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## Tampa Bay Express Lanes Project Makes National List of Highway Boondoggles, Wastes \$3.3 Billion

### New Report Identifies 12 of the Worst Highway Projects Across the Country

A new study by the United States Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) Education Fund and Frontier Group identifies 12 of the most wasteful highway expansion projects across the country, slated to collectively cost at least \$24 billion. Making the list of national highway boondoggles is the proposed Tampa Bay Express Lanes (TBX) Project, expected to cost \$3.3 billion. The new study details how despite America's massive repair and maintenance backlog, and in defiance of America's changing transportation needs, state governments across the country continue to spend billions each year on new and wider highways. The study shows how some of these highway projects are outright boondoggles.

"Florida continues to prioritize wasteful highway expansion projects that fail to effectively address congestion while under-investing in critical transit services that the community is demanding," said Bill Newton, director of FCAN Foundation which released the report in Tampa. "Moving along with this project would destroy an important community center, dozens of homes, and increase pollution in the area," he noted.

According to the new study, state officials *admit* that a decades-old plan to construct toll lanes would not solve the region's problems with congestion, while displacing critical community job-training and recreational facilities.

"TBX is a disastrous travesty that will cost this community billions, not provide solutions or relieve congestion, and further taxes residents via variable rate toll lanes," said Chris Vela, president of Sunshine Citizens. "There are more pressing transportation needs all over Hillsborough County. How many existing roads could be fixed or finished?"

“America’s long-term travel needs are changing, especially among [Millennials](#), who are driving fewer miles, getting driver licenses in fewer numbers, and expressing greater preferences to live in areas where they do not need to use a car often,” said Tony Dutzik, Senior Policy Analyst at Frontier GroupN. “Despite the fact that Millennials are the nation’s largest generation, and the unquestioned consumers of tomorrow’s transportation system, Florida is failing to adequately respond to these changing trends.” he added.

The study recommends that states:

1. Adopt fix-it-first policies that reorient transportation funding away from highway expansion and toward repair of existing roads and bridges;
2. Invest in transportation solutions that reduce the need for costly and disruptive highway expansion projects by improving and expanding public transit, biking, and walking options;
3. Give priority to funding transportation projects that reduce the number of vehicle-miles people travel each year, thereby also reducing air pollution, carbon emissions, and future road repair and maintenance needs;
4. Include future maintenance costs, a range of potential future housing and transportation trends, and the availability of new transportation options such as car-sharing, bike-sharing, ride-sharing, and transit in transportation project selection decisions;
5. Invest in research and data collection to better track, and more aptly react, to ongoing shifts in how people travel.

The report also looks back at the [11 highway boondoggles identified last year](#). Since the original report came out, several states have revisited plans to expand and build new highways, realizing that the money could be more wisely spent elsewhere. For example, the Trinity Parkway project in Dallas has been revised from a six-lane road to a more limited 4-lane road, and the original proposal to create a double-decker tunnel for I-94 in Milwaukee has been postponed for the foreseeable future. Similarly, the Illiana Expressway, a proposed \$1.3 billion to \$2.8 billion toll-way intended to stretch from I-55 in Illinois to I-65 in Indiana, has been placed on indefinite hold.

“Investing so heavily in new and wider highways at a time when so much of our existing infrastructure is in terrible disrepair is akin to putting an extension on your house while the roof is leaking. It just doesn’t make any sense,” said Newton of FCAN Foundation.

The report can be read at [www.fcan.org/foundation](http://www.fcan.org/foundation).

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Florida Consumer Action Network Foundation (FCAN Foundation) is a grassroots organization that enables citizens to have in informed voice in public policy by organizing and educating in areas where consumer voices are underrepresented including utilities, health care, insurance, tax and budget issues, the environment, and financial services. FCAN Foundation is part of the Public Interest Network, which includes the Frontier Group.