

CALLAWAY BRINGS TO FBT STATE, NATIONAL, PUBLIC, PRIVATE-SECTOR EXPERIENCE

Growing up a self-proclaimed “beach bum,” Doug Callaway’s endless stares toward the Atlantic Ocean may have pointed him more into the professional path of a marine biologist, but once joining the staff of a state congressman and driving the main and secondary routes of the legislator’s district in Southern Florida, his career objective headed down a different road.

While he admits to sometimes looking forlornly in his rear-view mirror and seeing sandy walking paths leading toward the beach, Callaway is intent on keeping his car headed on the right road in order to provide better transportation choices for all Floridians.

“I grew up in Pompano Beach, down in Southeast Florida,” said Callaway, who officially began work as president of Floridians for Better Transportation on January 1. “I went through elementary, middle and high school there, and even went to college there at Florida

Atlantic University. Quite frankly, I never thought I’d ever live anywhere away from the ocean, but my wife and I have lived in Washington D.C. twice, Texas once, and now we’re moving back to Tallahassee for the third time. I guess I didn’t turn out to be as much of a beach bum as I expected.”

Callaway comes to FBT, a statewide business and transportation association advocacy group that promotes safer and more-efficient transportation, with more than 20 years of private- and public-sector experience at the state and national levels.

Most recently, he served two years as a transportation program manager with Carter & Burgess, a national architectural/engineering consulting and management firm based in Fort Worth, Texas. He replaces Don Crane, who after serving as FBT president for 14 years retired Jan. 1, 2003.

An author of several transportation-related articles and books, Callaway is recognized nationally for his effective government relations techniques and public speaking.

Prior to working with Carter & Burgess, Callaway served on President George W. Bush’s transitional Transportation Advisory Committee; spent 12 years as the Federal Programs Coordinator for the Florida Department of Transportation – helping bolster the



Doug Callaway

state’s level of federal transportation funding from \$445 million annually to more than \$1.2 billion; and worked with former Congressman Tom Lewis in Washington, D.C.

While his career may travel back and forth from Florida, to Washington, D.C., to Texas and back, his transportation career began by crisscrossing South Central Florida. His travels on behalf of Congressman Lewis to Belle Glade, Clewiston, Everglades City, Immokalee, LaBelle, Marco Island, Moore Haven and Naples – to name just a few – provided Callaway a unique perspective on not only the diverse economies of the area but also how important a sound transportation infrastructure was to them.

“My first interest in transportation issues came during my tenure on the

staff of Congressman Lewis,” Callaway said. “(Later, after moving to Washington with the Congressman) I had the pleasure of working with him on matters ranging from widening U.S. Highway 27 and State Road 80, to helping Tri-Rail get started in the late ’80s, to dealing with access at the Port of Palm Beach, and even dealing with the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger.”

Callaway, 44, acknowledged how fortunate he’s been in working with not only “fine leaders” such as state congressmen Clay Shaw and Lewis, and three FDOT secretaries, but also the fine role models and mentors he’s had in his life – his parents Alan and Marylou Callaway, his wife of 18 years, Sheila, and Ben Watts.

“During the first eight of my 12 years with FDOT, Ben served as Secretary,” Callaway said. “Not only was he my boss, he was my friend, advisor, ally, fellow Sunday school teacher and joke swapper. At Carter & Burgess, I again had the privilege of working directly with Ben. It’s an honor to have him as my mentor.”

Ironically, while Callaway’s professional goals are to provide Floridians with the safest and quickest way to get from Point A to Point B, he enjoys a slower pace when he’s away from the office. “I’m a fairly simple person. I like to take walks with my wife, spend time with our daughters, Kristen (15) and Sarah (12), go to church on Sunday, play an occasional game of tennis or ping pong and read Steven Ambrose. Sometimes I enjoy just sitting by the fire with our dog, Belle.”

Shortly after taking over the duties as FBT president, Callaway sat down for an interview with *Florida Transportation Builder*.

Florida Transportation Builder: *How would you introduce FBT, and what it stands for, to new legislators and new advocates of Florida’s transportation industry?*

Callaway: “FBT is a statewide business and transportation association dedicated to making transportation safer and more efficient in Florida. Simply put, we think transportation is important and worth “investing” in for three simple reasons:

1. Congestion – Congestion on our highways, at our airports, and in our public transportation facilities costs us the most valuable commodity any of us has ... T-I-M-E. Congestion means lost business opportunities, and lost time that could have been spent with families, friends and loved ones. Hardworking Floridians deserve to spend time in a setting of their own choosing ... not sitting idle and frustrated in traffic jams, in crowded airports or waiting for the bus!
2. Safety – Crowded and overused roads, buses, planes and trains are not going to be as safe as they could and should be. Floridians expect their government to ensure their safety as best it can ... at home and when they travel!
3. Economic Benefits – Florida’s transportation system is the backbone of our economy. Our highways, airports, seaports and transit systems are the avenues to our state’s prosperity. They are the economic arteries upon which all of our manufactured goods are carried ... from the mail we receive on our doorsteps to the shirts we wear on our backs ... from the shoes on our feet to the books in our children’s schools ... from the computers on our office desks to the medications that arrive on our local pharmacy’s shelves. The things Floridians rely on to keep our state going strong are carried by our transportation system ... it literally drives our economy!”

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Florida Transportation Builder:

What changes would you like to see made with FBT? Or how do you think the organization can be improved?

Callaway: “Created in 1988 by the Florida Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Council of 100, FBT has made a significant and lasting contribution to improving the lives of every Floridian. Past President Don Crane, and others involved with FBT over the last 15 years deserve credit for that.

“I feel fortunate to be taking over FBT at such an exciting and challenging time. We need to ‘play defense at home’ – by protecting the integrity of the State Transportation Trust Fund here in Tallahassee – and we need to ‘play offense’ on the road – by working to get more of our Florida transportation dollars back from Washington during the reauthorization of TEA-21.”

Florida Transportation Builder:

One of the comments Don Crane made about his years as FBT’s president was he had to spend too much time raising money, which took away from his advocacy work. How will you face the “raising funding” challenge?

Callaway: “While fundraising will obviously be a part of my job, it won’t be the main thing. I’m firmly convinced that if folks see the good work FBT is doing – and understand how it benefits them – I think the finances will take care of itself.”

Florida Transportation Builder:

What are your thoughts on the importance of a strong highway system, and are roads more important for a state like Florida than they might be for other states?

Callaway: “Earlier, in talking about the three reasons why FBT believes

transportation is important and worth ‘investing’ in, I touched on this issue. With the southeastern portion of the U.S. being the natural entry point for commerce from South and Central America, Florida is uniquely positioned to benefit from its location in the 21st Century ... provided we have a good transportation system. As Ohio Gov. Bob Taft said recently in his State of the State message, ‘A good location without good access is a prescription for decline.’”

Florida Transportation Builder:

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing FBT?

Callaway: “The biggest challenges facing FBT will be the twin tasks of playing defense in Tallahassee while playing offense in Washington. But in both arenas, we will be successful if we effectively communicate the benefits of transportation with our elected officials. As I’ve been known



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to say upon occasion: ‘Facts are nice, but slogans sell beer.’ My job will be to personalize the day-to-day and the economic benefits of Florida’s highways, bridges, airports, seaports and transit systems.”

Florida Transportation Builder:
Most Floridians see the large amount of highway projects that have begun due to Mobility 2000. How are you going to try to get the message to them that the state needs more money for highways?

Callaway: “Well, I think while transportation is a national and statewide issue ... most people think locally, not globally. So the transportation improvements Floridians see as a result of Mobility 2000 is really a good thing. These are THEIR roads, THEIR bridges and THEIR transit systems being improved. They’ve already paid for them and they should see the work being done for them. But the job’s not done ... increased transportation investments are needed to ease congestion, improve safety, protect the environment, stimulate Florida’s economy and enhance the quality of every Floridian’s life.”

Florida Transportation Builder:
Where is one area of Florida’s road

system you believe can be improved?

Callaway: “If I had to pick one area where Florida’s transportation system could be improved, I’d say decreasing the enormous amount of time needed to build or improve a road, transit system, airport or seaport. With a state growing as fast as Florida, ‘time’ really does equal money! We can protect our state’s natural environment and build much faster the systems that move people and goods.

“The Federal Highway Administration has found that every dollar spent on a highway improvement results in \$5.40 in economic benefits. Now, more than ever, Floridians need those transportation dollars to be spent reasonably, responsibly, for their intended purposes, and in a timely fashion.”

Florida Transportation Builder:
Why is it important for FBT to work closely with associations such as FTBA and what are your thoughts in improving the involvement of contractors and improving the relationship with FTBA?

Callaway: “FBT and the Florida Transportation Builders Association

have always had an outstanding working relationship ... and we always will. In Florida we need a balanced transportation system with a variety of modes efficiently working together. Obviously, roads, highways and bridges will continue to be the backbone of that balanced system ... and FTBA will continue to be the backbone of building and improving Florida’s roads, highways and bridges.”

Florida Transportation Builder:
Don Crane had a successful tenure with FBT. How would you like your tenure to be remembered?

Callaway: “How would I like my tenure at FBT to be remembered? Geez, I only started on January 1st ... so why don’t you get back to me on that one in about a dozen years or so. But seriously, when the ‘Callaway Years’ at FBT are over I hope people will say we’ve been a consistent, effective and persuasive ‘voice’ for Florida’s transportation interests. I hope they will remember my time at FBT as having been one of integrity, creativity, reliability and perseverance. And I hope they remember me as having done all that with good humor!”



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