

Dear Editor,

During the 2003 Legislative Session, \$200 million was “diverted or swept” from the Transportation Trust Fund and spent elsewhere. It is important to understand that these funds did not come from general revenue and did not contribute one dime to the state’s budgetary problems. Instead, they were collected from TRANSPORTATION “user fees” -- gasoline taxes and tag fees -- and represent a promise made to the motoring public.

Simply put, these user fees are paid by the traveling public in Florida for a very specific purpose -- **TRANSPORTATION** maintenance and improvements. To use them for any other purpose breaks faith with Floridians and is just plain wrong.

With the recent Special Session focused primarily on Economic Development, it is indeed ironic that one of the most potent arguments against another Transportation Trust Fund raid in 2004 is an economic one. According to a report released by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in February:

- “Investments made by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) through the adopted work program will have a significant impact on Florida’s economy.
- Business benefits over the next 25 years will result in an increase of \$44 billion in personal income for Florida residents and generate 88,000 new permanent jobs.
- Direct benefits for personal travel, including reduced travel time, vehicle operating costs, and accidents, are estimated to be \$74 billion.
- Together, **these benefits yield \$5.50 for each dollar invested.** (Emphasis added).

Based upon the \$5.50 figure cited by FDOT, another \$200 million “raid” in 2004 would cost Florida’s economy \$1.1 BILLION!

Can Florida really afford that? Clearly, it is time to “**STOP Highway Robbery!**”