



Transportation Summit:

'X' Marks the Spot

Similar to the "X" that Americans once marked on their ballots while selecting political candidates at the voter's box, Walter Elias Disney saw an "X" from the window of his plane while flying over the rural Central Florida countryside in the 1960s.

The "X" that Walt Disney saw while flying over Florida's Orange and Lake counties was the intersection of Florida's Turnpike and Interstate 4. Just as the highway system around Orlando enticed the founder of Walt Disney Productions to make his dream of Walt Disney World Resorts a reality, attendees of the 2010 Transportation Summit were reminded how intersecting roadways not only marked the future spot for the world's largest recreational resort, but how transportation continues to be at the crossroads of political discussions in Florida.

More than 200 representatives of companies, corporations, associations, groups, commissions, departments, chambers, authorities and local governments – not to mention invited guests and political officials and candidates – attended the 2010 Transportation Summit, July 6-8. The event, co-sponsored by Floridians For

Better Transportation (FBT) and Transportation & Expressway Authority Membership of Florida (TEAMFL), was held at Disney's Contemporary Resort.

The three-day event centered on the importance of transportation in the state and provided a forum for Florida political figures seeking office in this year's general election.

Following several group or board meetings sessions on the first and second days, and the morning's Florida Transportation Commission Meeting on July 7, the FBT-TEAMFL Transportation Summit officially began with its Opening Session. Kevin Bakewell, vice president of AAA Auto Club South, welcomed the attendees to the annual event along with TEAMFL President/CEO Bob Hartnett and FBT President Doug Callaway.

Moments after Bakewell spoke on the importance of transportation trust funds to AAA's more than 52-million North American members and the concern they have on how legislators treat the trust funds as other program's piggy banks, Hartnett remarked on the transportation

industry's ire of the raids – which since 1998 has seen \$3.3 billion in revenues that could have been used for transportation go to general revenue. In 2010, Florida Transportation Builders Association (FTBA) members led a state effort by transportation advocates to halt a proposed \$460 million raid of the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF). (See related story on page 26.)

"I have long thought this," Hartnett said in addressing the audience. "Legislature, and in particular the members of the Florida Bar that are members of the legislature, when they cede and sign and vote for an appropriations bill that takes



Kevin Bakewell



Bob Hartnett

money out of the trust fund, I am convinced that we need to file a lawsuit by a consumer – probably a trucking company – that says, ‘When my company and my drivers fill those tanks with fuel that is taxed into the trust fund, that money is going into that fund to make, create and maintain roads.’

‘‘If you as a lawyer were representing me as an individual and I went in and I gave you \$10,000 and said, ‘Now, I want you to do this, this and this over this period of time,’ and I came back to you and said, ‘Now have you done this?’ And you said, ‘No.’ And then you said, ‘Well, you know, my mortgage was overdue, and my car payment was overdue, and I had a medical bill that wasn’t paid. So, I took your \$10,000 and paid all those off.’ The next day I would be down at the bar association and in court bringing an action, and shortly thereafter you would be disbarred and out of business.

‘‘I conceive that if they confer and vote for the raid of the trust fund, they have violated a trust



Doug Callaway

actively, which (legislatures and government officials) are empowered as licensed lawyers, and maybe realtors, to do. Therefore they should be brought up on charges, and that would include those that sign the bill, should they be the governor as a licensed lawyer.

‘‘Now wouldn’t that be an interesting activity if we did that?’’ Hartnett asked.

Illustrating that Florida’s transportation advocates are fed up with continual raiding of the STTF, Callaway used a series of comical cartoons to show how Floridians view their government officials. One was of a shepherd reading a magazine while a herd of sheep looked on. With the caption, ‘‘The meek decide it’s time to inherit the Earth,’’ one of the sheep says to the other, ‘‘OK, on the count of three we turn carnivorous.’’

‘‘In some ways,’’ Callaway said, ‘‘that’s what we should be doing. I caught a glimpse of that this year when I saw FTBA folks standing up and saying: ‘By God, enough is enough (when it came from taking money from the STTF).’ We decided to turn carnivorous,’’ Callaway added. ‘‘Once these guys,’’ pointing at the sheep in the cartoon, ‘‘turned carnivorous, they had a taste of meat; they didn’t want to go back to veggies; grass lost all its luster. That’s our opportunity to keep going on.’’

And thus set the stage for the Transportation Summit being a forum not only for Florida’s potential state and federal government officials, but also on how elected officials should recognize – and respect – the importance of the state’s transportation system.

What Transportation means:

- Every \$1 billion invested in transportation equals 28,000 jobs
- Every \$1 invested in the DOT’s work program nets a \$5 economic return

A Road Map

Disney’s Contemporary Resort, famous for the monorail that runs through the hotel, provided

an interesting stage in more ways than one for Florida politicians running for U.S. Senate and governor. Candidates – as well as Transportation Summit attendees – had the opportunity to see how well-planned and well-executed transportation practices can turn almost anyplace into ‘‘The happiest place on Earth.’’

‘‘Disney is renowned for all sorts of things, like the Magic Kingdom and other things,’’ Callaway said. ‘‘But when you think about it really, Disney is great at transportation. We have a monorail system running through the building, look out the window and you have a paddleboat taking people from the car parking lot, who got on a tram to take them to the paddleboat, which took them across the lake, where the people can get on the train, or a whole lot a lot of things, such as the buses.

‘‘Disney really has this whole transportation gig down. Unfortunately, many folks don’t,’’ added Callaway, as he referred to Florida legislators this past session who urged for jobs, jobs, jobs, but then looked at diverting nearly a half-billion dollars from the STTF.

To subliminally show the politicians the way to the stage, FBT formulated a ‘‘Road Map to a Better Florida,’’ which contained transportation ideas for the state’s future (see page 20).

To the politicians’ credit they seemed in-tune with the audience, as they provided pro-transportation messages that Callaway – who admits to never have seen a quote, slogan or analogy he didn’t like (or use) – would be proud to use himself. For example:

‘‘Interconnectivity is where we’re all headed – it isn’t just about building roads, it isn’t about toll roads, it isn’t about transit, it isn’t about 50-foot channels for ships, it’s that all these things are interconnected – and until we understand that we can’t really progress.’’

– Maurice Ferre, candidate for U.S. Senate

‘‘What have you seen in terms of trust funds? What does it mean to have trust in a fund when it is used as a piggy bank? . . . How do you feel when \$3 billion over the last 10 years have been

'Road Map' To A Better Florida

Transportation Ideas for Florida's Future

Rather than "raiding" Florida's Transportation Trust Fund, state leaders should be about spurring our economic recovery by "investing" MORE in transportation and focusing limited resources on what's truly important to the public. We should:

1. **STOP Raiding the Trust Fund** – Since 1998, \$3.3 billion has been diverted from the transportation trust fund. The "TRUST" should be restored to this Trust Fund.
2. **Suspend the Normal Rules** – TIME equals MONEY. After a natural disaster, governments often declare a State of Emergency and temporarily suspend the normal rules so bridges and highways can be rebuilt faster. With 12 percent unemployment, a "State of Economic Emergency" should be declared and transportation work done faster so folks won't lose jobs.
3. **Focus on Congestion Relief** – We should add a third priority of "Congestion Relief" to FDOT's priorities of Safety and Maintenance of the Existing System. Any project, highway or transit alike, should be prioritized based upon what it will do to address traffic congestion.
4. **Maximize Existing Funding** – Every available transportation funding tool we currently have should be utilized, and we should "re-capture" the dollars generated by the Tag & Title Fee increase of last year and redirect them to the transportation trust fund where they belong.
5. **Get More of OUR MONEY Back from D.C.** – Florida only receives 86 cents back for every federal gas tax dollar sent to Washington, so we need a comprehensive strategy to improve our "rate of return." What happens to the other 14 cents? That's OUR MONEY being used by other states to pay for their transportation systems and stimulate their economies!

Source: Floridians For Better Transportation



Maurice Ferre



Bud Chiles

diverted from transportation trust funds? What kind of trust is that? What kind of system do we have that we have allowed to develop as a result of money and power?"

– Bud Chiles, candidate for Florida Governor

"I was reading one study recently that showed something like 17 percent of all the bridges in Florida were in inappropriate shape – either falling apart or they need significant maintenance. When I get to Washington, I will fight against special-interest earmarks. The President, when he was running, was promoting a national infrastructure bank, which I thought actually was a very good idea. It's a way for basically a bi-partisan group in Washington, in the Senate hopefully, to come up with important things we need – like repairing our roads, and keeping them safe ... I think if we had a national infra-

structure bank we could have some low-interest loans to provide, so we can go in and repair these broken bridges and renew the existing infrastructure that we have."

– Jeff Greene, candidate for U.S. Senate

"I think that if we tackle transportation the right way, if we are creative, and really, really get serious with about what we should be doing and become competitive, we're going to get a lot more jobs ... I know that on-average that we get a return on investment, for every dollar that is spent on transportation, it has a return of \$5 to \$7 – that's pretty broad. Some analysis done not long ago on ports, says we get \$25 for every dollar put in ... it's a great investment return."

– Bill McCollum, candidate for Florida Governor



An example of Disney World's world-class transportation system is the monorail that runs through the Contemporary Resort, which served as the venue for the 2010 FBT-TEAMFL Transportation Summit in July.



Jeff Greene



Bill McCollum

The Opening Session included comments from U.S. Senate candidates Ferre and Greene and Florida gubernatorial candidate Chiles. The evening's dinner reception provided an opportunity for attendees to network; for local officials to discuss transportation matters with representatives of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT); and an opportunity to have their photo taken with Disney World royalty Mickey and Minnie.

Closing Session

NOVEMBER ELECTIONS? HOW 'BOUT JULY ELECTIONS?

While Disney World royalty helped end the first day of the meeting, the acclaimed "Godmother of Florida Politics" began the final day of the Transportation Summit.

Marian Johnson, the vice president of political strategy with the Florida Chamber Political

Institute, has been involved in politics for more than 45 years and is known as perhaps Florida's most-seasoned political advisor. Her message quickly became more pertinent to the audience when she informed it that today, July 8, was not 116 days until the election; in all honesty it was less than 24 hours away, as absentee ballots began being mailed out July 9. "We don't realize how close we are to the election . . . we're used to the after-Labor Day type theme, it's not that way anymore," she said. "Absentee ballots go out tomorrow, and early voting starts in just 37 more days (mid-August), then we have the primary election on August 24 (and the general election on November 2)."

The 2010 election is historic, as it is the first time in 120 years that each of the four Florida Cabinet positions – governor, attorney general, chief financial officer and agriculture commissioner – will be filled by a non-incumbent in the same year.



Marian Johnson

Also to be considered in Florida's November general elections are: one U.S. Senate seat; 25 Congressional seats; 23 of 40 state senate seats; 120 state house seats; and nine, possibly 10, constitutional amendments

Johnson said there are still a lot of decisions to be made by Floridians, as late-June statewide polling showed that 80 percent of voters are still

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undecided about who they'll vote for in the elections for Florida's cabinet positions.

Not only are there a number of important political races in Florida going on at the state and federal levels, Johnson said there are a number of political views being expressed. Florida is no longer only a Blue or Red state, as there are two major political parties in Florida—Democrat and Republican—and 33 minor parties, and that doesn't include the 2.5-million Floridians registered as having “non-party affiliations.”

“This election, we aren't going in as a Red or Blue state,” Johnson said. “I don't know what color we're going to be now. What do you get when you mix red for Republicans, blue for Democrats and yellow for some other party? I don't know what color you get. But this year, we're not just a Purple state. It's not just a race between Republicans and Democrats, it's not

just that moderate level, it includes another party and that is a non-party affiliated candidate, which does make the color change.”

During her presentation, Johnson presented current polling data to questions such as:

- Is Florida headed in the right direction? 53 percent say no
- What are Floridians' main concerns? 31 percent say jobs and economy; 15 percent say education; 15 percent say the oil spill
- Who do you support for state governor? 30 percent for McCollum; 25 percent for Sink; 15 percent for Chiles; 30 percent undecided
- Do you support Amendment 4 Hometown Democracy? 33 percent yes; 27 percent no; 40 percent unsure

Despite the 2010 election being upon us, and the interest that people have in pre-election polling, Johnson tempered the statistics she shared, saying, “In politics, nothing is constant. We have changes all the time, and the only thing that really matters is what happens on Election Day—or actually what happens after the elections.”

Following Johnson's presentation of election data, McCollum, who was leading the Florida Chamber Political Institute's current gubernatorial poll, addressed the audience. Florida's attorney general used the forum to unveil his transportation plan for the state, which can be found at www.billmccollum.com/wp-content/uploads/Transportation-Infrastructure-Bill-McCollum-for-Governor.pdf.

Following McCollum's discussion on his transportation plan, which was the Summit's final presentation by a political candidate, attendees

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Participants in the Summit's Florida Transportation Update session (from left to right) were Florida Trucking Association's Matt Ubben, Florida Ports Council's Mike Rubin, Florida Rail Enterprise's Kevin Thibault and Florida Public Transportation Association's Wes Watson.

received an update on Florida's transit, high speed rail, ports and trucking.

Florida Transportation Update

- In 2008, there were more than 262 million transit trips in Florida
- What seems like a long way down the road is happening now, as outreach work began in July on Florida's high-speed program that is scheduled to carry its first passengers in 2015
- In 2008, there were 570,000 direct jobs in trades and logistics in Florida
- While the amount of heavy-truck travel on U.S. highways has increased 65 percent since 1988, the number of accidents involving large trucks has decreased by 24 percent

These were just some of the highlights provided in the Florida Transportation Update session by Florida Public Transportation Association's Wes Watson, Florida Rail Enterprise's Kevin Thibault, Florida Ports Council's Mike Rubin and Florida Trucking Association's Matt Ubben.

Just as political candidates spoke on the importance of transportation to the economy, Watson provided reasons why money should be invested into transportation infrastructure and not taken out. With more than 50,000 jobs sustained by public transportation in Florida, Watson talked about the need for more funding. He listed and discussed the economic benefits that public

transit provides – such as job creation, economic stimulation and transportation-oriented development. Watson said the economic benefit for every \$1 billion invested in public transportation is the creation of nearly 19,800 jobs.

Recently named the executive director of Florida Rail Enterprise and currently the interim director of Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, Thibault talked

about the potential that high-speed rail provides. He took the audience on a virtual trip along the Tampa-Orlando-Miami Corridor and showed how an extension from Orlando to Jacksonville would provide a high-speed gateway to Georgia and beyond. "That opens up a whole new potential for us," said the former FDOT assistant secretary for Engineering and Operations. "Now we have connectivity with other states, as now (passengers from) Georgia can come down from Atlanta easily.

"... Think about the potential of the job opportunities. You heard the attorney general (McCollum) speak earlier about the economic opportunities; think about the short-term and the long-term opportunities with this one project right here," Thibault added, as he discussed the possible Orlando to Jacksonville extension.

Those potential possibilities must begin first with the completion of the Tampa-Orlando portion of



Illustrations: Touchstone Architecture

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the aforementioned high-speed corridor. The Tampa-Orlando leg, which will be located along the Interstate 4 corridor, is planned to open in 2015.

With Florida seemingly dragging its feet in deepening its ports system, and with nearby out-of-state ports such as Savannah doing so, Rubin asked if this is the end of the road for Florida being a gateway to the world?

Looking at the improvements that neighboring states, such as Georgia and Alabama, are doing to their ports system, Rubin said, "That (exporting) market that we have been dominant in for years has the potential to shrink, and we're going to be giving jobs to other states that are building a trade and infrastructure network, that instead of taking money out of their transportation network are putting money into their transportation network . . . Our two neighbors (Alabama and Georgia) are putting money in, we're taking money out."

Looking at various port statistics in the state and region, Rubin said the world is watching how Florida is investing in its port system, especially with the current improvements to the Panama Canal. "If they see us taking money out of the transportation trust fund, they see that we're not serious about transportation . . . Where do we want to be?"

Ubben, who has been working with the Florida Trucking Association for three years, reminded the audience of the importance of trucking, saying, "If people want to buy it, if people want to eat it, if people want to live in it, it generally got there by a truck. We have a good story to tell."

Along with providing national and state statistics regarding trucking, Ubben spoke about the impact the current recession has had on the industry. "In past recessions you really looked at the trucking industry as a bell weather of whether or not we're going to move out of the recession, whether it would be quickly or not. But in this recession that really hasn't been the case . . . We have a host of family owned trucking companies in Florida that have been in business since the early 1930s, and only this year have they been forced to lay off drivers.

"So anything we can do to encourage building, and buying, we support. We're there to help move the economy."

Keynote

In his no-nonsense delivery to close the Transportation Summit, retired U.S. General Barry McCaffrey cut to the chase: "There hasn't been a single, coherent strategic thought in transportation in this country since Eisenhower.



General Barry McCaffrey

"For God's sake," he added, "here you have a product of pre-World War II of dreams of an interstate highway system that has a top-down architectural design that probably gets one third of it done in 15 years, and then it took us another 40 years to build out the remainder of the system. But it was put into place and it changed America because of it. Now, you and I stand in the middle of Florida and look at the future, we're looking at not only a lack of investment, we know our bridges are rusting, our levy systems are in peril, the highway maintenance is inadequate – though Florida does a better job than perhaps anywhere in the country – because we haven't had steady ways to pay for it."

McCaffrey, who served in the U.S. Army for 32 years and retired as a four-star general, currently sits on the Board of Directors of FTBA-member HNTB Corp., among other boards, serves as a NBC News analyst on the topics of national security and terrorism and runs a consulting firm in Arlington, Va. In his talk on "Infrastructure's Critical Role in Our Economic Recovery," McCaffrey listed seven engineering challenges facing the nation's infrastructure:

- Fix America's infrastructure
- Secure critical infrastructure
- Develop a robust domestic freight infrastructure
- Modernize the transportation infrastructure that supports international trade



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“We have to have intermodal transportation,” McCaffrey said. “You can’t put it on 18 wheelers for two miles then move it to something else. You have to have intermodal transportation, which means we need a strategic design . . .

“Step No. 1 is fix the ports and the waterways . . . we have a lot of work to do on ports and waterways. We have to be re-focused, not on a 50-year-old model, but where trade is coming from now . . . When speaking of freight and rail, we have shameful gaps in it . . . it takes longer to get through Chicago with your rail traffic than with the rest of your journey. We have to fix rail . . .”

McCaffrey sees a lot of positives with high-speed rail, and with Florida leading the way. “This exciting high-speed rail . . . we’re finally off the mark on it. It’s just shameful that we waited this long.” He said there are a number of places besides Florida which should be implementing high-speed rail, such as the Northeast Corridor, Chicago to Milwaukee, Los Angeles to San Francisco, and Los Angeles to Las Vegas. “The one I bet works the quickest is right here in Florida . . . going forward I think it’s important in my view that Florida demonstrates that high-speed can work . . .



The 2010 Summit, which attracted more than 200 attendees, provided the stage for both transportation advocates and political candidates to bear each other's "voice" when it comes to transportation.

“You have to fix the infrastructure, that’s what your area of expertise is . . .,” McCaffrey said in conclusion. “We have to get those arguments out into the public life, and that means you in this room – the experts. You have to write the letter to the editor, get on the Sunday talk shows locally, you have to get on talk radio and make these arguments. And I think when you do, the way our system works with adversarial politics, then your voice will be heard.”

For several days in July transportation leaders met with Florida’s political hopefuls; with both sides listening to each other – which was a start. Earlier this year transportation advocates spoke up about not taking money from the transportation trust fund and the government leaders

listened. This fall, Floridians also have the opportunity to speak, by voting – to mark an “X” by the name of their chosen government leaders.

Organizers of the 2010 Transportation Summit hope attendees make sure that that “X” symbolically serves as a crossroads between transportation and government, a crossroads between a better quality of life and the economy.



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