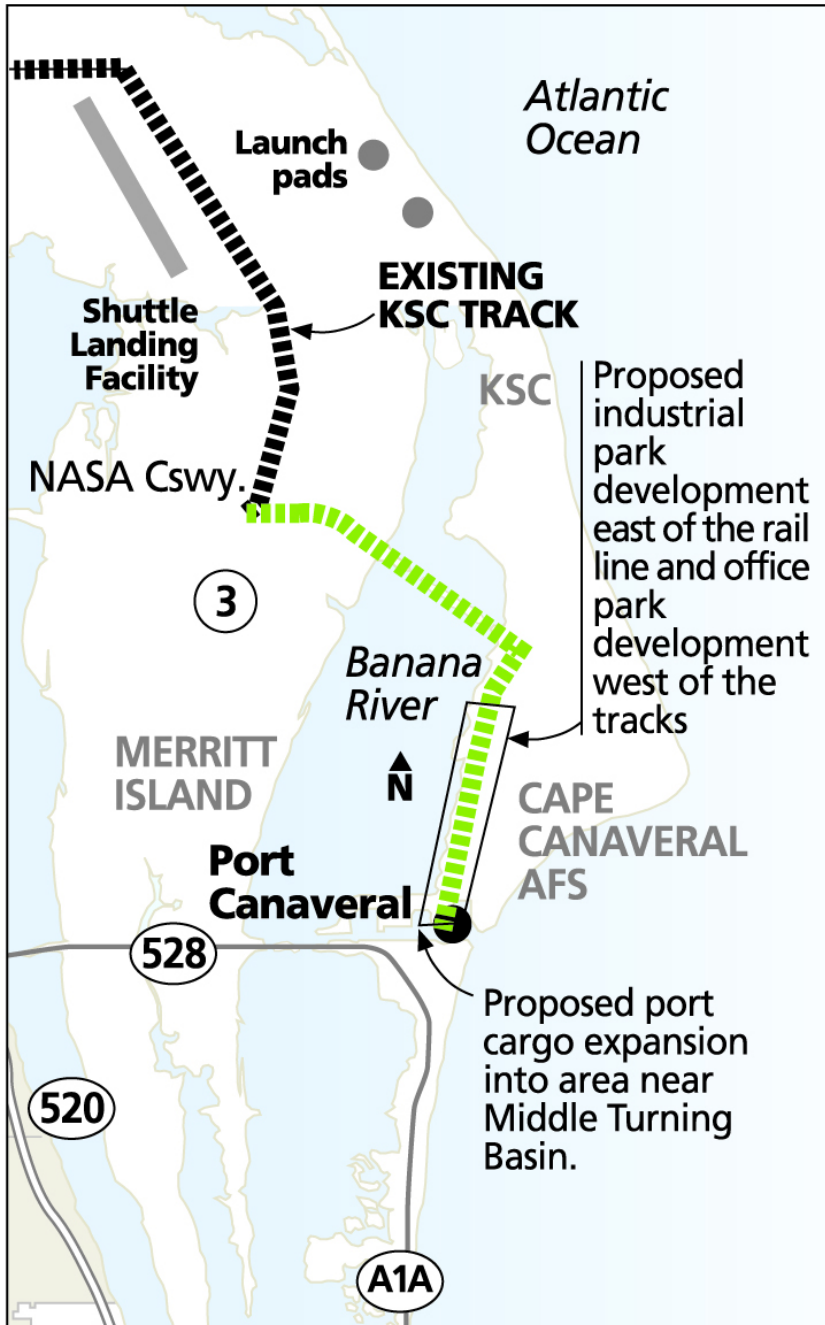
The Gilbane Renuart & Larkin Group team includes a development and construction company, a company involved in privatizing projects at Air Force bases, the operation of four short-haul railroads in the United States and a company involved in rail design projects.

Contact Berman at 321-242-3649 and dberman@floridatoday.com. Follow him on Twitter @ByDaveBerman and on Facebook at facebook.com/dave.berman.54.

The cargo rail issue is likely to be discussed at the Canaveral Port Authority meeting that begins at 9 a.m. Sept. 23 at Canaveral Port Authority Maritime Center Commission Chambers, 445 Challenger Road, Port Canaveral.

Proposed rail line

■■■■■■■ The proposed cargo rail route would parallel the existing six-lane Phillips Parkway at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, cross over the NASA Causeway East onto Kennedy Space Center, follow NASA Parkway East and link with existing KSC tracks.



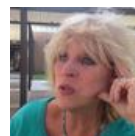
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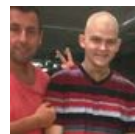
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