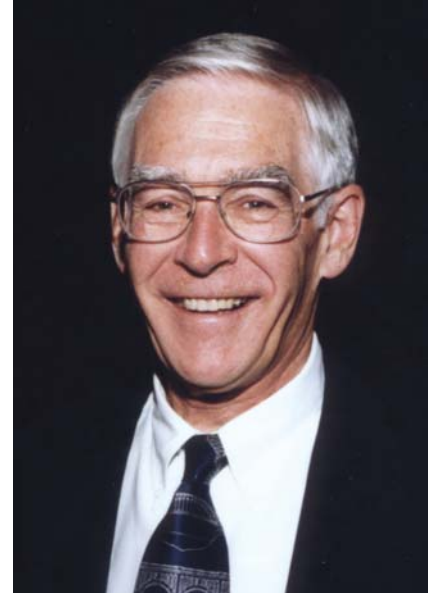


CRANE HELPED PUT FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION IN BETTER CONDITION



Don Crane

At age 69, you'd think Don Crane would love to be strolling across the golf course. Actually, he wants to spend more time on his 1930 Rolls Royce, which he vowed to finish when he retired, or travel with his wife, Shirley, in their motor home.

But as president of Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT), Crane was more fascinated with talking about roads, transportation funding and growth management rather than tee times. He enjoyed his work even though it consumed him, sometimes nearly 12 hours per day and too much time on the weekends.

However, after 14 years at the helm, Crane is looking forward to mixing personal interests with special projects, as he has recently stepped down from duties at FBT to become a consultant for the organization. He has been the leader of the agency since its inception in 1988 and undoubtedly has been one of the most influential people in promoting Florida's transportation construction agenda in recent time.

"The greatest part of this job is working with the people that have helped me. When you get into the

middle of this political fray, you better have a lot of allies," Crane said. "The other thing is the challenge and interest of the job which probably wouldn't be apparent to most people.

"It is a fascinating job and if I'm going to miss anything it's going to be that I'm not going to be in the middle of all that. It's just fascinating stuff and beats playing golf everyday."

From his start with FBT in 1988, Crane has watched transportation spending in Florida steadily rise from \$1.3 billion annually to \$5 billion. That increase started when FBT helped organize Florida's first transportation coalition in 1989 that led to the eventual passage of the state's biggest funding transportation package.

"When we organized FBT in '88, (the Florida Department of Transportation) was in dire straits. The engineers were

getting about \$40-million worth of work and \$500 million was going into contracting," Crane said. "And the attitude was bad. The relations between the Legislature and the DOT, and the DOT and the transportation builders were contentious. FDOT Secretary Ben Watts and FTBA President Bob Burleson were instrumental in forging good working relationships with the Legislature and transportation industry. We came together in 1988 and have had 14 years of very little negative comment about the DOT. We've ridden the high side."

As a member of the 1992 Environmental Land Management Study Commission, Crane initiated the recommendation that permitted county governments to increase their local gas tax by five-cents per gallon. FBT's involvement helped make transportation an economic issue in every growth

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management committee since 1992, and its 1996 report on transportation funding and Florida's economy helped to eventually spur the passage of the Mobility 2000 highway funding package.

In addition to highway funding, Crane and FBT have been steadfast in growth-management issues because transportation is "absolutely the backbone of all land plans," he said. Crane has sat on about a dozen growth management and land planning committees since the late 1960s. That's vitally important in Florida, where population has rapidly grown and will continue to do so in the future, so state and local officials must figure "how you are planning your land and how you are planning your transportation system to meet future demands and improve Florida's economy.


"Florida's government and legislature must rewrite the state's comprehensive plan in such a way that it will have an economic goal, a vision for the future development of Florida, and a valid plan for paying for growth. That includes Florida's transportation system," Crane said. "Florida has only three sources of revenue to pay for growth - property, sales and vehicles taxes. Unless there is an increase in earned income, Florida will never be able to pay for growth."

As Crane watches FBT's new president, Doug Callaway, handle daily operations, he hopes the industry will lend its support so FBT can fully reach its potential. Right now, about 20 percent of the transportation construction industry provides financial backing to FBT, which is an independent, non-profit organization.

By lending support, Callaway can work on important issues instead of begging for funding, which Crane calls unproductive time. "FBT is Florida's leading advocate for transportation improvements," he said.

"Some of the 'Better Roads' organizations that do the same thing we do have a budget of \$250,000 to \$400,000. My greatest challenge has been attracting enough new members to get the money that is needed to get the job done," Crane said. "You've just got too many things to do ... the real thing that has to be happening is the members have got to help increase the membership. While you are out raising money, you aren't taking care of the grass-roots efforts necessary to motivate elected officials and the media."

Crane sees the two main missions for



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FBT being: Increase funding for transportation and protect current funding from raids for non-transportation purposes in the face of the no new-tax agenda; and turning transportation into an economic issue so everyone understands why transportation needs additional funding.

Most of all, he wants to see the entire business community, not just transportation, come together to form a united front that will convince the Legislature and media how important transportation funding is to Florida and why it's needed to ensure the state's economic vitality.

"There are far too many business leaders who are more concerned about their personal and business relationships with elected officials, so they will not speak up about tough issues that may offend their elected officials."

Crane will stay on as a consultant for FBT and will be seen keeping his contacts throughout the transportation industry. It's those contacts, both in politics and in business, who have allowed Crane to thoroughly enjoy his job, including FTBA President Bob Burleson, who Crane said has been FBT's most avid supporter.

"It's the people that have made this job so much fun," Crane said. "Everything I have ever accomplished has come from valued business and personal friendships who have helped me get the job done."



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