

Fast lanes facing backlash | July 5

Upgrade is key to economy

The “Tampa Bay Express” project proposed by the Florida Department of Transportation will be critical to both the enhancement of the region’s transportation network and the ability of Port Tampa Bay tenants and customers to move cargo efficiently to market. This project calls for the addition of express lanes on Interstates 4 and 275, allowing for traffic to flow quicker and smoother.

In business, time is money. Traffic congestion across the country costs Americans \$124 billion in direct and indirect losses. This number is expected to rise to \$186 billion by 2030. All of which causes American industry to underperform.

The FDOT understands the impact that an inefficient transportation system can have on the economy. The department has a long record of success, as well as being a valuable strategic partner of Port Tampa Bay. In January 2014, the FDOT finished construction of the I-4/Selmon Expressway Connector, a project that has fundamentally improved traffic flow in an out of Port Tampa Bay. Like the I-4/Selmon Expressway Connector, the “Tampa Bay Express” project is a legacy project that will deliver generational benefits.

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. The regional roadway network is already nearing capacity, presenting a significant limiting factor in attracting new cargo and businesses to the port if major improvements to our system are not made.

The community needs to be unified in its support for the “Tampa Bay Express” project, recog-

nizing that the economic vitality of the Tampa Bay region will be negatively impacted if the project does not move forward.

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