



# Everglades Coalition

1000 Friends of Florida  
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation  
Audubon Florida  
Audubon of Southwest Florida  
Audubon of the Western Everglades  
Audubon Society of the Everglades  
Backcountry Fly Fishers of Naples  
Bullsugar Alliance  
Calusa Waterkeeper  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Clean Water Action  
Conservancy of Southwest Florida  
Defenders of Wildlife  
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society  
Earthjustice  
Environment Florida  
Everglades Foundation  
Everglades Law Center  
Everglades Trust  
Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund  
Florida Defenders of the Environment  
Florida Keys Environmental Fund  
Florida Native Plant Society  
Florida Oceanographic Society  
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall  
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge  
Friends of the Everglades  
Hendry-Glades Audubon Society  
International Dark-Sky Association,  
FL Chapter  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Izaak Walton League Florida Division  
Izaak Walton League Florida Keys Chapter  
Izaak Walton League Mangrove Chapter  
Lake Worth Waterkeeper  
Last Stand  
League of Women Voters of Florida  
Martin County Conservation Alliance  
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition  
Miami Waterkeeper  
National Audubon Society  
National Parks Conservation Association  
National Wildlife Refuge Association  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
North Carolina Outward Bound School  
Ocean Research & Conservation Association  
Reef Relief  
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation  
Save It Now, Glades!  
Sierra Club  
Sierra Club Florida Chapter  
Sierra Club Broward Group  
Sierra Club Calusa Group  
Sierra Club Central Florida Group  
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group  
Sierra Club Miami Group  
Snook and Gamefish Foundation  
South Florida Audubon Society  
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy  
The Florida Wildlife Federation  
The Institute for Regional Conservation  
The National Wildlife Federation  
The Urban Environment League of  
Greater Miami  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation  
Partnership  
Tropical Audubon Society

November 1, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
U.S. Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
United States

Re: Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act Funding Request for Tamiami Trail

Dear Secretary Chao:

On behalf of the 62 member organizations of the Everglades Coalition committed to the protection and restoration of America’s Everglades, we write in support of Everglades National Park’s request for \$50M for the Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase 2 project. If allocated, these FAST Act funds would allow for the completion of roadway improvements and installation of conveyance structures critical to the health of Everglades National Park and the Greater Everglades ecosystem.

Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41/SR 90) is a National Scenic Byway that connects Tampa to Miami. It forms a portion of the northern boundary of Everglades National Park and provides access to one of the most popular areas of the park – Shark Valley and the iconic observation tower. The road is the only way to access the Big Cypress National Preserve Visitor Center and Headquarters and important tribal lands. It provides a hurricane evacuation route and is the alternate route for transit across South Florida when I-75 (“Alligator Alley”) is closed to traffic due to wildfires.

Since the 1920s, Tamiami Trail has acted as a dam, impeding the natural north-south flow of water through the Everglades. As a result, the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay are starved of vital water, causing deterioration of the park’s wading bird and wildlife habitat and its unique ridge and slough landscape. Meanwhile, areas north of the road are drowning with too much flow. This includes the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) that are home to deer and other wildlife on tree island habitat.

In 1989, Congress recognized the need for restorative action and authorized the Modified Water Deliveries project, which included bridging one mile of Tamiami Trail to reconnect the north-south flow of water that had been cut off for decades. However, more than twenty years elapsed before ground was broken on construction of that bridge. Fortunately, through a successful partnership between the National Park Service and the State of Florida – facilitated by \$20M from the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program from the U.S. Department of Transportation– recent progress has been much more rapid. The first one-mile bridge was completed in March 2013, and the next section of 2.6 miles of bridging is in the final phase of construction today. Together these bridge sections will rehydrate the Southern Everglades and deliver life-saving flow to the waters of the Florida Keys, while simultaneously relieving dangerous high-water levels in the north.

*Committed to full protection and restoration of America’s Everglades*

The remaining portion of the project – Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase 2 – includes additional roadway improvements imperative to public safety, as well as the installation of conveyance structures to ensure that new water flow can be delivered to the Southern Everglades in the most beneficial flow path. Particularly as the population increases on both sides of the state, this transportation corridor needs to remain safe while protecting the integrity of adjacent resources. The bridging project will widen and repave a portion of the road, making it safer for traffic, and it will reduce incidents of hitting animals as they cross between the Water Conservation Areas and Everglades National Park. The success of this critical final project phase will maximize the success of all previous elements.

We believe that Tamiami Trail would be a competitive project to receive funding through the FAST Act's Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program, which was designed to provide grants to "construct, reconstruct, and rehabilitate nationally-significant projects on Federal or tribal lands." The overall goal of the FAST Act to ensure that the nation's roadways are improved to promote safety, protect the environment, and reduce delays in project delivery would be well served by funding Tamiami Trail.

America's Everglades is one of the world's most diverse and productive wetlands and a tremendous economic generator for Florida. It is recognized as a World Heritage Site, an International Biosphere Reserve, and a Wetland of International Importance. An economic study by Mather Economics found that for every \$1 invested in restoring the Everglades, which includes bridging Tamiami Trail, there is at least a \$4 return in economic benefits related to real estate, groundwater purification, park visitation, and recreational uses such as birding, hunting, and fishing. Funding to maintain progress on restoration projects, such as bridging Tamiami Trail, is critical to avoiding collapse of the ecosystem, economy, and water supply for over eight million Floridians.

The Everglades Coalition, with its 62 member organizations committed to the health of this unique and iconic ecosystems, strongly supports Everglades National Park's request for \$50M in FAST Act funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the completion of Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase 2.

We hope that this grant application will be approved so construction of the final phase of this important public safety and ecosystem restoration project can move forward expeditiously.

Thank you for your consideration of our support.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry, Co-Chair



Marisa Carrozzo, Co-Chair

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