

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 19, 2006

Volusia County Residents  
Florida's Seventh Congressional District

Dear Friends:

As your Representative in Congress, I wanted to provide a brief update on a number of Volusia County projects in which I have been involved and that may be of interest to you.

Volusia County faces a number of challenges dealing with transportation as well as expanding good-paying jobs and economic opportunities. While a great deal of my time in Washington has been expended on national issues, I continue to focus on helping to bring a better life and future opportunities to those whom I represent.

Improving transportation, and particularly our major highway arteries, is a high priority in our Congressional District. As your Congressman I represent not only Volusia County, but also 5 other counties and 32 municipalities, and have the opportunity to assess projects as they impact multiple jurisdictions. In that regard, I believe it is important to bring to your attention plans now underway for a new regional highway that will dramatically impact Volusia's future.

The Orlando/Orange County Expressway Authority recently announced its intention to begin preliminary work on a new four-lane highway that will extend from the existing GreeneWay to the Seminole/Volusia county line near Osteen. This major transportation artery will be the most significant highway development in our region since construction of I-4 and I-95. It will be constructed sooner than anticipated. Volusia could face a dramatic increase in development in this area once the new roadway is built and begins dumping commuters right at the County's borders.

Couple this new major highway coming to our front door with more than 300% growth predicted in many areas of Volusia County over the next 20 years, and we have a potential recipe for significant problems. To illustrate what traffic congestion will be like in the future, I ask you to imagine closing I-4 from the St. Johns River Bridge to SR 44 to understand the volume of traffic that could end up on local roads. Imagine, if you can, the traffic congestion in 15 to 20 years and the development pattern that will occur without adequate planning today.

In my position, I cannot tell or require local and State leaders to construct a road or infrastructure project. However, I have publicly requested that the Volusia County Council

consider carefully the impact of what our neighbors to the South are planning, and that they allow preliminary studies to be undertaken. My recommendation has been that a route be studied for a future limited access highway without tolls and that would have a minimal impact on environmentally sensitive lands.

The need to deal with a future highway link in this area is not new. In fact, it is mentioned as part of Volusia County's Long Range Transportation Plan. Furthermore, a study conducted with Volusia County's support in 2003 identified several potential routes for an Eastern Connector that could provide a link from the Expressway Authority's new highway at the county line to I-95 north of Edgewater. A limited access road may offer the best way to control development, relieve traffic and protect the environment in the region, similar to the Beach Line (formerly the BeeLine) east of Orlando.

Part of the problem with our current procedures for transportation planning is the separate jurisdictions of MetroPlan Orlando (which covers Seminole, Orange and Osceola Counties) and the Volusia Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Neither agency's process fully takes into account the consequences of transportation development and planning in the other's jurisdiction. An example of the problem we currently face was experienced with the replacement of the I-4/St. John's River Bridge. When I first began work on this effort more than a decade ago, I found that the proposed bridge replacement was not designated as a regional priority by either MetroPlan Orlando or the Volusia MPO.

With the Expressway Authority's decision to proceed expeditiously on the project to our south, I have encouraged local officials in Volusia to plan now for the future. It is vital that planning takes place now, even though construction of a limited access road may not take place for nearly two decades. By setting basic conditions today, we can best limit development and secure environmentally sensitive areas for the future. Furthermore, I have secured federal funding for the initial study phase of the project. If the Volusia County Council authorizes the study now, it can be performed in conjunction with the Expressway Authority's study without cost to the County budget or County taxpayers. Conducted separately and at a later date, this review will be much more expensive. Your support by informing local leaders about the importance of this matter would be most appreciated.

While at the federal level we cannot fully fund State or local roads, I have also pledged to work to secure additional federal gas tax funding for improvements to both SR 415 and US 17. Both of these projects will move forward and SR 415 will still be four-laned.

Improvements and expansion of our interstates is another important priority in Volusia County. Widening I-4 to six lanes from Saxon Boulevard to SR 472 began in April, 2005 and is expected to be completed in early 2007. As part of this \$27.6 million project, a new ramp from westbound SR 472 to eastbound I-4 will be added once the road is widened. Six-laning the 16.4 miles from SR 472 to I-95 is in the planning stages. Estimated costs for the initial 4.1 miles from SR 472 to SR 44 is \$56 million which includes reconstruction of the SR 44 interchange. Bids on that section will be received in August, with roadwork possibly beginning in early 2007.

A \$14.6 million new frontage road adjacent to I-4 by DeLand has been approved for connecting three major I-4 interchanges (SR 472, Orange Camp Road and SR 44). Federal and State funds are helping to reduce local costs for this County undertaking, which will provide an alternative local route to I-4 and SR 472. Construction is in progress to four-lane 6.4 miles of SR 44 from I-4 to Pioneer Trail and to add two eastbound lanes to the new alignment along the one mile west of I-4; this \$26 million contract is expected to be done by early next year. Finally, resurfacing 2.2 miles of US 92 from I-4 to Bellevue Road was finished in May.

I am pleased to report that the future widening of I-4, some of which will provide up to 12 lanes, will proceed without tolls. I included a ban on I-4 tolls in the recent federal highway bill that will bring back to Florida an additional \$2.3 billion over the next four years. It is my belief that my constituents should not pay twice for their roads – once with federal gas taxes at the pump, and again at a toll booth.

Widening I-95 to six lanes is also progressing and has been divided into several phases. The section from the Flagler County line to SR 40 was completed in August, 2005 at a cost of \$22 million. Expansion of I-95 from SR 40 to US 92, a \$26 million project, began in January, 2004 and will be finished this summer. A portion of I-95 from the US 92 junction to I-4 was done in 2003. An environmental study for the remaining segment of I-95 from I-4 to the Brevard County line is now proceeding. Lastly, the six-laning of I-95 in neighboring Flagler County began in March, 2005 and will conclude next summer at a cost of \$73.7 million.

Other transportation improvements that have my support include a new interchange at I-95 and North US 1 near Ormond Beach, and new medians and road safety improvements on US 1 in both Holly Hill and Ormond Beach. The East Central Florida Regional Rail Trail, which will connect Enterprise to downtown Titusville and north to Edgewater, is another cooperative State, local and federal effort.

Progress is being made on the Central Florida Commuter Rail project, which will link Volusia County with its three neighbors, Seminole, Orange and Osceola Counties. Under the management of the Florida Department of Transportation, preliminary engineering will soon proceed and will include detailed planning to determine station locations and costs. Negotiations are concluding with CSX for the State to purchase the right of way and relocate freight rail from this congested corridor. Volusia, Orange, Seminole and Osceola Counties have each indicated their support and commitment to this much needed alternative to commuter traffic congestion on I-4.

To help provide access to the planned location of the DeBary commuter rail station, which would serve as Southwest Volusia's connection to the future regional commuter rail system, federal funds will assist in the extension of Saxon Boulevard west from US 17-92. It is anticipated that this facility will also serve as a bus stop for VOTRAN transit services. For those without their own vehicles, we are coordinating with VOTRAN to better link with other regional transit systems and to ensure Volusia County's bus fleet and facilities are providing citizens with the best transit services possible.

A number of new activities in Volusia County have kept me busy over the past year.

In conjunction with the City of Daytona Beach and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we secured grants for the replacement and construction of affordable and public housing. A further \$167 million is being financed by private contributions, State and local funds, tax credits, and in-kind contributions from the City and the County. To date, 499 public housing units have been demolished at Bethune Village, Halifax Park and the Martin Luther King Apartments. 386 new homes will be constructed at Bethune Village, which will be renamed Pine Haven, and at Halifax Park and two new sites at Virginia Avenue and South Street in Daytona Beach. Many former public housing tenants will become homeowners through the Affordable Housing Homeownership Program. With safer neighborhoods, crime in that area of the community has dropped nearly 20%.

I have been coordinating with community officials and leaders at the Coalition for the Homeless/Homeless Assistance Center. We discussed plans for providing new housing opportunities, emergency shelters and resources for the homeless in the Central Florida area. With a local partnership in place, we hope to secure State and federal resources to assist those in need. Unfortunately more than 25% of our homeless are also veterans. Improving substance abuse and mental health programs in our community also have gained our attention and support.

This past month, the House of Representatives granted initial federal support for the Bethune-Cookman College School of Nursing Enhancement Project in Daytona Beach. The nursing industry is important to our health care industry, and with a nationwide shortage of nurses, Bethune-Cookman will expand its education and training facilities. Additionally I was pleased to help secure federal support last year for improvements to Bethune-Cookman's satellite campus in St. Johns County.

In conjunction with Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU), Volusia County, the Volusia County School System and the City of Daytona Beach, we are assisting in efforts to build a new high tech research park adjacent to Daytona Beach International Airport (DBIA) that could expand economic opportunities and jobs in the area. Passenger traffic counts, employment and new services have improved at DBIA, and we are focused on attracting both a low cost carrier and additional major carriers. Recently we were pleased to host a visit by US Deputy Secretary of Transportation Maria Cino to both ERAU and DBIA.

To provide assistance and information to those who own or are hoping to start a small business, we also brought US Small Business Administration experts to the Daytona Beach Community College for a recent seminar and workshop.

Progress is being made with the Florida National Guard to relocate to a new facility outside the city limits of Daytona Beach, just west of I-95. Congress has provided funds for preliminary studies and the Guard has begun budgeting for future construction of a new joint military reserve facility. With federal support, our local defense industry has expanded and new jobs are being created in support of our national defense and homeland security requirements.

In DeBary, I again participated in the special youth day arts kickoff sponsored by the DeBary Arts League. We are supporting local and private efforts to make the new Cultural Arts Center a reality. In DeLand we remain committed to assist in expanding youth activity programs sponsored by the YMCA.

Strong Tower Ministries in the West Volusia area provides the students of Seville and Pierson with summer and afterschool programs. It is my pleasure to again this year assist those local and non-profit activities that are so important to our young people.

Of course, it is also my priority to aid seniors and veterans who have sacrificed so much over the years and given so much for the younger generations of our country. Prior to the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for enrollment in the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit, we contacted all seniors in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District with information, conducted workshops and surveyed participants for their comments and suggestions. Today a majority of participating seniors have lowered their costs of medications and are pleased with their coverage. However, we must continue efforts to bring down health care costs for all Americans. Finally, I was honored to recently participate in the opening of the William V. Chappell, Jr. Veterans Outpatient Clinic's expanded facilities that will provide additional space to accommodate our growing veterans population in Volusia.

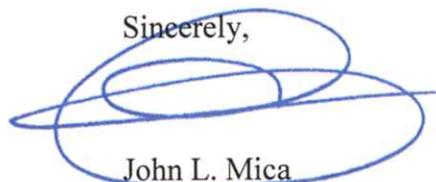
Once again in May we welcomed to Washington a number of community leaders from Volusia County who participated in our annual 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Fly-In. While in our nation's capital, participants received briefings by Congressional leaders and senior officials from the Administration. Special thanks to the West Volusia, Ormond Beach and the Daytona Beach Halifax Area Chambers of Commerce and to all those who brought our community projects and priorities to the attention of federal officials.

While this brief update only touches on a few of our community activities, I hope that you find it informative. Currently there are many important issues before Congress including immigration, tax reform, deficit spending, energy prices, national security and a host of matters vital to our future. Detailed information on my position and voting record relating to any of these national issues is available on the internet at [www.house.gov/mica](http://www.house.gov/mica). You may also contact either of our 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Offices in West Volusia at (386) 860-1499 or Northeast Volusia at (386) 676-7750 for assistance or information.

Please know that I always welcome your opinion and suggestions both on pending projects and national legislation. I hope you will not hesitate to contact me on matters concerning our community or issues before Congress.

With my regards and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely,



John L. Mica  
Member of Congress