

**RESOLUTION #RES2021-06**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF DUNNELLON URGING THE GOVERNOR AND STATE LEGISLATURE TO CEASE FUNDING FOR THE MULTI-USE CORRIDORS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE (M-CORES) PROGRAM AND SUPPORTING LEGISLATION TO REPEAL THE M-CORES PROGRAM AND REVERT PROGRAM FUNDS.**

**WHEREAS**, on May 17, 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill 7068 (SB 7068) into law to create the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) Program, bypassing the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Corridor Planning Process (5-year work plan); and

**WHEREAS**, M-CORES defeats the taxpayer protections in 338.221 F.S.; and

**WHEREAS**, M-CORES defeats the community protections in 339.135 F.S., the underlying statute covering the 5-year work plan, essentially bypassing FDOT's 5-year work plan development process, resulting in the project being fast-tracked without any preliminary determination of need or economic feasibility; and

**WHEREAS**, the M-CORES task forces (Northern Turnpike, Suncoast, and Southwest-Central Florida Connectors) presented final recommendation reports to the Governor, House, and Senate on November 13, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, each of the final reports of three appointed Task Forces stated that "The Task Force did not reach a conclusion based on the information available at this time that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modification of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose"; and

**WHEREAS**, extrapolating from the independent projections of Florida TaxWatch and the costs of Florida's Wekiva Parkway, the entire project could cost \$26.4 billion or more over the next 10 years; and

**WHEREAS**, in FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21, \$142.5 million was allocated for the M-CORES toll roads without any determination of need or feasibility; and

**WHEREAS**, SB 7068 and section 338.223, Florida Statutes, lay out numerous requirements, such as need, economic feasibility and economic impacts, applicable to proper planning for and evaluation of the M-CORES corridors; and

**WHEREAS**, M-CORES funding increased from the statutorily required \$90 million, to \$117 million in 2020, all while more than \$90 million in transportation backlog and water quality projects were cut from the 2020 budget. These documented needs could have been fully funded if not for the continued funding of M-CORES; and

**WHEREAS**, FDOT has failed to provide costs and accountability for millions already spent; and

**WHEREAS**, cutting M-CORES funding will save the state more than \$100 million this year alone, and up to \$26.4 billion in the long-term; and

**WHEREAS**, Turnpike Enterprise drivers across the state are already subsidizing M-CORES, and when construction is bonded, Florida motorists on heavily traveled toll roads in southeast and central Florida will pay disproportionately for the M-CORES program; and

**WHEREAS**, M-CORES is contrary to key aspects of FDOT's mission to provide a safe transportation system that ensures the mobility of people and goods, enhances economic prosperity, and preserves the quality of our environment and communities; and

**WHEREAS**, highways fragment wildlife habitat and collisions with vehicles are an added source of wildlife mortality. For endangered large mammals like the Florida panther, additional fragmentation of remaining habitat could imperil their existence. The panther is not the only listed species that would be threatened by M-CORES. The panther is an umbrella species; protecting panthers and panther habitat will help other listed and non-listed species as well; and

**WHEREAS**, more than 4 million acres of protected conservation land, and more than 400,000 acres of land in already-approved Florida Forever projects, is located within the M-CORES Corridor study areas, underscoring the immense conservation value of these corridors and the irreversible harm the destruction of these lands would have on the state's natural resources and quality of life; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed M-CORES toll roads will add new sources of nutrient pollution into the Rainbow River Watershed and further fuel harmful algal blooms; and

**WHEREAS**, Harmful algal blooms have resulted in immense environmental, public health, and economic costs to our communities and imperil the quality of our water resources; and

**WHEREAS**, adding more sources of nutrient pollution to our already beleaguered watershed is contrary to the legislative priorities of the Dunnellon City Council as well as the the recovery of local businesses who have faced unprecedented revenue shortfalls due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, any transportation capacity, operational or safety deficiencies within the state's transportation system should first be met by improvements to existing transportation corridors. New transportation corridors should only be considered as alternatives once significant improvements have been planned and programmed to existing corridors; and

**WHEREAS**, local governments should not be forced to make Comprehensive Land Use changes outside of the adopted process in their Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Codes in response to government agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, broadband is a necessary utility that does not depend on the construction of new roads; and

**WHEREAS**, since M-CORES funding is channeled through FDOT's five-year work program, failure to repeal the project will siphon money away from other much-needed transportation projects from across the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the compounding effects of the pandemic and continued funding of M-CORES through 2020 has already resulted in the cut or delay of 77 road projects from FDOT's five-year work plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the financial health of FDOT and Florida's Turnpike System is questionable. COVID-19 has drastically altered traffic patterns devastating toll revenues to the tune of \$189 million in losses. Delays in vaccinating the population to allow us to resume a "new normal" means FDOT won't recoup those losses anytime soon; and

**WHEREAS**, COVID-19 has greatly increased Florida's financial risk. The pandemic decimated state revenues causing losses of \$1.9 billion in FY 2019-2020 and \$5.4 billion in FY 2020-21. This will cause projected state budget shortfalls of \$2.77 billion in FY 2021-22 and \$2.058 billion in FY 2022-23; and

**WHEREAS**, since SB 7068 was signed, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to respond to critical state needs; and

**WHEREAS**, in a time of historic budget shortfalls, fiscal responsibility requires the cutting of needless, wasteful programs.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:**

In order to operate with fiscal discipline, protect environmental assets and resources, and preserve rural lands, the agriculture industry, and the quality of life of Florida's citizens:

- 1) The Dunnellon City Council urges Governor DeSantis and the State Legislature to immediately cease funding for M-CORES, effectively terminating all of the post-task force process phases of the program; and
- 2) The Dunnellon City Council supports legislation that would repeal M-CORES and revert program funds back to the general fund for meeting budget priorities.

Upon motion duly made and carried, the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the City Council of the City of Dunnellon on the 22nd day of March, 2021.

**CITY OF DUNNELTON, FLORIDA**

---

William P. White, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

---

Amanda Roberts, CMC, City Clerk