



FLORIDA'S ECONOMY NEEDS A JUMP START ... NOT "HIGHWAY ROBBERY!"

"I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts." -Will Rogers

Transportation legislation recently approved by the House Policy and Budget Council (HB 5067) contains a proposal to "redirect" over \$600 MILLION in transportation funding! This would make travel less safe, increase congestion, and cripple our economy. In short, it's the wrong thing to do at the wrong time.

Through a series of "questionable" budgetary assumptions which bring to mind phrases like "Fuzzy Math" or "Voodoo Economics" the Council purports to reduce this \$639 million figure to only \$200 million or so. However, the reality is that for the first time in Florida's history, we're facing a transportation budget cut of more than half a BILLION dollars in one year alone ... and that is wrong!

Current Situation

As evidenced by the Governor's proposed '08-09 budget and the Senate's strong opposition to taking money from the Transportation Trust Fund, Governor Crist and the Florida Senate agree it would be unwise to "cut" (*aka: divert, sweep, redirect.*) badly-needed transportation dollars. But the Florida House wants to cut \$639 million from transportation this year!

Quick Background

Due to rising construction costs and declining transportation revenues, over the last three years FDOT already:

DEFERRED 268 projects statewide
at a total cost of \$5.7 Billion

Knowing that these types of "ready-to-go" transportation projects return \$7 in economic benefit for every \$1 invested just imagine how much better Florida's economy would be today if these transportation "investments" had been made as planned! According to my calculator, about \$40 BILLION better.

(MORE)

Should We Do An Anti-Stimulus?

Given this information, why would anyone want to reduce funding for transportation? If investing badly-needed transportation dollars yields a \$7 return...then wouldn't cutting \$639 million -- as proposed by the Florida House -- actually COST Florida's economy \$4.4 BILLION?

Talk about an Economic "De-Stimulus." It would be like throwing a wet blanket on the flickering flames of Florida's economic recovery.

What Should Be Done?

The dollars already dedicated to transportation projects and promised to the people of Florida - which will help Improve the safety of the traveling public, maintain our quality of life, and provide jobs for Floridians -- should be left exactly where they are.

And additional, non-recurring dollars -- which can only be used for non-recurring purposes, like transportation projects -- should be "invested" NOW to stimulate Florida's economy in the short-term and position us for economic prosperity in the long-run.

The Florida Chamber's New Cornerstone Revisited report (December 2007) indicated that Florida does a good job of maintaining our existing highway system ... but has little money left for ADDING badly-needed new capacity!

And a Reason Foundation report from last June confirms this. Here's the Bad News transportation-wise:

- o Fatality Rate per 100 million miles 34th
- o Urban Interstate miles congested 40th
- o Total Disbursements per mile 48th

Just think about that ... we're 48th out of 50 states in funding transportation! No wonder we've got growing traffic congestion, a declining quality of life, and a worsening economy.

Transportation is the "fuel" that powers Florida's economic engine ... and part of the reason that engine is "sputtering" right now is our failure to "fill-up" the tank in the past! The "FUEL" light is ON and we're riding around on "vapors" -- so why is the Florida House talking about siphoning even MORE fuel out of the tank at this crucial time?

For more information regarding these and other Florida transportation issues, contact FBT President Doug Callaway at 850-521-1256 or

dcallaway@bettertransportation.org.



Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT)

www.bettertransportation.org