

(Letter to the Editor - Op/Ed)

## ***HOW DOES THE PROPOSED BELTWAY FIT INTO TAMPA BAY'S REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN?***

Well, the train has left the station (don't we wish) on this proposed beltway with a thumbs up from Hillsborough County's BOCC last week. There are lots and lots of questions that need to be answered before this goes any further, and we as a community had better start asking them. Issues to consider:

1. How does the proposed beltway fit into Tampa Bay's regional transportation plan? ***What IS Tampa Bay's regional transportation plan?***
2. Who has the regional picture? DOT is doing its own regional plan; Tampa Bay Partnership is doing its own plan; Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council is doing its own; the CCC made up of Metropolitan Planning Organizations from around the region is doing its own; and the Florida Turnpike is doing its own. We don't need 5 different pictures – just one thoughtfully prepared.
3. Hillsborough County is the major hub of transportation planning and is a job destination for many - when is the BOCC going to get on board with a regional look at our transportation? **IT MEANS LOTS OF MATCHING DOLLARS TO OUR COUNTY IF WE ARE INVOLVED WITH REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS** (from the Federal, State, new growth management bill - DOT has a huge pot of money for regional initiatives.)
4. This beltway has NOT been tied to land use - we will thus incur unplanned and therefore, unprepared development exacerbating our sprawl issues. Atlanta here we come! Their beltway is now up to 12 lanes wide and development still choking it.
5. This beltway benefits the tourists who will get to avoid our Tampa Bay area, but will NOT directly help our Tampa Bay residents with gridlock .
6. Is a multi-modal component part of this beltway? If we don't start planning for multi-modal use (even if we don't use it right away), aren't we going to miss our opportunity? That is what happened to Atlanta - no multi-modal for express, BRT, light rail or any other modality was included.

We need answers to each and every one of these questions before we spend our tax dollars studying this beltway as our “fix it” proposal. This piece must fit into the larger transportation vision. Soooooo.....

**Attention Government in the Tampa Bay area:** On behalf of the communities within the Tampa Bay regional, we need you to make a decision today to explore a regional look at our transportation - PLEASE!

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