

FLORIDIANS FOR BETTER



TRANSPORTATION

Florida's Transportation Needs And Lake Belt Mining

Due to a March Miami-Dade federal court ruling, the supply of limestone rock so important to meeting Florida's growing transportation needs is in serious jeopardy. On Tuesday, June 13th, this federal court will begin hearing arguments on this issue. The court's ultimate decisions could have a dramatic impact on Florida's transportation future – and our state's economy.

Simply put, a shut-down or reduction of limestone rock production would cripple the state's ongoing efforts to keep Florida moving, and risk bringing Florida's booming economy to a screeching halt. Instead of shutting down Lake Belt mining, Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT) thinks we should **"Keep Florida Rockin!"** (www.KeepFloridaRockin.org) in order to keep Florida's transportation system "rollin!"

On March 22, 2006, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, Miami Division, decided to remand environmental studies related to the Lake Belt plan back to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If the court ultimately decides to restrict Lake Belt mining for 18 months while the federal agencies redo environmental studies used to issue mining permits, much of Florida could face unimaginable traffic gridlock.

According to materials produced by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the transportation results of a shut-down in Lake Belt mining would be dramatic and disastrous. FDOT's information shows that the percentage of DOT projects halted by a shut-down would be:

- 100% in all of Southeast Florida,
- 50-75% in Southwest Florida and the Tampa Bay Region, and
- 25-50% in Central Florida and Northeast Florida.

In other words, a halt to mining in the Miami-Dade Lake Belt would:

1. shut down road construction and/or improvements in most of Florida,
2. drive up construction costs in those few areas still able to get "aggregate",
3. bring much of the housing construction industry in Florida to a standstill, and
4. quite possibly throw Florida's thriving economy into a recession.

That's because nearly half of the limestone rock used to build roads in Florida comes from the Miami-Dade Lake Belt area.

And Florida's transportation system is already facing enormous challenges. Consider the following sobering facts:

A.) Due to rising transportation construction costs, FDOT has deferred some 62 projects that were in the Five Year Work Program at a cost of about \$1 billion,

B.) Florida has a well-documented transportation funding shortfall -- or "pothole" -- over the next ten years and needs additional funding of at least \$23 billion ... just to maintain today's highway conditions,

C.) Florida's population grows by a net daily average of 1,060 people (*according to the April issue of Florida Trend magazine*) and

- Daily in-migration is: 1,890
- Daily out-migration is: - 945
- Daily births minus deaths is: + 115
- For an average daily population growth of: 1,060

D.) Our state's population is increasing at the phenomenal rate of 2.3% annually, however, the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by cars, trucks, and SUVs on our highways is increasing at 5.4% -- more than double our population!

Given all these factors, it would seem imprudent to drive transportation construction costs HIGHER -- or worse yet, dramatically reduce or eliminate the supply of limestone -- throughout most of Florida by imposing a shut-down on the mining of rock in Miami-Dade.

Ironically, in a March survey of 500 registered Miami-Dade voters, TRAFFIC was the number one worry at 26% -- nearly triple the # 2 issue, education at 9%!

Clearly, we need to **"Keep Florida Rockin!"** Any court action resulting in increased transportation construction costs or a dramatic reduction in the supply of materials would have the exact OPPOSITE effect.

Douglas J. Callaway
President
Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT)
Tallahassee, Florida
850-521-1256-office
850-510-8985-cell
fbt@flchamber.com
www.bettertransportation.org

Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT) is a statewide business and transportation association dedicated to making transportation safer and more efficient in Florida. FBT has a diverse membership of 180 businesses, organizations, and individuals, including the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Florida Transportation Builders Association, Publix Super Markets, SunTrust Bank, the Florida Institute of Consulting Engineers, the Florida Public Transportation Association, the Florida Ports Council, the Florida MPO Advisory Council, the Florida Airports Council, and numerous local businesses, Chambers of Commerce, MPOs, and transit providers all across the Sunshine State.