



Monday, March 22, 2004

TRU\$T in Florida's Transportation System and Stop Diverting Revenue

Prior to the start of the 2004 Legislative Session, the Florida Chamber notified all 160 legislators that any vote to divert dollars out of the State Transportation Trust Fund would count as a vote against the 2004 FLORIDA BUSINESS AGENDA, therefore earning legislators negative points toward the 2004 Legislative Report Card. Senior Vice President Paul A. Ledford asked legislators to sign a TRU\$T pledge form and "take a personal leadership role in stopping future diversions from this trust fund." Just last week, Floridians for Better Transportation gave legislators another opportunity to sign a TRU\$T pledge form when they hand-delivered a copy of the Chamber's letter and a list of those who had signed the pledge so far.

The 2003-04 budget passed by the Florida Legislature included a diversion of \$200 million from the State Transportation Trust Fund to pay for non-transportation-related general revenue programs. Any further deterioration of our transportation infrastructure will have a significantly negative impact on every economic sector, our quality of life, and the public safety of Floridians and our visitors. The Florida Chamber encourages all legislators to "do the right thing" and keep the \$100 million where it belongs and where it can do the most good. "The Florida Chamber will fight efforts to raid the Transportation Trust Fund to be used for non-transportation purposes," Ledford said.

Federal Transportation Funding – Breaking a lengthy deadlock, House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Illinois) said the House will soon pass a \$275 billion, six-year compromise surface transportation bill that appears to be supported by the President. Ed Mortimer, director of the Americans for Transportation Mobility (ATM) coalition and U.S. Chamber director of Transportation Infrastructure Policy said, "Obviously we are very disappointed if that's (the Speaker's figure) the number.....We'll reserve judgment on the package (and a final funding level that comes out of conference) until we see the details." The U.S. Chamber and ATM continue to fight for the longest and largest surface transportation reauthorization bill that can pass Congress and be signed into law by President Bush.

Transportation is a FLORIDA BUSINESS AGENDA priority, and the Florida Chamber is fully supports the efforts of Floridians For Better Transportation (FBT) and the "TRU\$T" pledge's common-sense approach to transportation issues.