

FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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May 31, 2006

Honorable William Hoeweler
United States District Court
Southern District of Florida
301 North Miami Avenue
Miami, Florida 33128

Dear Judge Hoeweler:

On March 22, 2006, you issued an opinion (Case #03-23427-CIV-Hoeweler) challenging the nine permits issued by the U.S. Corps of Engineers which allow the mining of limestone in the Lake Belt region of South Florida. The limestone aggregate produced from these mines is a major component of the road building material throughout the state of Florida. If the court restricts mining activities in this region during the 18 months it is estimated for the U.S. Corps of Engineers to review the permits, the impact on the economy of Florida will be devastating.

Prior to making any decision, the Court needs to fully comprehend the impact that any disruption in mining activities will have on the transportation building industry and the construction industry in general. Over the past 40 years, approximately 50 percent of the aggregate used by the Department of Transportation in the development of the state's transportation infrastructure has come from the Lake Belt mines. Eliminating this source of aggregate will have an immediate, drastic, and long lasting impact on the Department's ability to maintain and improve that infrastructure and will delay and, in some instances, cause the cancellation of on-going and future road construction projects.

The Florida Transportation Commission is a Governor appointed policy board responsible for providing oversight of the Department of Transportation and leadership on statewide transportation issues. In this capacity, we strongly encourage the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida to do what is right for the people and the economy of Florida by allowing mining activities to continue during the permit review process. Enclosed is a resolution signed by every member stating the position of the Florida Transportation Commission on this issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Holton".

James Holton, Chairman
Florida Transportation Commission