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Other Views

Support 'Tampa Bay Express'

The "Tampa Bay Express" project being proposed by the Florida Department of Transportation will be a critical link to both the continued enhancement of the region's transportation network and the ability for Port Tampa Bay tenants and customers to move cargo efficiently to market.



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This project calls for the addition of express lanes on interstates 4 and 275, allowing for traffic to flow quicker and smoother.

And, in today's world of business, time *is* money. The cost of doing business surges if there is inadequate investment in our

surface transportation system. Traffic congestion across the country is costing Americans \$124 billion in direct and indirect losses. This number is expected to rise to \$186 billion by 2030. All this causes American industry to underperform.

Florida's Department of Transportation understands the impact an inefficient transportation system can have on the economy. FDOT has a long record of success, as well as being a tremendous strategic partner of Port Tampa Bay. In January 2014, FDOT finished construction of the I-4/Selmon Expressway Connector, a project that has fundamentally improved traffic flow in and out of Port Tampa Bay, and throughout our downtown and Ybor City corridors.

Like the connector, the Tampa Bay Express project is a legacy project that will deliver gener-

ational benefits. In fact, by alleviating traffic congestion along key stretches of interstate leading to the I-4/Selmon Expressway Connector, it will help to optimize the many benefits of the connector.

Port Tampa Bay is West-Central Florida's largest economic engine, generating \$15 billion in annual economic impact and supporting in some fashion over 80,000 jobs. Today, cargo is the currency of the world, and the port's ability to expand its economic contribution to our region depends significantly on the efficient movement of products between the port and the marketplace. The regional roadway network, already nearing capacity at some points, will be a significant limiting factor to attracting new cargo and businesses to the port if major improvements to our system are not made.

A powerful funding package for the project is being developed by FDOT, and unified local support for the project is critical to the project moving forward. Other regions in the state are competing for these dollars, and this funding will be diverted to projects in other parts of Florida without demonstrated commitment to this investment from throughout our community.

The community needs to be unified in its support for the Tampa Bay Express project, knowing that the economy will be negatively impacted if the project does not move forward.

Paul Anderson is the president and CEO of Port Tampa Bay.