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AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Kevin J. Thibault  
Florida Department of Transportation  
605 Suwannee St., MS 54  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

October 6, 2020

**RE: Comments on Toll Roads – No Build Option**

Dear Mr. Thibault:

Please accept the following comments concerning the three proposed toll roads (Central-Southwest, Northern Turnpike and Suncoast Connector). As a non-partisan, non-profit organization, the Florida Wildlife Federation strongly opposes the construction of these roads as they will be environmentally destructive and are financially untenable.

Both Florida TaxWatch and Cornell Consulting have clearly evidenced the extravagant cost of these roads to Florida's taxpayers, which would likely be over \$10 billion dollars. Based on the revenue from existing toll roads in Florida, there is little hope this expense would be recouped in the future. Moreover, the need for these roads have not been identified by transportation planners and they were not included in any of the major FDOT transportation plans. As such, FDOT itself did not deem these roadways as necessary.

Construction of these roads would undoubtedly bring sprawl to the remaining rural parts of the peninsula. By expanding urban areas to what is still rural Florida, we will not only lose the ability for citizens to enjoy country life, but as importantly, these roads will increase the pressure on our limited water resources. As to wildlife and wildlands, these roads will destroy habitat and increase mortality for the rare Florida panther and our black bear, as well as a plethora of other native species.

Simply put, the rationale for the toll roads does not make sense. If there really is a need to increase the footprint of highways, we should expand existing ones. Broadband access does not require road construction; using aerial fiber optic cables is much less expensive. As to hurricane safety, citizens should not be out on these proposed toll roads but sheltering in their own homes during the storm. Moreover, these roads will destroy over 50,000 acres of both natural and agricultural lands, and will isolate existing public lands and fragment important wildlife habitat.

Lastly, and just as importantly, the majority of Floridians who have voiced their opinions have opposed construction.

In light of the above, please include and approve no build options for all three of these roadways. With the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not the time to expend limited resources on unneeded projects that will negatively impact our natural resources and our quality of life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Preston T. Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Preston T. Robertson  
President and CEO