

Special Legislative Session *Highlighting* Environmental/Transportation Issues

Date of Event: January 5 – 16, 2009 **Submitted by:** Charles Lee, Florida Audubon Society

A. Summary of Event:

- Special session of the Legislature to address budget shortfall of \$2.3 billion
- Impact on Environmental/Transportation Issues

B. Key Issues Identified:

- During the Special Session, the House and Senate approved line items in the budget reduction bill, which removed funding for the initiation of the \$300 million 2008-2009 bond series of the "Florida Forever" land acquisition program
- The actual impact to the budget of this item in 2008-2009 was only \$4.2 million in initial debt service. Governor Crist vetoed this line item, in effect restoring the \$4.2 million so that the Department of Environmental Protection could proceed to issue the bonds. A major factor influencing the Governor's action was that existing contracts for purchase of lands had already been signed which would have to be cancelled if the funding were removed
- Some of those contracts relate to land purchases in Central Florida important to the completion of the Wekiva Parkway

Special Legislative Session *Highlighting* Transportation Issues

Date of Event: January 5 – 16, 2009

Submitted By: Floridians for Better Transportation

A. Summary of Event:

- Special session of the Legislature to address budget shortfall of \$2.3 billion
- Impact on Transportation

B. Key Issues Identified:

- During the Special Session, the Florida House proposed diverting \$200 million in vitally important state transportation funding. These were gas tax dollars – a user fee – that should only be used for transportation purposes. Fortunately, the Florida Senate's position prevailed in conference and no funding was ultimately diverted. However, there is a concern that the House intends to divert \$400 million in the Regular Session beginning in March 2009
- At the same time, the Florida House is contemplating decreasing Florida's level of transportation funding. The U.S. Congress is working on a Federal Economic Stimulus that viewed ADDITIONAL federal transportation dollars as an essential ingredient in "stimulating" our economy
- At the point of this summary the Economic Stimulus bill is pending, but is expected to impact state and regional transportation priorities

C. Next Steps:

- Work to increase dollars devoted to transportation in the Federal Economic Stimulus package
- Fully, quickly, and wisely use ALL of the additional Federal Transportation Funding Florida does receive...and then seek to gather more from any subsequent redistribution. (Florida DOT has \$7 billion worth of "ready-to-go" transportation projects!)
- Protect existing state transportation funding during the 2009 Regular Legislative Session (...a provision in the House Economic Stimulus bill in D.C. would reduce any state's transportation funding allocation by an equal dollar amount should that state SHIFT funds away from transportation purposes!)
- Encourage Governor Crist and the Florida Legislature to consider additional transportation revenues that could be generated by modest increases in Florida's tag and title fees—which haven't been adjusted in over 25 years. By the 3rd year, user fee adjustments could produce an extra \$1 billion for transportation
- Every \$1 invested in transportation generates a \$5.60 economic benefit, and every \$1 billion invested in transportation creates 28,000 jobs