



T.R.I.P. - A Four Point Plan for Prosperity!

Status Quo is Latin for
“the mess we’re in.” -Ronald Reagan

With Florida’s economic condition continuing to worsen, NOW IS THE TIME to take swift, and meaningful action to help – both economically and from a transportation standpoint.

“Investing” in transportation projects – with a proven return of at least \$5.50 for every \$1 spent – is a responsible, tried and true way to help our economy, improve our quality of life, and position Florida for greater prosperity as we recover from the current economic downturn.

And, quite frankly, now’s the perfect time to do badly-needed transportation work because with the economic slowdown, we can get work done for bargain basement prices while also “stimulating” the economy in the process. Here’s what needs to be done.

1.) Temporarily suspend the normal bureaucratic rules and requirements that slows transportation construction and rehabilitation work.

After a natural disaster, federal and state governments frequently issue an Emergency Declaration and for a time discontinue “business as usual” in order to make needed repairs as quickly as possible. When Florida is facing a virtual state of *economic* emergency today, we must move much quicker to put currently planned transportation “investments” to work!

It’s time for Florida’s Leaders to demonstrate a true sense of “urgency” and act accordingly. Waiving the normal governmental red-tape associated with transportation projects today will get Florida going again faster tomorrow.

2.) Do “Ready-to-Go” Transportation Projects already planned for as an immediate Economic Stimulus with non-recurring dollars.

A 2006 amendment to Florida’s Constitution limits how many one-time dollars (non-recurring) can be spent on routine, year-to-year government expenses (recurring). Therefore, “non-recurring” dollars that formerly would’ve been used to fill budgetary holes each year can now only be used for one-time expenditures – like TRANSPORTATION. These “non-recurring” funds should be invested immediately in “ready-to-go” transportation projects.

Florida DOT has hundreds of projects that were in their Five Year Work Program in the past. Over the past 3 years, due to construction cost increases and reduced gas tax receipts, Florida DOT has deferred 268 projects statewide at a total cost of \$5.7 billion.

Knowing that these “ready-to-go” projects yield a \$7 economic return for every \$1 invested, imagine how much better Florida’s economy would be today had these projects been done as planned – about \$40 billion better. Clearly, now is the time to get going on these ready-to-go projects!

3.) Convene a Special Legislative Session to Stimulate Florida's Economy after the November Election.

A Special Legislative Session on the Budget focused entirely on funding cuts alone won't be enough. State Leaders also need to make targeted "investments" in areas – like TRANSPORTATION – that will quickly help stimulate our economy, spur job creation, and get Florida going again.

The Statutory Recommendations for Additional Transportation Revenue (#36) made by the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission (TBRC) to the Florida Legislature should be a logical starting place for debate. These modest, broad-based TBRC transportation "user fee" adjustments will generate an additional \$600 million in the first year alone, and \$2 billion more per year after ten years. To give our economy a shot in the arm now, these common sense TBRC transportation funding ideas – or something even better – should be enacted before the end of the year.

Far from any sort of New Deal "make work" program, additional dollars for transportation improvements will go directly to the private sector and help provide a legitimate boost to our ailing economy, while also preparing Florida to be more competitive in the global marketplace. Transportation-based economic stimulus activities have been receiving positive endorsements from economists and fiscal conservatives all across the country.

4.) Bring a New Focus to go with the New Funding that elevates "reducing congestion" to one of Florida DOT's top priorities.

To ensure that we don't end up with any "Bridges to Nowhere," Florida's Leaders should bring a new focus to go with the new funding that elevates "reducing congestion" to one of FDOT's top priorities. A new emphasis on "Congestion Reduction" will ensure that valuable and limited transportation funds are used for projects that actually reduce congestion – and meet the people's demand for relief from growing traffic congestion.

The Florida Chamber's New Cornerstone *Revisited* report (December 2007) indicated that:

- A.) Florida does a great job of maintaining our existing highway system ... but
- B.) has little money left for ADDING badly-needed new capacity!

Additional financial resources and a clear commitment to reducing congestion – after meeting essential safety requirements – is needed, and would likely shift investment decisions.

- o The reduction of congestion should be a primary goal.
- o Aggressively addressing congestion will require adding new highway lanes.
- o A commitment from the Governor, the Legislature, and the Florida Department of Transportation to reducing congestions is essential.
- o That commitment must be supported with goals and milestones that can be tracked.
- o Transportation investments – highways and transit alike – should be measured based on how many hours of delay can be reduced for each million dollars invested.

Transportation is literally the fuel that powers Florida's economic engine, and we're running out of "gas!" The fuel warning light is ON and it's clearly time for a fill-up. We can't solve our economic and transportation problems with budget cuts alone – we've got to increase our transportation investments and focus on relieving traffic congestion.

Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT)

www.bettertransportation.org

