



## Diverted Road Funds Jeopardize Safety, Commerce & Tourism

By Kevin Bakewell



In our last issue, we promised to keep you informed on Florida's Transportation Trust Fund. You'll recall that the 2003 legislative session closed with the governor authorizing a \$200 million diversion from the state's Transportation Trust Fund and, like Willie Sutton the notorious bank robber, politicians tend to "go where the money is."

Because the \$200 million is a relatively small portion of the entire transportation trust fund, there's good reason to believe the state could attempt, once again, to betray the "trust" and fund other under-budgeted projects with money that had been designated for transportation purposes.

What does that mean for Florida's economy? When our transportation infrastructure is forced to postpone investment that covers maintenance and improvements to accommodate increased road usage and population growth, what does that mean for tourists, residents, commuters and students dependent upon school buses?

It's the wrong thing to do. Florida Gov. Jeb Bush recently joined the governors of 14 states to urge transportation committee leaders in Washington to ensure that Florida receives a 95 percent return on the federal gas tax dollars that flow annually from Florida to Washington. Yet at the same time, it clearly undermines the efforts of our own representatives in Congress, who are fighting for our fair share of federal tax dollars, when the state willingly diverts funds from its own Transportation Trust Fund.

As a member of AAA Auto Club South, we encourage you to contact your state legislators and ask them to support transportation safety and ask Gov. Bush to fully fund transportation in his 2004-05 budget.

The message can be clear and simple. Here is a sample message that may help you express your concerns:

**Dear Florida Legislator:**

**As a member of AAA Auto Club South, I am asking you to protect our roads. Do it for Florida's older drivers, teenaged drivers and everyone else. Transportation investment improves safety, reduces congestion, and ensures development and economic growth. Protect the public trust and do the right thing. Protect Florida's highways and transportation investment. Please ask the governor to fully fund transportation in his 2004-05 budget. Thank you.**

AAA Auto Club South will continue to keep you updated. For additional information, you may also want to visit Floridians for Better Transportation ([www.bettertransportation.org](http://www.bettertransportation.org)).

*(This article can also be found online at: [http://www.aaasouth.com/current\\_issue/travadvfl.asp](http://www.aaasouth.com/current_issue/travadvfl.asp))*