

TEA-21 “Road Map”

A Reauthorization Action Plan

FLORIDIANS FOR BETTER



TRANSPORTATION

The following TEA-21 “Road Map” is an action plan produced by Doug Callaway, President of FBT (Floridians for Better Transportation), a statewide business and transportation association dedicated to making transportation safer and more efficient.

This Road Map is intended to provide interested parties with guidance during the reauthorization of TEA-21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century). Like an actual highway map, it will help government officials, community leaders, and interested citizens get from “where they are now,” to “where they want to be.”

I.) REAUTHORIZATION ESSENTIALS – *The Policies*

Support for Florida’s Recommendations- The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Florida Transportation Commission (FTC) have worked jointly to produce a series of “Florida Recommendations for TEA-21 Reauthorization.” It would be wise for any group in Florida to endorse Florida’s TEA-21 Reauthorization recommendations. These recommendations, which can be found at <http://www.tea21fl.org>, are:

- *Maximize the return of funding to Florida*
- *Protect & strengthen transportation funding guarantees*
- *Seek opportunities for increased funding*
- *Continue to expand innovative financing techniques*
- *Simplify the federal program structure*
- *Support Florida’s environmental initiative*
- *Support Florida’s special transportation needs*
- *Coordinate Congressional project designations*

In particular, your group may wish to express strong support for increasing Florida’s share of federal highway funding to 95%, protecting and improving the RABA (Revenue Aligned Budget Authority) provisions in TEA-21, and encouraging close coordination between the State and members of the Florida Congressional Delegation in pursuit of regionally significant highway project designations. Your group may also wish to suggest additional ideas for TEA-21 Reauthorization, such as:

- *Only regionally significant transportation projects on the State’s 5-Year Work Program should be pursued for special federal project funding.*

FBT – Your “Voice” for Transportation!

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- *Both federal and state preference should be given to important regional projects where the local transportation partners contribute rights-of-way or donate water run-off capabilities in order to help generate cost savings.*

II.) WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY – *THE PROJECTS*

Yearly DOT Appropriations Act- Each year appropriations (or funding) bills are produced to provide fiscal resources for various federal activities. The yearly spending legislation for federal transportation activities is the DOT Appropriations bill – produced by the House & Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittees. *The annual DOT appropriations bill will continue to be a target source for new federal transportation funding. This will be accomplished through the designation of discretionary funds for regionally significant transportation projects.*

TEA-21 Reauthorization- TEA-21 will expire at midnight on September 30, 2003. When enacted in 1998, TEA-21 authorized \$ 218 billion for federal surface transportation activities for the years 1998-2003. Of that total, roughly 5% or \$ 9.359 billion was earmarked for more than 1,850 so-called “high priority projects” selected by Members of Congress. *This reauthorization will offer an excellent long-term opportunity to secure new, area-specific federal transportation funding for projects of regional importance.*

III.) TELLING THE STORY – *The Public Relations*

It has been said, “Doing business without advertising is like winking at a stranger in the dark, you know what you’re doing but no one else does.” The same maxim applies to transportation. Funding in Washington, D.C. just like in state Capitols usually goes to interests that have well organized, and PR savvy supporters. There should be little doubt that the decline in transportation funding (relative to overall spending levels) directly corresponds with the loss of transportation’s national prestige. The societal benefits of transportation – once implicitly understood – are no longer self-evident. Put simply, transportation (when it is thought of at all) is commonly viewed as “the problem,” rather than “the solution!”

- *Transportation advocates must choose to proactively “sell” the real benefits of transportation to the public. Those advocating education spending would never confine their arguments strictly to the number of jobs created during construction of a school building ... so why must transportation advocates? The REAL benefits of transportation – personal freedom, economic opportunity, mobility, etc. – far surpass the short-term increase in construction jobs!*

Transportation truly has a great story to tell, but it needs to be told with passion and imagery – through marketing and PR – rather than with thick reports and PowerPoint presentations filled with numbers and pie charts. Remember ... facts are nice, but slogans sell beer!