

February 28, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Editorial Writers

FR: Doug Callaway, President
Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT)

RE: **Florida - The Great State of Wait!**



When Florida lawmakers return to Tallahassee in early March, they will find a \$2.7 billion “pothole” in the state’s transportation budget. That figure represents the amount of additional money that will be needed simply to keep our congested highways from getting any worse. To make any significant improvements, the state needs an additional \$4.9 billion per year.

Increasingly, Florida residents are facing longer drive times in our major metropolitan areas. Folks in Orlando, for example, are spending more time stuck in traffic than people in New York City. Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT) believes this is unacceptable. Our elected leaders can and must address this situation now.

I am writing to ask your support for bringing public and legislative attention to the critical need to properly fund transportation in Florida. Clearly, there are many competing interests vying for limited state dollars as there are during every legislative session. Many years ago, however, Florida wisely recognized that transportation is an essential service on which our entire economy - and our quality of life - depends. The State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF) was created with the understanding that we must set aside money for transportation in much the same way as a family sets aside money to replace an aging roof.

Simply put, transportation is not a competing budget priority; it is one that makes all the others possible.

The political reality in Tallahassee makes it difficult to predict if lawmakers will pass a comprehensive “fix” to the problem this year. However, there is already significant interest in addressing Growth Management and a growing consensus that additional transportation funding will play an important role in that debate. At a minimum, the Governor and legislators should begin a meaningful discussion about how we are going to address Florida’s growing transportation needs into the future.

It has been said that a Legislature is a body that responds better to heat than light. At FBT, we ask that you help us apply an ample serving of both to improve our roads and transportation systems.

If you have any questions, please call me at (850) 521-1256 or contact me via e-mail at: dcallaway@bettertransportation.org. Thanks for your time.