

COVID-19's Impact On State Budget Cast Doubt On Future Of Proposed Toll Roads

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Other than cleaner air, maybe another benefit from the virus will be an excuse to trash the toll road boondoggle.

These roads were not within the budget before the virus came, so now it would be even more difficult to justify putting a forever debt on future generations. Let us hope that enough dollar-minded people will rise up and be heard.

Read the complete article here [at WUSF News](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

jim.tatum@oursantaferiver.org

– A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back © Jim Tatum

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By Lynn Hatter • May 4, 2020

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Florida is still moving forward with plans to build three new toll roads. The projects have been met with local opposition since the legislature approved them in 2019. Now, a new front against the roads has opened. Given the new coronavirus pandemic and economic uncertainty, can the state still afford them?

“FDOT and task force members are carrying out a directive in law...so the question of whether or not we move forward with this process is not something the task force and FDOT can answer. We have to ask that question of the legislature and the governor,” said Kristin Dozier, a Leon County Commissioner and member of the Suncoast Corridor task force that’s examining a proposed route from Citrus County north to the Georgia-Florida border.

Dozier opposes the toll roads.

They were the creation of outgoing Senate President Bill Galvano and the Florida Transportation Builders Association. Galvano has maintained the roads are critical for hurricane evacuation and to ease road congestion, but they were never a part of the state

Department of Transportation's official plans.

The deadline for three task forces to make recommendations to the state on three new toll roads has been pushed to November 15th because of the new coronavirus. That's been the only concession made to the plans so far. Rural governments are growing increasingly uneasy about the impact the roads will have in their communities. There are concerns the roads will bypass local communities, taking with them valuable traffic. Levy County commissioners recently voted to oppose the two routes slated to cut through that county.

"I don't want to see Levy County become another Tampa Bay, and that's what's going to happen if we don't stand up and say no," said Levy commissioner Lilly Rooks.

Local officials are also concerned some of the early promises made—that the roads would bring utility upgrades and expanded broadband service, won't materialize because the legislature has not funded it...