



Florida Transportation Fact Sheet

March 2008 – SWFTI

Our future is in jeopardy and threatened by growing transportation gridlock. Transportation is the fuel that “drives” Florida’s economy, and makes our quality of life possible. And yet, like a thief quietly siphoning fuel from your car’s tank, growing traffic congestion threatens to bring us all to a screeching halt. NOW is the time to **Move Florida Forward!**

THE MESS WE’RE IN - As the fourth largest state, and still one of the fastest growing, Florida’s transportation challenges are incredibly daunting. Consider the following:

- Florida Lane Miles – how large its road network is – increasing at only 1.1% annually,
- Our Population is increasing at 2.3% annually,
- Our Highway Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) – how heavily our road network is used – increasing at 3.5% annually, and
- A 25-year Transportation Funding Shortfall of at least \$58 Billion – just to maintain today’s conditions!

FDOT’S LIMITATIONS - The Florida Department of Transportation budget, by law, is self adjusting. It cannot spend more revenue than it takes in. Consequently, over the past three years FDOT had to defer projects to make adjustments to its budget - the first two years due to construction cost increases, and this year due to a reduction in gas tax receipts. The Revenue Estimating Conference will be meeting again on March 3rd and it will be adjusting transportation revenues downward once again. This will result in FDOT deferring more projects all across Florida to adjust its budget.

FOCUS AND FUNDING - A new Florida transportation “recipe” for meeting the demands of the 21st Century is needed. This new comprehensive approach will require a smarter way of dealing with transportation and additional financial resources for transportation. We need a new focus on congestion relief and more sources of transportation funding.

FOCUS - Florida’s efforts to build upon the success of the Interstate Highway System with the development of the Florida Intrastate Highway System – and more recently the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) – are significant steps in the right direction. However, they alone are not enough. Over the next 25 years, **\$45 billion** more will be needed just to fund the highway component of the SIS.

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

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

FUNDING - Transportation is significantly under funded throughout the nation, but in a high growth state such as Florida, the long-term impacts can be staggering. The major source of revenue – the fuel tax – is stagnant and may actually be declining. Short-term, Florida needs a minimum of **\$2 billion** in new, critically-needed recurring money for the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF). And in the longer-term, new potential funding sources should be explored.

IDEAS PROPOSED TO THE TBRC (Taxation & Budget Reform Commission) -

- **Adjust and Index Motor Vehicle Registration Fees** (better known as tag fees): Florida tag fees are low compared to other states. Depending on the rate of increase, this could raise *\$700 million per year* by the fifth year.
- **Adjust and Index Title Fees**: This could raise up to *\$130 million per year* by the fifth year.
- **Indexing Remainder of State, Local and Federal tax**. Allows Florida to keep up with inflation. Would raise *\$520 million annually* after five years.
- **Equalizing Local Option Gas Tax**: Currently all counties may levy up to 12 cents in local option gas taxes. Establish the tax at 12 cents in all counties. This would raise an additional *\$400 million per year* by the fifth year.

Mileage Fee Instead of State Gas Tax: Recognizing the importance of transportation to Florida's future and given the need to add additional funding sources to the current list of options, the state should explore a direct user fee transportation funding mechanism whereby transportation consumers would be charged based upon a "per mile driven" formula.

Encourage Private Investment: We must find the additional transportation means necessary to maintain our quality of life, but government alone should not be the only answer. We also need to tap into the financial resources in the private sector. Public Private Partnerships (P3s) hold promise and should be encouraged – with appropriate safeguards firmly in place, and provided they A.) bring more financial resources to the table, and B.) provide additional capacity.

Continued Utilization of Toll Opportunities: Toll revenues now represent about two-thirds of all new lane miles built. The state should continue to encourage the responsible use of toll revenues to meet Florida's growing transportation needs.

- *HOT (High Occupancy Toll) Lanes* would "sell" excess capacity in existing HOV (High Occupant Vehicle) lanes to those willing to pay a toll to bypass the congested lanes on a freeway. This idea would provide motorists the option of buying "congestion insurance" to avoid being stuck in traffic and safely get where they want to go on time.
- *Express Bus Service* would enable buses to use the HOT lanes, avoid traffic congestion, and entice new customers by providing a time-saving alternative to driving on a freeway.
- *Truck Tollways* would add separate heavy-duty truck-only lanes to interstate routes that are major truck routes. Separated from general purpose lanes by a six-foot-high concrete barrier, truck toll lanes would provide truckers with a reduction in operating expenses due to decreased time spent stuck in traffic and safety improvements to the public by separating big trucks from the regular traffic flow.

Florida's transportation program is **running out of "gas"** – basically the "Fuel warning light" for Florida's transportation system is **ON** – and attention needs to be focused on this issue! We can't move Florida **FORWARD** if our transportation system is stuck in **REVERSE!**

Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT)
www.bettertransportation.org

