

Growth Management & Transportation

The current **growth management** landscape is unlike any other in recent memory. Any consideration of policies for the development industry must be made in the shadow of the Hometown Democracy amendment's presence on the November 2010 ballot. With the outcome of Amendment 4 pending, neither the House nor Senate is expected to put forth an ambitious growth management agenda, despite the upcoming votes in both chambers on the survival or sunset of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) as mandated by statute. That vote had been viewed by the development industry and Legislature alike as an opportunity to significantly modify or do away with the DCA; however, major structural changes to the agency and the laws it administers seem highly unlikely now.

In the area of **transportation**, AIF strongly believes that encouraging the state to invest in road building is one of the strongest economic development drivers available to the Florida Legislature.

- According to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), for every \$1 spent on road construction, \$7 is returned to the economy.
- Conversely, efforts to raid these transportation trust fund dollars eliminate new opportunities for companies to grow and employ more Floridians.
- AIF encourages legislators to return their focus to road development and construction as a key mechanism to kick-start the lagging economy.

The recent approval of landmark rail legislation during a special session in December creating a rail transit system will undoubtedly be a boon for the economy. The construction of the SunRail project and the award of stimulus funds for High Speed Rail have been well received by legislators and economic development professionals.

- Legislators must be careful not to achieve the goals established by this new rail transit system at the expense of FDOT's existing 5-year work program, which funds transportation projects across the state.
- Funding for road projects must be protected if we want our economy to turn around.

AIF will concentrate on the following growth management and transportation issues for the 2010 Legislative Session:



Community Renewal Act

In the event 2009's SB 360 is found unconstitutional, AIF SUPPORTS the addition of language which clarifies that a developer still has the opportunity to re-enter the process without penalty. Last year's landmark growth management legislation (SB 360), known as the "Community Renewal Act," offered larger developments the option of avoiding the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process in certain densely populated areas, which the legislation defined. It also allowed those projects to abandon the process if they had already begun. Now, as a result of ongoing litigation, many think those provisions are in danger of being repealed; therefore, throwing ongoing projects into a regulatory nightmare.

Expedited Permitting

AIF strongly encourages the Legislature to examine additional measures that expedite permitting time lines at agencies, as well as requests for comprehensive plan amendments. Time is money to businesses and too often permitting agencies stifle efforts to grow or expand by allowing applications to flounder while businesses continue to absorb the associated carrying costs. This is often crippling to a business and serves no role in a state like Florida, which is so heavily dependent on growth. Legislators must address this in the upcoming session.

Regional Planning Councils

The Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council (RPC) has proposed a five-year pilot program whereby

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it would take over the functions of the DCA in their region. The RPC claims such a delegation would cut out state involvement in regional projects as well as facilitate quicker plan reviews. On the other hand, DCA says the state review is needed for consistency and that a regional final review would likely be subject to “log rolling” within the Council (one local government Council member’s vote exchanged for another’s vote on a different issue). Another underlying issue is where the RPC would get the funding needed for the additional workload. Would it be from increased fees to developers, taking some of DCA’s funding, or perhaps both?

Historically, the development community has had its differences with the RPCs as a whole and any transfer of additional authority to one or more would require close scrutiny. **AIF will monitor the progress of this proposal, but will oppose any potential outcome that subjects the industry to the inconsistencies of the past where those RPCs were virtually independent in their requirements and regulation.**

Transportation Concurrence

AIF believes legislators should address some of the shortcomings associated with 2009’s SB 360 and transportation concurrence. Much discussion has taken place in the Legislature over provisions in SB 360 that removed many developments from state transportation concurrence, but not from local government ordinances requiring similar concurrence provisions.



Rep. Lake Ray (R-Jacksonville) addresses AIF members in Jacksonville.

Transportation Trust Fund

AIF OPPOSES any raids from the State Transportation Trust Fund for non-transportation expenditures. Florida’s state budget should emphasize the advancement of all construction-ready road projects to maximize the impact of transportation spending as an economic stimulus.

Tag and Title Fees

AIF OPPOSES any additional fee or tax increases on commercial vehicles and will work on efforts to return all the tag and title fee increases from the 2009 session to the State Transportation Trust Fund. As advocated by AIF last year, these new fee increases should go to fund existing transportation projects that are construction-ready and in FDOT’s five-year work program.

Commercial Truck Weights

AIF SUPPORTS raising the weight limit on commercial trucks using state and local roadways to weight limits that are equal to those of our surrounding states. As the need to move goods throughout our country continues to grow, increased fuel and operational costs combined with the need to lower emissions have placed new burdens on trucking companies. AIF believes that increased truck weight limits will have a positive effect for the Florida business community by reducing the shipping costs for moving goods, and aligning Florida’s current weight limits with those of our surrounding southern states.

Auxiliary Power Units

AIF SUPPORTS legislation exempting Auxiliary Power Units (APUs) from commercial truck weight restrictions. The use of APUs allows commercial truckers to mitigate the effects of long idling times. APUs reduce fuel consumption by using about half of the fuel as regular diesel-engine idling. They improve air quality and reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere.

AIF Lobby Team Members Assigned to the Area of Growth Management & Transportation:

Chris Dudley – Transportation

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