



# Manatee Board of County Commission 2020 Federal Legislative Priority List

## I. Primary Legislative Request: Transportation

**Provide federal support to establish federal funding mechanisms benefitting the renewal, repair or replacement of the 301 DeSoto/U.S.41 DeSoto Bridge, SR 64 Manatee Ave Bridge to Anna Maria and the SR 684 Cortez Road Bridge to Anna Maria to alleviate traffic congestion.**

### Background:

The United States has approximately 47,000 structurally-deficient bridges that need significant repairs or replacement to address structural elements that are in poor condition. Many more bridges have outdated designs that contribute to accidents and traffic congestion. Counties own and operate 45 percent of public roads and almost 40 percent of the National Bridge Inventory. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates there is a \$123 billion bridge repair backlog, including \$17 billion worth of needed repairs and improvements to rural and local bridges located off the federal-aid highway network. Bridge projects, even smaller projects, often require a significant one-time source of funding. In the absence of sufficient federal funding, bridge projects often require new tolls on drivers.

### Advocacy for Existing Legislation:

1. Monitor and provide support for the **Bridge Investment Act**, S. 2310 by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH). This bill establishes a bridge investment program to provide financial assistance for projects to repair, improve, rehabilitate, or replace a bridge on a public road. The program includes small, medium, and large bridge projects and nationally or regionally significant projects involving more than \$500 million. The program's goals include improving the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of people and freight over bridges and the reduction of the number of bridges in need of significant repair. **The Department of Transportation may award grants for bridge investment projects**

**that meet specified criteria.** Establishes a standardized evaluation process for proposed projects and expected benefits, ensuring a non-partisan annual competition that efficiently allocates funding. Simplified project review is available for small projects. Enables states, **counties**, cities, metropolitan planning organizations, special purpose districts and public authorities with transportation function, Federal land management agencies, and Indian tribes to apply. Permits bundling of medium and small projects into a single application to accelerate repairs. Allows large projects to receive multi-year grant agreements.

2. **The Strengthen and Fortify Existing Bridges Act (SAFE Bridges Act) S.1707** by Senator Jeanne Shaheen, (D-NH) would address more than 47,000 structurally deficient bridges in the United States. The SAFE Bridges Act would establish a program to provide funding dedicated to repairing and replacing bridges in poor condition and would authorize an additional \$2.75 billion annually through 2025 to enable states to repair and replace bridges in poor condition, as well as maintain the surface coating and corrosion protection systems on eligible bridges. The bill uses a needs-based formula to provide states with funding levels according to their share of the nation's deficient bridges.
3. **The America's Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA) S. 2302, sponsored by Senator John Barrasso (R-WY)** authorizes \$287 billion in funding from the Highway Trust Fund for the nation's highway surface transportation programs over five years, representing a roughly 27 percent increase over the levels authorized in the previous legislation, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015, which is set to expire in September 2020. July 30, 2019 the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee unanimously approved a five-year surface transportation reauthorization measure spanning FY 2021 through 2025.
4. **Maintain the off-system bridge set-aside:** ATIA maintains the set-aside under the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) that mandates no less than 15 percent of a state's STBGP allocation be directed to the repair and rehabilitation of bridges off the federal-aid highways system. This set-aside is critical as it increases the amount and flexibility of STBGP dollars allocated to counties for the improvement of off-system bridges. Counties own and maintain 64 percent of the nation's 281,184 off-system bridges.
5. **NEW competitive grants for bridges:** The legislation authorizes more than \$6 billion over five years, including \$3.3 billion from the Highway Trust Fund, for a new competitive bridge grant program to address the growing backlog of bridges in poor conditions nationwide. Under this competitive program, states and counties may apply directly for funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). Counties own and operate 38 percent of the National Bridge Inventory, over 50 percent of which are considered "structurally deficient" and in need of repair.

#### Transportation Infrastructure Funding

1. Support financing mechanisms for Infrastructure Improvements such as a gasoline tax. The Federal Highway Trust fund finances the bulk of federal transportation projects. Fuel taxes fund approximately 87 Percent of the trust fund. With fuel tax revenues steadily declining due to fuel efficiencies, electric vehicles and technologies, trust fund monies are lost and/or supplemented with Congressional appropriations. The options to address this funding shortfall could include increasing the gas tax, additional appropriations of gas tax

revenues, public-private partnerships, toll roads, tire tax, vehicle registration tax, indexing local option fuel tax, etc.

2. Environment and Public Works (EPW) ranking member Tom Carper (D-Del.) and DeFazio support a gas tax increase “I believe the answer is indexing the gas and diesel tax by about a penny per gallon, which would be the first increase in 26 years, and capping the maximum annual increase at one and a half cents,” DeFazio told POLITICO Friday. “By bonding that over the next 15 years, we could get approximately \$500 billion in additional investment.”
3. Chairman DeFazio (D-Ore.) plans to pursue a surface transportation reauthorization as well as individual pieces of infrastructure legislation after infrastructure talks between Democratic Leadership and the White House broke down on May 22.
4. H.R. 2864, “The Rebuild America Act of 2019,” would increase the federal excise tax on gasoline and diesel fuel five cents a year for the next five years. After 2023, the federal gasoline tax would increase to 43.3 cents per gallon and the federal diesel tax would increase to 49.3 cents per gallon. After 2024, the motor fuels tax would be adjusted for inflation. The measure is supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Trucking Associations.
5. The Manatee County Metropolitan Planning Organization has approved Federal Legislative Transportation Priorities including federal revenue generating options on October 26, 2015. As a member of the MPO, the Manatee County Board of County Commission endorses this policy position (attached).

## II. Primary Legislative Request: Water Quality

1. **Piney Point Closure** – seek federal agency grant or appropriations opportunities to support the County request to enhance private, state and local funding including efforts to properly and safely dispose of water currently stored in the phospho gypsum stacks at the former Piney Point phosphate processing plant.
2. **Clam & Oyster Restoration:** Build support at USDA and in Congress for funding to support clam and oyster restoration efforts. Adult clams would be sourced from Florida’s impacted commercial shellfish farmers. Funding would include provision for research and evaluation of monitoring efforts in restoration areas by the Gulf Shellfish Institute. Request a mechanism for clams to be an approved means of environmental mitigation since the cost of planting clams is less than the cost of planting seagrass. Clam and oyster restoration efforts have the potential to enhance coastal ecosystems, combat increasing water quality challenges, and support industry growth and expand domestic seafood production.
3. **Red Tide Remediation and Prevention:** Support Federal efforts to provide more funding in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress (2019 – 2020)
  - a. H.R.414 – Protecting Local Communities from Harmful Algal Blooms Act Sponsor: Rep. Rooney, Francis [R-FL-19] (Introduced 01/09/2019) House Committee on

Transportation and Infrastructure *To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to include algal blooms in the definition of a major disaster, and for other purposes.*

- b. H.R.335 – South Florida Clean Coastal Waters Act of 2019 Sponsor: Rep. Mast, Brian J. [R-FL-18] (Introduced 01/08/2019) House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology; Natural Resources *To require the Inter-Agency Task Force on Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia to develop a plan for reducing, mitigating, and controlling harmful algal blooms and hypoxia in South Florida, and for other purposes.*
- c. S.10 – South Florida Clean Coastal Waters Act of 2019 Sponsor: Sen. Rubio, Marco [R-FL] (Introduced 01/03/2019) Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation *To require the Inter-Agency Task Force on Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia to develop a plan for reducing, mitigating, and controlling harmful algal blooms and hypoxia in South Florida, and for other purposes.*
- d. Address U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulation’s red tide and shellfish harvest quarantine and closures.
- e. Wild and Scenic Rivers Act: The Little Manatee River, with its rare ecosystems and pristine wetlands, is one of the most beautiful natural areas of a county full of scenic treasures. The river has been designated an Outstanding Florida Water, a special area with the most stringent restrictions in place to protect water quality. A small portion of the mainstem Little Manatee River in Manatee County provides water for a cooling pond for a power plant owned and operated by Florida Power & Light (FPL). Given the importance of this segment to FPL’s operations and ability to provide reliable energy to the citizens of Manatee County, Congressman Buchanan was asked to exclude this segment of the Little Manatee River adjacent to FPL’s property from the proposed designation.

### **III. Primary Legislative Request: Economic Development:**

1. **Washington Park Redevelopment:** Federal funding is being requested for continued operation and maintenance of the Manatee Harbor entrance channel and Tampa Bay main channel. Specific aspects of this request include increasing storage capacity at the Port Manatee Dredged Material Management Area (DMMA), which has limited capacity to support future dredging events without increasing capacity by offloading material from the DMMA. Collaboration between the Port, the Corps of Engineers, and Manatee County has resulted in a proposed solution to offload material from the Port Manatee DMMA to the Manatee County owned, Washington Park Borrow Pit to use dredge material to restore a recreational amenity to a historically underserved local community.
2. **Port Manatee Legislative Priorities:** Continue to provide support in Washington, DC with the Florida delegation and relevant Committee and Subcommittee Chairmen for Port Manatee’s priorities including:
  - a. Advocate for full use of the Harbor Maintenance Tax collected from shippers for the sole purpose of federal navigation channel maintenance.

- b. Advocate for inclusion of funds in Energy and Water Development Appropriations bills and subsequent Administration Work Plan for the maintenance of Tampa Ship Channel and the Manatee Harbor Channel, the Federal Assumption of maintenance and for the full reimbursement of the construction of the South Channel.
- c. Advocate to increase the USDHS Port Security Grant funding to the \$400 million level.

#### **IV. General Legislative Issues directly benefiting Manatee County Government programs and opportunities:**

1. **Support Senator Marco Rubio's bill, S. 2163, "The Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act,"** to establish a bipartisan commission consisting of 19 members to include Members of Congress, federal agency experts, and subject matter experts to investigate potential civil rights violations affecting black males and study the disparities experienced by both black men and boys. This data will then allow the Commission to recommend policies to improve or augment existing government programs. The Commission will also make recommendations related to the social and current conditions facing black men and boys based on the annual report the Commission will produce. We hope this annual report will be able to provide guidance for federal policymakers on applicable strategies to reduce racial disparities in a variety of key fields including, but not limited to, education and criminal justice. Letters for Florida's Congressional Delegation in support of the Senator Rubio's bill were approved by the Board of County Commissioners on August 6, 2019
2. H. R. 1396 ***Hidden Figures Congressional Gold Medal Act*** to award the Congressional Gold Medals to Katherine Johnson and Dr. Christine Darden, to posthumously award Congressional Gold Medals to Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson, and to award a Congressional Gold Medal to honor all of the women who contributed to the success of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration during the Space Race working as computers, mathematicians, and engineers at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and its precursor organization, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), from the 1930s to the 1970s. Letters to Florida's Congressional Delegation requesting their support of H.R. 1396 were approved on July 29, 2019.
3. **Monitor USDA Regulations on puppy mills** and legislation and report back to the Board of County Commissioners.
4. Respond to news reports of "flesh eating bacteria" and other issues associated with Harmful Algae Blooms (HAB).
5. **Monitor RESTORE Act implementation and infrastructure investment proposals** leveraging grants from the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, and USEPA.