



Alachua County Board of County Commissioners

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County Manager

Legislative ID# 160199D

June 22, 2016

Tom Byron, Chair, I-75 Relief Task Force
Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS 19
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Chair Byron:

Thank you for providing Alachua County the opportunity to participate in the I-75 Relief Task Force process. The County Commission is pleased to have had our official Task Force representative, Commissioner Charles Chestnut, IV, and our staff, participate in this crucial infrastructure planning process. The County Commission has previously communicated our issues and concerns to the Task Force in letters dated February 2nd, 2016 and March 15th, 2016. Please consider this letter as the official position of the County Commission on the options that are currently under consideration by the Task Force based on the information that has been presented to date.

Alachua County supports the goals of the I-75 Relief Task Force aimed at improving safety and reliability along the I-75 corridor. To this end, Alachua County has written a letter of support for the 2016 Advanced Transportation Congestion Management Technology Deployment (ATCMTD) grant application submitted by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for the I-75 Integrated Corridor Congestion Relief Technology Deployment project. Additionally, the County along with the City of Gainesville and our Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) partners in Marion County have a pending application for TRIP funding of the SW 62nd Blvd extension within the City of Gainesville to help remove local traffic from the through lanes of I-75. The SW 62nd Blvd project is the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) for the Gainesville Urbanized Area's top ranked priority for Surface Transportation Funding in the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.

Alachua County's position is that the Task Force should recommend to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) that any transportation capacity, operational or safety deficiencies within the region's transportation system should be met by improvements to existing transportation corridors. New transportation corridors should only be considered as alternatives once significant improvements have been planned and programmed to existing corridors. In addition to limiting impacts to the region's ecological resources and aquifer recharge areas, focusing on existing corridors avoids the risk of the premature induced conversion of Alachua County's rural landscapes to urban uses. Additionally, any new limited access transportation corridors would likely fragment the existing transportation network within Alachua County and serve to separate communities and further limit mobility within the County. Alachua County continues to incur significant expense mitigating the local and regional transportation connectivity impacts of the original construction of I-75, with one overpass currently under construction and two additional grade-separated crossing improvements identified in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

In light of the above, the County does not believe sufficient data has been presented during this process to justify the continued study of the Northern or Central "Areas of Opportunity" at this time. These corridors should be considered "Alternatives Considered but Eliminated" in future alternatives analyses aimed at resolving the purpose and need under consideration by the Task Force.

The County feels strongly that any new freight and other transportation capacity needs between Northeast Florida and Tampa should be met through the expansion of freight through rail and passenger traffic through expansion of existing corridors. Multimodalism is a hallmark of Alachua County's approach to transportation and land use planning. Non-automotive modes of transportation should be the primary consideration of the FDOT in providing additional mobility within and between these two regions.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to participate in the I-75 Relief Task Force process. Alachua County looks forward to continuing our cooperation with the FDOT in the future in order to provide mobility and economic opportunity to the State's residents, visitors and industries while preserving the unique communities, natural resources and rural landscapes of North Central Florida.

Sincerely,



Robert Hutchinson, Chair
Alachua County Commission
Chr16.084

RH/JH/jh

- cc: Board of County Commissioners
Dr. Lee A. Niblock, County Manager
Michele Lieberman, County Attorney
- xc: Alachua County Legislative Delegation
Alachua County Municipalities
Initial I-75 Relief Study Area County Managers