A Review of the Current Functions of Independent Transportation Authorities in Florida that Own or Operate Roadways or Bridges or Toll Facilities

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A Review of the Current Functions of Independent Transportation Authorities in Florida that Own or Operate Roadways or Bridges or Toll Facilities
A Review of the Current Functions of Independent Transportation Authorities in Florida that Own or Operate Roadways or Bridges or Toll Facilities

Prepared for
The Florida Legislature

By
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College of Engineering
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Tampa, Florida

October 1996
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A Review of the Current Functions of Independent Transportation Authorities in Florida that Own or Operate Roadways or Bridges or Toll Facilities

1. Introduction

The Florida Legislature requested that CUTR “perform a review of the current functions of the expressway authorities, transportation authorities, and other transportation special districts or entities created by or pursuant to law that own or operate roadways or bridges or toll facilities [but excluding] dependent special districts or departments or any city or county government performing transportation functions.” For the sake of simplicity, all such authorities, districts, and entities are referred to in this report as expressway authorities. The expressway authorities included in this review are:

- Bay County Bridge Authority
- Brevard County Expressway Authority
- Broward County Expressway Authority
- Dade County Expressway Authority
- Escambia County Expressway Authority (emerging)
- Fort Walton Beach Area Bridge Authority (Okaloosa County)
- Jacksonville Transportation Authority
- Mid-Bay Bridge Authority (Okaloosa County)
- Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority
- Pasco County Expressway Authority
- St. Lucie County Expressway Authority
- Santa Rosa Bay Bridge Authority
- Seminole County Expressway Authority
- Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority

Although the Bay County Bridge Authority, the Fort Walton Beach Area Bridge Authority, and the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority are dependent special districts, they are included in the review for informational purposes since they were created by acts of the Legislature rather than by local ordinances.

In Section 2 of this report the advantages and disadvantages of public authorities and, specifically, of expressway authorities are presented. In Section 3, relevant parts of the Florida Expressway Authority Act (Chapter 348, Part I, FS) are discussed. Section 4 contains detailed information for each of the individual expressway authorities, and Section 5 summarizes the role that expressway authorities play in the transportation planning process.
2. Why Authorities Exist

The reasons that authorities exist vary from community to community. Often they exist because of special circumstances or to address unique local issues. Included in this section are the argument for and against authorities that tend to be common to all communities. The advantages and disadvantages of public authorities in general are presented first, followed by the advantages and disadvantages of expressway authorities specifically.

2.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Public Authorities

According to *Public Authorities and Public Policy*, the primary mandate of an authority is "...to develop revenue-producing facilities in an atmosphere insulated from political pressures." It says that the authority "...should be structured so as to encourage independence in decision-making from elected officials...and encourage the staff to think in long-range terms not limited by the next election." It also says that authorities "...are the businesses of American government...[and] are supposed to operate in the public interest but in the manner of a self-supporting business, free from political compromise, public pressure, and bureaucratic red tape."

2.1.1. Advantages

The primary reason voiced around the country for special districts or authorities is that their concentrated focus on providing a single project or service allows them to accomplish what general-purpose governments will not or cannot. *Public Authorities and Public Policy* says that "the large powers of public authorities (both structural and managerial) have given them the capacity to achieve goals far beyond what might be expected of traditional government agencies or, for that matter, private sector firms."

The governing boards of these authorities also provide an opportunity for citizens to participate in local government, and they help develop a base of civic and political leadership in a community.

Another advantage noted in the book *Governing Urban America* is that "usually, the debts and costs of special districts do not count in determining debt and tax limits of regular local governments, and the bonds of such districts are sometimes more easily marketed than are those of other local governments." *Public Authorities and Public Policy* says that authorities provide "...the independence and flexibility thought to be required for the conduct of businesslike operations, given current constitutional and statutory restrictions on general-purpose governments."
2.1.2. Disadvantages

Nonetheless, there is some opposition to the wide-spread use of special districts or authorities. Pointing out the disadvantages, *Governing Urban American* says that although “special districts have often done very good jobs in construction and engineering and sometimes in management... they do not necessarily eliminate political patronage,... do not guarantee professional administration of functions, and do not remove from the arena of politics governmental functions that involve issues of policy. Special districts often result in increased costs of local government because of duplication of personnel, inefficient utilization of equipment, and inability to save through centralized purchasing and other centralized housekeeping activities. They do not balance the various needs for services of a community, do not recognize the interdependence of various functions, and are not usually provided with a method for coordinating their activities and budgets with those of the other governments in the area in which they exist....If the governing board is indirectly chosen, as is usually the case, there is no real responsibility to the public for the function performed.”

Victor Jones, in an article titled “Local Government Organization in Metropolitan Areas” says “a corporate form of metropolitan government in which the selection of the authority or district commission members is once or more removed from the electoral controls may give us efficient and effective government but it cannot give us good government.... [Good government cannot be achieved] by slicing off the most important functions of local government and handing them over to one or several autonomous bodies.”

Florida has experience at the local level with both limited and widespread use of authorities. Dade County, for instance, is limited in its use of authorities. The Miami airport and the local transit agency, for example, are part of county government. Hillsborough County, on the other hand, uses the authority form of government quite freely, and the Tampa airport and the local transit agency, for example, are independent authorities. At one time there were numerous authorities in Dade County, but they have tended to be absorbed into county government as part of the government consolidation that has taken place there. It is important to note that, contrary to this general trend, Dade County recently created an expressway authority in the belief that this mechanism will improve its ability to fund local transportation needs.

2.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Expressway Authorities

In addition to the question of how local or state government can best construct and manage toll facilities, there also is the policy issue of whether toll financing of transportation facilities is, in fact, an appropriate funding mechanism. For instance, there are equity issues such as the extent to which lower-income persons may be unable to use the facilities, and the question of whether the gas tax is a better funding mechanism. On the other hand, toll facilities represent the purest form of user fee financing.
2.2.1. Advantages

The primary advantage of an expressway authority is:

- It is a single-purpose agency focused on a specific mission. Its ability to focus on a single major transportation project and not be distracted by competing interests or purposes allows it to accomplish projects that other state and local governmental entities often cannot, or allows it to accomplish projects more quickly.

Other advantages include:

- It is able in Florida to borrow money from the state’s Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund to begin the planning and implementation phases of toll facilities. This opportunity also is available to local governments but is not available to district offices of FDOT.

- It is exempt from some state and federal design standards and processes. This may affect the feasibility, cost, and schedule of projects.

- It may be more sensitive to local issues than are state agencies because all board members are local residents.

- When it is composed, in whole or in part, of members who are not elected officials, it may be better able to implement needed but controversial projects.

- Through its bonding ability, it can undertake major projects whose costs are so high that they could not be funded by district offices of FDOT. However, local governments and FDOT’s Turnpike District also have this bonding ability.

- It provides citizens an opportunity to serve their community, and it helps develop a base of civic and political leadership.

- When the authority is composed of more than one county it may bring a regional perspective to bear on regional transportation needs that may be lacking in local governments. (There currently are no multi-county expressway authorities in Florida.) FDOT district offices might also provide a regional perspective.
2.2.2. Disadvantages

The primary disadvantage of an expressway authority is:

- It contributes to the fragmentation of local government, making coordination and efficient allocation of resources more difficult and making it more difficult for citizens to know where to provide community input.

Other disadvantages include:

- When it is composed, in whole or in part, of members who are not elected officials, it is less accountable to local voters than an authority or local government composed entirely of elected officials.

- It duplicates, to some extent, the efforts and costs of other governmental entities. This is especially true if the authority is only managing an existing toll facility and is not actively involved in the planning and building of new facilities.

- A single-county authority may lack the regional perspective needed for expressway projects that affect surrounding counties.

A general disadvantage of toll facilities is the high cost of collecting the tolls. In its last year of operating toll facilities, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority estimated that the cost of collecting the tolls amounted to 21 percent of its revenues, not including lost time and higher vehicle operating costs experienced by motorists due to congestion at toll barriers. The increased use of new electronic toll collection technologies, however, could substantially reduce this cost.

Jacksonville's previous toll facilities are now financed by a sales tax, and the authority's cost of collection is negligible. Using a gas tax in place of tolls to finance roadways would have the same effect, i.e., it would eliminate the high cost of toll collection.

3. The Florida Expressway Authority Act

Expressway authorities can be formed either pursuant to the Florida Expressway Authority Act (Chapter 348, Part I of the Florida Statutes) or by special act of the Legislature. Dependent special districts can be created either by local ordinance or by special act of the Legislature. Most existing expressway authorities were created before Chapter 348, Part I was enacted in 1990 and, therefore, are not subject to its provisions. In fact, the recently formed Dade County Expressway Authority is the only authority currently governed by Chapter 348, Part I. Nevertheless, relevant sections of Part I are described here because it is, in a sense, model legislation for future expressway authorities.
The differences between this legislation and the special acts creating the other authorities are pointed out in Section 4 under each of the individual authorities. Perhaps the most significant difference is that the projects of expressways not governed by Part I of Chapter 348 are not required to be consistent with the local MPO plan. However, Chapter 338.251(2) does require that expressway authority projects be consistent with the MPO plan for the authority to be eligible to borrow from the state’s Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund, and most authorities have borrowed from the trust fund.

### 3.1. The Formation of Expressway Authorities

Under Part I of Chapter 348, “any county, or two or more contiguous counties located within a single district of the [Florida Department of Transportation] may, by resolution adopted by the board of county commissioners, form an expressway authority.”

### 3.2. The Purposes and Powers of Expressway Authorities

Section 348.0004 of Chapter 348 says that an expressway authority “may acquire, hold, construct, improve, maintain, operate, own, and lease an expressway system.”

It has the power of eminent domain and the right to issue bonds. It does not have the power to tax. It may use county gasoline tax funds as a secondary pledge of revenues for repayment of bonds if it has the prior express written consent of the board of county commissioners. Any county gasoline tax funds used for bond payments must be reimbursed by the authority. The terms of repayment are set forth in the individual lease-purchase or interlocal agreements.

Section 348.0006 allows an authority to enter into a lease-purchase agreement with FDOT. Under such an agreement, the authority leases the expressway system to FDOT, which then undertakes certain functions related to the operation of the system. Upon completion of the agreement, title to the system is transferred to the state.

### 3.3. Requirements for Coordinated Planning

Section 348.0004 of Chapter 348 says that expressway authorities may “add additional expressways to an expressway system...[only] with the prior express written consent of the board of county commissioners...and [only if they] are compatible with the existing plans, projects, and programs of the authority.” It also provides that in home-rule counties surplus revenues can be used for certain public transportation projects if “…the expenditures are consistent with the metropolitan planning organization’s adopted long-range plan” and they are approved by the board of county commissioners after a public hearing.
Section 348.004(3) says that "...the consent of any municipality is not necessary for any project of an existing or new authority...if the project is consistent with the locally adopted comprehensive plan. However, if a project is inconsistent with the affected municipal comprehensive plan, the project may not proceed without a hearing...at which it is determined that the project is consistent with the adopted metropolitan planning organization transportation improvement plan, if any, and the applicable strategic regional plan, and at which regional interests are determined to clearly override the interests of the municipality.”

It also says that in any home-rule county "...no expressway authority shall undertake any construction that is not consistent with both the metropolitan planning organization’s transportation improvement program and the county’s comprehensive plan.”

4. Status of Individual Expressway Authorities

The expressway authorities in the state are authorized under Chapter 348, FS, Parts I through IX. In addition, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority is authorized under Chapter 349, FS. The dependent special districts reviewed in this report, such as the Bay County Bridge Authority, are authorized by acts of the Legislature contained in chapters of the Laws of Florida. Other dependent special districts are authorized by local ordinance. The authorized purposes and powers of each of the eight expressway authorities and the one bridge authority created by Chapter 348 are essentially the same, except in the case of the Dade County Expressway Authority, which has the authority to use its revenues for multi-modal transportation services. The Jacksonville Transportation Authority is responsible for both expressways and transit service.

One of the primary differences among the authorities in Florida—as well as among authorities around the country—is the composition of the boards. These boards range from being composed entirely of elected officials (Bay, Pasco, Seminole), to mostly elected officials (Broward, St. Lucie), to mostly appointed members (Orlando, Tampa), and to entirely appointed members (Dade, Fort Walton Beach, Jacksonville, Mid-Bay, Santa Rosa), as shown in Table 1. These differences usually reflect local preferences in the desire to insulate the development and management of toll facilities from politics versus the desire to maintain control and accountability. On some of the boards—but not all—the FDOT district secretary serves as an ex officio voting member. The boards vary in size from five to thirteen (Dade). Of Dade’s thirteen members, nine are voting members and those nine are all non-elected members.

Another organizational difference seen in Florida and around the country is the placement within state and local government of the responsibility for the management of toll facilities. In some counties, the board of county commissioners serves as the expressway authority board, so that, in effect, the expressway authority is part of county government. Toll facilities owned by the state come under the authority of either FDOT’s Turnpike District or the local FDOT district.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Elected Officials</th>
<th>Non-Elected Members</th>
<th>FDOT</th>
<th>Total Voting Members</th>
<th>MPO Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay County Bridge Authority</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5^3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brevard County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>5^4</td>
<td>5^4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0-5^4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broward County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>3-4^5</td>
<td>2-1^5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dade County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9^6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escambia County Expressway Authority (emerging)</td>
<td>5^7</td>
<td>0^7</td>
<td>0-1^7</td>
<td>5-6^7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Walton Beach Area Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville Transportation Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Bay Bridge Authority (Okaloosa County)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasco County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5^3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucie County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Rosa Bay Bridge Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Non-voting member.
1 As provided in state and local statutes. Not all authorities are currently active.
2 Number of designated joint voting memberships (cross memberships) between the authority and the MPO.
3 The board consists of the County Commission. There currently are 5 County Commissioners.
4 The board may consist of either the County Commission or appointed members.
5 At the discretion of the County Commission.
6 In addition, there are four non-voting appointed members.
7 Proposal is for the board to be the County Commission; FDOT membership has not yet been addressed.
Summary information on Florida’s expressway authorities and their current status is presented in Table 2. There are eight active authorities, with a ninth being considered. Of the eight active authorities, four currently operate toll facilities and the Dade County Expressway Authority expects soon to be operating toll facilities in Dade County. Seven of the eight have plans for (or are studying) new facilities.

### Table 2
**Statistical Summary for Florida’s Expressway Authorities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>No. Of FTE Employees</th>
<th>FY1997 Admin. Budget</th>
<th>Created</th>
<th>First Project Completed</th>
<th>Roadway Miles Operated</th>
<th>1995 Toll Revenue (000,000)</th>
<th>New Miles Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay County Bridge Authority</td>
<td>inactive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brevard County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>inactive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broward County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>inactive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dade County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>---³</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>31⁴</td>
<td>$18.7⁵</td>
<td>5-10 plus misc. improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escambia County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>emerging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Walton Beach Area Bridge Authority</td>
<td>inactive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville Transportation Authority</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>26⁶</td>
<td>$1,410,000⁷</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1955⁸</td>
<td>none⁹</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>18 plus misc. improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Bay Bridge Authority (Okaloosa County)</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>$287,000</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>3 (bridge)</td>
<td>$4.1</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (continued)
Statistical Summary for Florida’s Expressway Authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Status¹</th>
<th>No. Of FTE Employees</th>
<th>FY1997 Admin. Budget²</th>
<th>Created</th>
<th>First Project Completed</th>
<th>Roadway Miles Operated</th>
<th>1995 Toll Revenue (000,000)</th>
<th>New Miles Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>$2,382,520</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>$73.5</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasco County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>inactive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucie County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Rosa Bay Bridge Authority</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>3 (bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$296,908</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1994⁴</td>
<td>12³</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>6⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$487,419</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$13.6</td>
<td>3 plus misc. improve.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Authority is considered active if it meets on a regular basis.
2 Caution should be used if budgets are compared. The functions and types of expenditures included may vary among the authorities.
3 Budget is being developed; previous year was a start-up year.
4 Negotiations are in process to turn over to the Authority 31 miles of expressways with 1995 toll revenues of $18.7 million.
5 For engineering (highway) division only. The Authority also has a transit division.
6 Projects were begun by predecessor agency.
7 Projects are turned over to state or local government upon completion.
8 The Authority undertakes initial design and engineering and then turns projects over to FDOT for bonding, construction, and operation.

Selected debts of the authorities are shown in Table 3. Most of the authorities, including three inactive ones, owe money to the state’s Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund. As noted earlier, the projects of expressway authorities that borrow from the Revolving Trust Fund must be consistent with the local MPO plan. Detailed information on each of the individual authorities follows the table.
Table 3
Selected Debts of Florida’s Expressway Authorities
June 30, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Bonds Outstanding</th>
<th>Long-Term Debt&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>TFRTF Loans&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay County Bridge Authority</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$583,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brevard County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broward County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>182,590,000&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dade County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>91,300,000&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>13,547,213</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escambia County Expressway Authority (emerging)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Walton Beach Area Bridge Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,022,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville Transportation Authority</td>
<td>303,655,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Bay Bridge Authority (Okaloosa County)</td>
<td>86,250,000&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1,397,614 (9/30/95)</td>
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<td>Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>785,520,000</td>
<td>94,375,958</td>
<td>16,730,971</td>
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<td>Pasco County Expressway Authority</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>800,000</td>
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<td>St. Lucie County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,217,475</td>
</tr>
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<td>Santa Rosa Bay Bridge Authority</td>
<td>0&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,442,513</td>
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<td>Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority</td>
<td>120,030,000&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>67,387,990</td>
<td>3,734,341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Florida Department of Transportation

<sup>1</sup> Long-term receivable due FDOT as a result of subsidizing operation and maintenance expense and completing the project when bond proceeds were insufficient.

<sup>2</sup> Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund loans advanced to provide for preliminary engineering, design, and traffic and revenue studies.

<sup>3</sup> Florida Turnpike has operational control and, if toll revenues are insufficient, will provide for the deficiencies.

<sup>4</sup> The Authority is in the process of defeasing or refunding the outstanding bonds.

<sup>5</sup> Excluding refunded bonds.

<sup>6</sup> The Authority is in the process of issuing approximately $94.9 million of bonds.
Chapter 348, except that the provision for consent of a municipality is not as restrictive. There also are no provisions for consent of the board of county commissioners to add expressways or for consistency with MPO and county plans.

It was specifically authorized in its legislation to “...construct a toll facility in Brevard County establishing a two-lane or four-lane bridge located in the southern area of Brevard county, south of the municipality of Melbourne, connecting existing U.S. Highway No. 1 with State Road A1A across the Indian River....”

Current System. None.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority has never met. It does not own or operate any transportation facilities and, apparently, has no plans to do so or to otherwise become active.


4.3. Broward County Expressway Authority

Legislation. The Broward County Expressway Authority was created in 1983 by Part III of Chapter 348, FS. Broward’s purposes and powers are essentially the same as provided in Part I of Chapter 348, with a slight variation in the municipal consent clause and no requirement for consistency with the MPO plan. The Authority was specifically authorized in its legislation to “...construct roadways commonly known as the noninterstate funded portions of the I-595/Port Everglades Expressway, the Deerfield Expressway, and Sawgrass Expressway.” It also was authorized to “…sell, transfer, and dispose of all property of the Sawgrass Expressway...to the Department of Transportation as part of the Turnpike System....”

Current System. None.

Status and Future Plans. The Sawgrass Expressway was completed in 1986. From the beginning, the expressway fell far short of initial revenue projections and became a financial drain on the county, which had pledged its local option gas tax to support the bond payments. Consequently, the county prevailed on FDOT to assume operational and financial responsibility for the expressway, and it was turned over to FDOT in 1990. The Authority became inactive at that time and no other project has been undertaken and none is planned.

Planning Process. The need for the Sawgrass Expressway was initially identified by the MPO and placed on its plan as the University Parkway. The MPO subsequently decided that the facility had the greatest likelihood of being funded and constructed if it were undertaken as a toll facility. An expressway authority was then formed to undertake the project.
4.4. Dade County Expressway Authority

Legislation. The Authority was created by Dade County Ordinance No. 94-215 in December 1994 pursuant to Part I of Chapter 348, FS.

Current System. As of the date of this report (October 1996), the Authority did not own or operate any transportation facilities. However, it was negotiating with FDOT to transfer the operational and financial control of 31 miles of expressways to the Authority.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority is newly formed and is in the process of initiating strategic planning and developing a master plan. Tentatively, it expects these plans to include early implementation of electronic toll collection, several capacity and operational improvements to existing expressways, and five to ten miles of new expressways. As permitted in Chapter 348, it also expects to provide funding for public transportation projects. As part of the transfer of control of the expressways, the Authority will assume a debt to FDOT of approximately $12 million (was $13,547,213 as of June 30, 1996). The Authority also will owe Dade County $450,000 for advances to cover administrative costs.

Planning Process. The Authority’s executive director was added to the Dade County Transportation Planning Council, which is the technical arm of the MPO. There currently is no designated spot on the MPO for an Authority member; however, the Authority hopes to have state legislation changed to add one. One of the Authority’s board members coincidentally now serves on the MPO by virtue of another affiliation.

The Authority expects that potential future projects will be identified by its staff working jointly with other transportation agency staff through the Dade County Transportation Planning Council. Part I of Chapter 348 requires that projects undertaken by the Authority be consistent with the MPO transportation improvement program. Consequently, the staff expects to start with the MPO long-range plan and attempt to identify needed projects that would be feasible to finance with toll revenues. Potential projects would then be taken to the Authority board for approval. They also would be presented to the MPO for approval to finance the projects with tolls.

Part I of Chapter 348 also requires that the projects be consistent with the county’s comprehensive plan and, unless there are overriding public interests, with affected municipal comprehensive plans.

4.5. Escambia County Expressway Authority

Legislation. None yet.

Current System. None.
**Status and Future Plans.** The Escambia County Board of County Commissioners is considering the establishment of an expressway authority to construct a toll road that would be a connector between the junction of I-110/I-10 and U.S. 29, a distance of approximately 10 miles. The BOCC borrowed $500,000 from the state's Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund to conduct the initial traffic and revenue and corridor studies. They expect to decide whether or not to establish an authority by January 1997.

**Planning Process.** The connector was identified as a need during the MPO transportation planning process some years ago and also was identified at that time as a candidate for toll financing. The BOCC recently indicated an interest in creating an expressway authority to undertake this particular project, and the MPO and FDOT both concurred in exploring the possibility of moving the project forward as a toll facility.

### 4.6. Fort Walton Beach Area Bridge Authority (Okaloosa County)

**Legislation.** The Fort Walton Beach Area Bridge Authority is a dependent special district (budget must be approved by the county) that was created in 1990 by Chapter 90-412, Laws of Florida, and granted the power to construct and operate a bridge(s) over Choctawhatchee Bay and/or Santa Rosa Sound. The Authority is not authorized under its current legislation to undertake projects not related to the bridge(s). This Authority was formed to construct a second toll bridge over Choctawhatchee Bay and/or Santa Rosa Sound at a time when the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority and its resources were fully committed to the construction and operation of the first toll bridge across the bay.

**Current System.** None.

**Status and Future Plans.** The Authority conducted a feasibility study of several bridge alignments and decided not to undertake the project. The Authority borrowed from the Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund for this study and currently owes the fund $1 million. The Authority has been inactive for the past two years and has no plans to become active. The MPO, in fact, has requested that the Authority be abolished. The MPO “needs” plan continues to show the need for additional bridge capacity but a specific bridge project is no longer shown on the MPO “cost feasible” plan.

**Planning Process.** The study described above was the result of a joint agreement among the MPO, FDOT, and the county that a bridge authority should be created to undertake a study to determine the feasibility of constructing a bridge across Choctawhatchee Bay as a toll facility. During the MPO’s transportation planning process a need for additional capacity across Choctawhatchee Bay had previously been identified and added to the MPO plan.

The Authority was not a member of the MPO but was a member of the MPO’s technical coordinating committee.
4.7. Jacksonville Transportation Authority

Legislation. The Jacksonville Transportation Authority was created in 1955 under Chapter 349, FS. In addition to the right to function as an expressway authority, Jacksonville’s legislation gives it the power to operate a mass transit system, construct parking facilities, and to “...construct and operate all other facilities necessary to a complete and coordinated transportation system....”

There are no provisions for consent of a municipality, for consent of the board of county commissioners to add expressways, or for consistency with MPO and county plans. However, there is a provision for public hearings and for review and comment by the Jacksonville area planning board.

Current System. The Authority operates the local transit agency but does not own or operate any highways. It funds and constructs roadways and then turns them over to FDOT or local government for operation.

Status and Future Plans.
The toll facilities in Jacksonville were operated by the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA), which also operates the local transit system. The tolls were eliminated through referendum and replaced by a local sales tax effective in 1989 due, in large part, to the congestion caused by the toll barriers. Nonetheless, tolls may be used to finance new facilities when the needs exceed the sales tax revenues. A substantial part of the sales tax (over 20 percent) goes into transit, replacing some of the reduction in federal transit assistance. The Authority’s primary debt is $303,655,000 in outstanding bonds. The annual debt service (principal and interest) on the bonds is approximately $27,000,000 per year. The county has pledged two cents of its gas tax to support the Authority’s bond issues. The Authority has approximately 480 employees, of whom 26 are in the engineering (highway) division and the balance of whom are in the transit division. The administrative budget for the engineering division is $1,410,000 for FY1997.

The development of the Authority’s work program is an on-going process. Highway projects are set for construction when additional bonds are issued, which occurs when bonding capacity permits. The next bond issue is planned for 1997.

Planning Process. According to the authority, having transit and expressways in the same authority has resulted in much greater coordination of the two. JTA says that it exists because there are roads that need to be built that FDOT and the city of Jacksonville cannot build. The Authority’s staff starts with the MPO’s priority list and asks the city and FDOT for input. The staff then develops recommendations that it discusses with the board in a series of workshops. The board then makes the final decision on which projects to undertake and presents it to the city council for approval. There is no requirement that the Authority’s projects be on the MPO’s priority list or be consistent with the MPO’s plan. However, the Authority does ask the MPO to
put the Authority's proposed projects in the MPO plan and the TIP, and, apparently, the MPO has never asked the authority not to undertake a project that the board selected.

There are no elected officials on the JTA board. Three members are appointed by the Governor, three are appointed by the Mayor, and the seventh member is the FDOT District Secretary. The Authority has a designated membership on the MPO, and two members of the Authority's staff are members of the MPO's technical coordinating committee.

4.8. Mid-Bay Bridge Authority (Okaloosa County)

Legislation. The Mid-Bay Bridge Authority is a dependent special district that was created in 1986 by Chapter 86-465, Laws of Florida, which authorized the Authority to construct a bridge across Choctawhatchee Bay in Okaloosa County. The Authority is authorized under its current legislation to undertake projects only related to the bridge.

Current System. The three-mile Mid-Bay Bridge over Choctawhatchee Bay.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority constructed the Mid-Bay Bridge as a toll facility in 1993 and currently operates the bridge. Under a lease-purchase agreement, FDOT pays all operation and maintenance costs, which the Authority is obligated to repay when it has sufficient revenues. The Authority's expenses, including its debt service, are supported in part by the county's pledge of 40 percent of its share of the local option gas tax, which the Authority also is obligated to repay. As of September 30, 1995, the Authority owed FDOT $1,397,614 for accumulated operations and maintenance costs and owed Okaloosa County for advances of $7,847,910 from the local option gas tax. The other major debt of the Authority is the outstanding principal on the bonds for the bridge of $86,250,000. (The original bond issue of $81,740,000 is being refunded through the sale of $86,250,000 in revenue refunding bonds.) The current debt service (principal and interest) on the bonds is approximately $6,200,000 per year. The Authority's toll revenue for 1995 was $4,083,361. The balance of the debt service cost comes from gas tax and interest revenue. The Authority has one full-time employee plus the executive director, who is one-half time. The Authority has no plans for future projects.

Planning Process. During the MPO's transportation planning process a need for a bridge across Choctawhatchee Bay was identified and added to the MPO plan. Subsequently, it was jointly agreed among the MPO, FDOT, and the county that a bridge authority should be created to undertake a study to determine the feasibility of constructing the bridge as a toll facility.

The Authority is not a member of the MPO but is a member of the MPO's technical coordinating committee.
4.9. Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority

Legislation. The Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority was created in 1963 under Part V of Chapter 348, FS. In the Authority’s legislation there are no provisions for consent of the Board of County Commissioners to add expressways or for consistency with MPO and county plans. However, the Authority’s legislation does require that “before making any application for [a] pledge of gasoline tax funds, the authority shall present the plan of its proposed project to the Orange County planning and zoning commission for its comments and recommendations.”

Also, the provision for consent of a municipality is more restrictive than the general legislation. The Authority’s legislation states that “…acquisition of right-of-way for a project of the authority which is within the boundaries of any municipality in Orange County shall not be begun unless and until the route of said project within said municipality has been given prior approval by the governing body of said municipality.” It also states that “the authority shall have no power other than by consent of Orange County or any affected city, to enter into any agreement which would legally prohibit the construction of any road by Orange County or by any city within Orange County.”

The Authority was specifically authorized in its legislation to “...construct, finance, operate, own, and maintain that portion of the Western Beltway known as the Northwest Beltway Part A, extending from Florida’s Turnpike near Ocoee north to U.S. 441 near Apopka....” and “...to exercise its condemnation powers, construct, finance, operate, own, and maintain that portion of the Western Beltway known as the Western Beltway Part C, extending from Florida’s Turnpike near Ocoee in Orange County southerly through Orange and Osceola Counties to an interchange with I-4 near the Osceola-Polk County line....”

Current System. The 79-mile expressway system operated by the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority consists of three expressways: the 34-mile Central Florida Greeneway (S.R. 417) on the south and east sides of Orlando, the 23-mile Bee Line Expressway (S.R. 528) on the north side of the Orlando Airport, and the 22-mile East-West Expressway (S.R. 408) on the north side of Orlando.

Status and Future Plans. The Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority opened its first expressway in 1967. From then until 1995 FDOT provided toll-collection and maintenance services. Last year the authority began contracting with the private sector to provide these services. In FY 1996, FDOT contributed $1,288,000 of the $5,900,000 roadway maintenance budget, and the Authority has an interlocal agreement with FDOT to provide certain types of maintenance on portions of S.R. 408 that previously were performed by the city of Orlando. The authority also has begun to establish partnering relationships with FDOT and local governments to undertake jointly the construction of new facilities. The authority’s five-member board consists of the Chair of the County Commission, the District Secretary of FDOT, and three persons appointed by the Governor.
As of June 30, 1995, the Authority’s long-term debt included $70,210,000 for accumulated operations and maintenance costs and $14,038,000 for initial construction loans owed to FDOT and $66,000 for advances for preliminary engineering studies owed to Orange County. The debt owed to Orange County for advances of local gas tax revenues was repaid in 1995. Other major debts of the Authority as of June 30, 1996 are shown in Table 3. The current debt service (principal and interest) for the Authority’s bonds is approximately $39,000,000 per year. Current toll revenues are approximately $74,000,000 per year. The excess of revenues over debt service generally goes toward operating expenses, such as operations, maintenance, and depreciation.

The Authority’s future plans call for a 35-mile north-south expressway (the Western Beltway) on the west side of Orlando. It will extend from I-4 in Osceola County near the Polk County line to U.S. 441 near Apopka. The Authority has received a loan of $6.3 million from the state’s Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund for the initial studies on this project and has received a grant of $13.7 million from FDOT for the purchase of right-of-way. The state legislature gave the Authority the right to construct and operate the portion of this expressway that will be in Osceola County. The Authority’s 2015 Master Plan also call for over $400 million in improvements on the existing expressway system.

Planning Process. The Authority says that it does not undertake any project unless it is approved by the MPO and is consistent with and part of the MPO plan. The Authority begins its planning process with the MPO plan and then develops its own long-range plan after receiving input from the public and other interested parties. The Authority then takes its list of projects to the MPO for approval. Upon approval, the MPO includes the Authority’s projects in its transportation improvement program (TIP) for informational purposes.

The chairman of the Authority is a designated member of the MPO and the executive director of the Authority is a member of the MPO’s transportation technical committee.

Coordination activities include:

- An interlocal agreement with the city of Orlando for the Authority to assist in the widening of a city road (John Young Parkway) that connects with an expressway interchange. The Authority also will pay the city $66,000 for work on the interchange.

- An interlocal agreement with Orange County to undertake a highway beautification project on the Bee Line Expressway. The Authority and the county will split the $579,141 cost.

- Establishment of a task force to assist in the development of the proposed Western Beltway. The task force includes elected officials and chief staff personnel from the cities of Apopka, Winter Garden, and Ocoee; Orange and Osceola counties; and FDOT.
• An agreement with Osceola County for the Osceola Parkway to connect to the Authority’s host computer for the transfer of toll revenues.

• An agreement with FDOT’s Turnpike District to provide electronic toll collection facilities and services on the Seminole County portion of the Central Florida Greeneway and the Turnpike’s southern extension of the Greeneway.

4.10. Pasco County Expressway Authority

Legislation. The Pasco County Expressway Authority was created in 1973 under Part VI of Chapter 348, FS. Pasco’s purposes and powers are essentially the same as provided in Part I of Chapter 348, except that the provision for consent of a municipality is not as restrictive. There also are no provisions for consent of the board of county commissioners to add expressways or for consistency with MPO and county plans.

Current System. None.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority began a feasibility study of a Pasco County expressway (the Bi-County Expressway) in 1987 and concluded in 1995 that the project was not feasible. The Authority borrowed about $800,000 from the Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund for the initial work and that is now being repaid by the county. The Authority became inactive in 1995 and has no plans to become active again.

Planning Process. The proposed Bi-County Expressway was geographically outside of the MPO’s planning area (the county’s urbanized area) and, therefore, was not part of the MPO planning process. The proposed expressway was identified by the county as a potential toll facility and included in the transportation element of its comprehensive plan. When the MPO’s planning area was expanded to include the Bi-County route, the MPO began the process of including the Bi-County on the MPO plan but before that process was completed the project was determined not to be feasible and, therefore, was not added to the plan. However, it does remain as a conceptual route on the regional road network plan that is jointly maintained by the Pasco, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Hernando MPOs. The Authority was the County Commission, which also makes up the majority of the MPO.

4.11. St. Lucie County Expressway Authority

Legislation. The St. Lucie County Expressway Authority was created in 1983 under Part VII of Chapter 348, FS. St. Lucie’s purposes and powers are essentially the same as provided in Part I of Chapter 348, except that the provision for consent of a municipality is not as restrictive. There also are no provisions for consent of the Board of County Commissioners to add expressways or for consistency with MPO and county plans.
Current System. None.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority conducted a feasibility study of the proposed “Palmer Expressway” in the 1980s and then decided not to proceed with the project. It was inactive until recent interest in the possible construction of a toll bridge (the “Walton Bridge”) over the Intracoastal Waterway. The Authority has no employees. It owes $2,217,475 to the Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund for money it has borrowed for studies on both the proposed Palmer Expressway and the proposed Walton Bridge.

Planning Process. The Authority identified the need for the Walton Bridge and requested that the MPO add it to the MPO plan so that the Authority would be eligible to borrow from the Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund. The MPO added the proposed project to its transportation improvement program and its “needs” plan last year, but not to its “cost feasible” plan. The Authority borrowed $500,000 from the Revolving Trust Fund and is now undertaking a feasibility study of the proposed bridge.

No members of the Authority are designated members of the MPO or the MPO’s technical advisory committee. However, two county commissioners currently serve on both the MPO and the Authority boards.

4.12. Santa Rosa Bay Bridge Authority

Legislation. The Santa Rosa Bay Bridge Authority was created in 1984 under Chapter 348, Part IX, FS, to construct and operate the Santa Rosa Bay Bridge System, which is defined as “...a bridge between Red Fish Point on the mainland and Garcon Point of the cape, which may include an eventual connection to Santa Rosa Island....” The Authority is not authorized under its current legislation to undertake projects not related to the bridge.

Santa Rosa’s purposes and powers are essentially the same as provided in Part I of Chapter 348, except that the provision for consent of a municipality is not as restrictive. There also are no provisions for consent of the Board of County Commissioners to add to the system or for consistency with MPO and county plans.

Current System. None.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority has completed a study that determined that the construction of the Garcon Point bridge as a toll facility is feasible. The authority hopes to sell bonds this year and begin construction shortly afterwards. Through a lease-purchase agreement, FDOT will advance the money for operations and maintenance costs with a provision that the Authority repay the costs at some point. The Authority has borrowed $8,442,513 from the Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund for the initial studies, design, and right-of-way purchase for the...
Planning Process. During the MPO’s transportation planning process a need for a bridge to Garcon Point was identified and added to the MPO plan. Subsequently, it was jointly agreed among the MPO, FDOT, and the county that a bridge authority should be created to undertake a study to determine the feasibility of constructing the bridge as a toll facility.

The authority is a member of the MPO but not the MPO technical coordinating committee.

4.13. Seminole County Expressway Authority

Legislation. The Seminole County Expressway Authority was created in 1974 under Part VIII of Chapter 348, FS. The Authority’s purposes and powers are essentially the same as provided in Part I of Chapter 348, except that the provision for consent of a municipality is not as restrictive. There also are no provisions for consent of the board of county commissioners to add expressways or for consistency with MPO and county plans.

Current System. The Authority does not operate any expressways. It completed the engineering and design for the 12-mile portion of the Central Florida Greeneway in Seminole County and then turned the project over to FDOT. The bond financing and the construction of this segment were handled by the Turnpike District of FDOT, which now operates the expressway.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority is now partnering with FDOT to extend the Greeneway six miles to connect with I-4. The Authority is handling the design and engineering for this segment while District 5 of FDOT is handling right-of-way acquisition. The Authority expects the Turnpike District of FDOT to undertake the financing, construction, and operation of this segment. The Authority has no plans for other activities after it completes the design and engineering of this segment in 1998. For initial work on the Greeneway the Authority owes the Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund $15,380,275. It also owes $731,000 to Seminole County for advances to cover administrative costs. The Authority expects these debts to be assumed by the FDOT Turnpike District when it assumes responsibility for the new segment.

Planning Process. In the 1960s the MPO identified the need for a beltway in Seminole County. In the 1980s the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority identified the need to extend its expressway system into Seminole County and suggested that the beltway identified in the MPO plan be constructed as a toll facility, and that project has since been part of the coordinated MPO planning process.

Although the Authority does not have designated memberships on the MPO, four members of the Authority currently are also members of the MPO. These include three county commissioners.
and the mayor of Sanford. The Authority’s executive director is a designated member of the MPO’s transportation technical committee.

4.14. Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority

Legislation. The Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority was created in 1963 under Part IV of Chapter 348, FS. There are no provisions for consent of a municipality, for consent of the board of county commissioners to add expressways, or for consistency with MPO plans. However, there is a strong provision for consultation with the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission and for consideration of the county’s comprehensive plan.

In addition to the power to construct and operate an expressway system, the authority is given the power to construct along the system and lease “…telephone, telegraph, television, electric power and other wires or cables, pipelines, water mains and other conduits….”

Current System. The Authority manages the Lee Roy Selmon Crosstown Expressway, which extends 14 miles between Gandy Boulevard in the Inter-Bay area in Tampa and Interstate 75 near Brandon.

Status and Future Plans. The Authority’s bonded debt payments and its administrative costs are paid out of toll revenues. When toll revenues are not sufficient to cover these costs, Hillsborough County has pledged to make up the difference out of its local gas tax revenues. Toll revenue on the Lee Roy Selmon Crosstown Expressway has recently begun to exceed the debt service payments and, therefore, the county is not currently having to contribute local gas tax revenue toward bond payments. However, at current rates, toll revenues are not expected to be sufficient to cover all of the current operations and maintenance costs before the bonds are due to be retired in 2008. Therefore, FDOT is expected to continue to advance funds to cover the operations (toll collection) and maintenance costs of the expressway.

As of the end of 1995, the Authority owed FDOT $36,608,361 for accumulated operations costs, $8,170,539 for accumulated maintenance costs, and $18,884,709 for initial construction loans. In addition, the Authority owes Hillsborough County $45,226,588 for local gas tax revenues that have been applied to bond payments as of the end of the county’s 1995 fiscal year (June 30, 1995). Other major debts of the Authority are $3,938,719 owed to the FDOT Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund for planning and design work on extensions to the expressway, and the outstanding principal on the bonds for the expressway of $120,030,000. The current debt service (principal and interest) for the bonds is approximately $13,000,000 per year. Other than the bonds, none of these debts bear interest.

The Authority did the planning and initial development for the Veterans Expressway but, when it became apparent that the Authority had insufficient financial capacity to finance the construction, the Authority established a partnering arrangement with the FDOT Turnpike District wherein the
Authority became the Turnpike District's right-of-way agent for the project and the Turnpike undertook the construction and management of the facility.

In April 1996, the Authority adopted a master plan of new projects to be funded and built in partnership with Hillsborough County and FDOT. Preliminary design is underway on the largest of the new projects, a planned connector between Interstate 4 and the Lee Roy Selmon Crosstown Expressway. This $225 million project is funded jointly by the Authority and FDOT and is being developed in conjunction with the reconstruction of the Interstate Highway System in the Tampa Bay area. The project includes the construction of additional lanes on the Lee Roy Selmon Crosstown Expressway from downtown Tampa to the present eastern terminus of the expressway at Interstate 75.

Discussions are currently under way with FDOT, Hillsborough County, and the Hillsborough MPO to extend that terminus by constructing additional access to the expressway in the Brandon area. Two projects in the Brandon area have tentatively been identified and $50 million has been programmed in the Authority's master plan for these projects and related improvements. The master plan now includes $280 million of funded improvements to be constructed over the next 15 years, with the first construction scheduled to begin in 1997. The improvements will be funded by refinancing outstanding bonds and selling new bonds backed by toll revenues. The first bond sale is scheduled for January 1997.

Planning Process. Through its internal analyses of the level of service on its existing facility the Authority may identify capacity or other improvements that are needed. It then takes those proposed improvements to the MPO for approval. It also attempts to identify projects currently on the MPO plan that may be feasible toll projects. It does not undertake any projects that are not approved by the MPO and made part of the MPO plan. Coordination with local comprehensive plans and other planning agencies, such as FDOT and the Planning Commission, occurs within the MPO planning process. The Authority is a member of the MPO and participates on various MPO committees.

5. The Role of Expressway Authorities in the Planning Process

Expressway authorities primarily are one of the implementers of the transportation plan that is developed by the local MPO. Along with FDOT, the county, and the cities within the urban area, the local expressway authority funds and constructs roadways, and, in some cases, transit. Expressway authorities usually are also one of the developers of the MPO plan by virtue of membership on the MPO, or through input in the public forums during which the plan is developed. This input typically consists of advice on which roads currently on the MPO plan could be financed through tolls, and recommendations on new roadways not currently on the plan that could be toll-financed and may be appropriate to add to the plan.
However, as discussed earlier, most expressway authorities do not have to follow the MPO’s plan nor its priorities. Although this fact does not appear to have been a source of serious conflict in the past, there certainly is the potential for conflict or uncoordinated plans.

5.1. Relationship with other Governmental Entities

FDOT Turnpike District

Some authorities have established a partnering arrangement with the Turnpike District in order to bring expressways to fruition. For instance, in the case of the Veterans Expressway in Tampa, the Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority initially developed the project and then purchased the right of way on behalf of the Turnpike. The Turnpike financed and constructed the expressway. This arrangement will remain in effect until all current legal cases involving right-of-way acquisition are resolved, which is expected to occur within the next year. As part of that arrangement, the Turnpike District has reimbursed the Authority for a substantial share of its administrative cost. Since the agreement went into effect in October 1990 that share of the Authority’s administrative cost has been as high as 70 percent and is currently about 30 percent. Tampa and other authorities are proposing additional partnering relationships with the Turnpike on future projects.

Under the lease-purchase agreements that exist between FDOT and most expressway authorities, if the bonds on an authority’s expressway are retired, the expressway will be transferred to state ownership, and toll facilities owned by the state come under the authority of either the Turnpike District or the local FDOT district.

FDOT Central Office

The FDOT Office of Toll Operations is responsible for toll collection on all state toll roads, including the Florida Turnpike. It also performs this function under contract for most expressway authorities. This relationship usually is stipulated in the expressway’s bond covenants; otherwise, the authority could hire its own toll takers or contract that function out to the private sector. The lease-purchase agreements between FDOT and expressway authorities usually provide that the cost of toll collection (referred to as operations cost) will be advanced by FDOT and will be repaid by the authorities when the bonds are retired.

Within the FDOT Office of Financial Planning a revolving trust fund (the Toll Facilities Revolving Trust Fund) is maintained from which local governments, including expressway authorities, can borrow up to $500,000 per year for the initial design and planning of expressway projects. Additional amounts can be appropriated by the Legislature. Current amounts owed to that fund are shown in Table 3. If expressway authorities borrow from the fund, their projects are required to be consistent with the local MPO plan.
FDOT District Offices

It often is stipulated in the bond covenants that FDOT perform the maintenance on expressways; otherwise, the authorities could hire their own maintenance workers or contract that function out to the private sector. When stipulated or otherwise requested, the local FDOT district performs this function. As in the case of operations costs, the lease-purchase agreements between FDOT and expressway authorities usually provide that the cost of maintenance will be advanced by FDOT and will be repaid by the authorities when the bonds are retired.

As shown in Table 1, the District Secretary often is a member of the expressway board and often also participates in expressway authority affairs through non-voting membership on the local MPO. Coordination at the local level between FDOT and expressway authorities occurs formally through the MPO planning process and through lease-purchase agreements.

Local Governments

Counties often support the bonds for expressways by pledging their local option gas tax. Without that pledge there would be cases where authorities either would not be able to sell bonds or would receive less favorable rates. Cities and counties often are represented on expressway authority boards by elected officials, as shown in Table 1, and expressway authorities often are members of MPOs, which include local elected officials.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

Under Chapter 348, Part I, FS, projects undertaken by an expressway authority must be approved by the MPO as part of the MPO's long-range plan. However, most authorities were created prior to the passage of Part I of Chapter 348 by special acts that do not require consistency with the MPO plan or any other involvement with the MPO. In practice, most authorities work closely with their MPO and the authorities' projects are almost always selected from needs first identified by the MPO. In part, this is due to the requirement that the projects of expressway authorities that borrow from the Revolving Trust Fund be consistent with the local MPO plan. The specific projects selected from the MPO long-range plan for construction by an authority tends to be a result of negotiation among the authority, the MPO, and other involved parties. There is, however, the potential for conflict.

As noted in Table 1, there tends to be cross membership between the boards of expressway authorities and MPOs. In addition, authority staff often are members of the MPO's technical committee, which advises the MPO board.
Other Local Agencies

The interaction of expressway authorities with other local agencies is usually limited to ad hoc involvement or to joint membership on the MPO, transportation committees, etc. However, in some cases there is substantial interaction with the local transit agency. In Jacksonville, the transit agency is part of the authority. In Dade County, the authority’s legislation specifically includes public transportation projects in its mission.

References


