



# Urban Land Institute

## Southeast Florida/Caribbean

For more information contact: Carla Coleman at 954.783.9504 or [carla.coleman@uli.org](mailto:carla.coleman@uli.org)

### ***CONNECTING FLORIDA: TRANSIT AND FLORIDA'S ECONOMY* HIGHLIGHTS TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AS CRITICAL TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF STATE'S URBAN AREAS**

Fort Lauderdale, April 30, 2010 -- New transportation connections within and between the five largest urban regions in Florida – including Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Tampa Bay/St. Petersburg, Orlando, Jacksonville, and Lee and Collier counties – will enhance the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of the entire state, according to a new report, *Connecting Florida: Transit and Florida's Economy*, prepared by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and its five Florida District Councils.

ULI is a global research and education institute dedicated to responsible land use; the report is being released this week during a series of events hosted by the district councils representing ULI in Florida: ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean, ULI Central Florida, ULI North Florida, ULI Tampa Bay and ULI Southwest Florida.

"Well-planned, integrated transportation systems, including transit, translate into sustainable communities. A sustainable community is also an economically viable one," observed ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean Infrastructure Chair Debbie Orshefsky, also a Fort Lauderdale attorney with Greenberg Traurig.

The *Connecting Florida* report was released at a ULI program held today in Fort Lauderdale. The report examines transit alternatives being built, planned or proposed for each of the state's five major urban regions, which include more than 80 percent of both the state's population and the state's jobs, and which are expected to absorb at least 80 percent of the five million additional people projected to live in the state by 2030. The systems range from a rejuvenated express bus service in Miami to commuter rail service in central Florida to a federally funded high-speed rail line system connecting Tampa to Orlando and other areas. With use of the limited transit service now available already on the rise, the potential is great for widespread use of the new systems, which will provide much-needed relief to traffic gridlock throughout much of the state, the report says. (Between 2000 and 2007, vehicle miles traveled in the state rose 35 percent, compared to a 17- percent population increase and a 6-percent increase in road lanes.)

"Regionally integrated transit systems coordinated with compact development and metropolitan intensification will benefit not only Florida's economy, but also the state's environment and quality of life," *Connecting Florida* states. "For a state long associated with tourism and attracting in-migrants, quality of life is one of Florida's most significant economic assets."

Connecting Florida was prepared as part of the ULI/Curtis Regional Infrastructure Project, supported by ULI trustee James J. Curtis, III, principal at the Bristol Group, Inc. in San Francisco. The project includes research on the relationship between infrastructure and land use, and seeks to position infrastructure as a key component of sustainable communities and a major contributor to economic competitiveness. The ULI district councils in Florida are among several nationwide that are participating in the project.

The report notes that the passenger capacity of 400 cars can be accommodated by eight buses or one commuter train. It points to five elements of a regionally integrated transit system:

- Commuter rail and express buses to connect multi-county metro regions
- Light rail and bus rapid transit to expedite movement throughout urban areas

- Local buses and streetcars to connect neighborhoods to regional transit
- Intercity passenger rail and bus service to expand connections between metro regions
- Walkable community design to permit pedestrian access to transit

*Connecting Florida* highlights the multiple benefits of well-designed, integrated transit systems: 1) more transportation choices for consumers means having to spend less on auto maintenance and gas; 2) high-quality transit lowers expenditures on road use and parking facilities; and 3) transit investments create jobs (every billion dollars of annual spending on transit in the United States generates 36,000 jobs, according to the American Public Transportation Association.)

The viability of the transit systems will hinge in large part on the degree to which the infrastructure systems are planned in coordination with land use planning in the regions, the report states. "Clustering development around transit stations or stops improves the efficiency of the transit system, allowing for higher-quality service, which with supportive planning and development policies, increases property values," the report says.

It points to more concentrated, transit-oriented development as a way to conserve land, preserve the environment, encourage transit use, and create a safe walking environment (each of the five major urban regions are rated as among the nation's highest for pedestrian fatalities, according to the Surface Transportation Policy Project and Transportation for America). In addition, the report notes that more compact development in walkable neighborhoods connected by transit will be the likely preference of the two age groups influencing future housing demand: aging baby boomers trading large homes on large lots for smaller homes on smaller lots; and Generation Y, the highly mobile children of baby boomers who place a high priority on convenience and connectivity.

The report emphasizes the need for a long-term commitment to transportation infrastructure, including local, metro and regional coordination, consistent state government support, and private sector leadership. "Collaborative partnerships will be needed to develop plans, policies, regulations and investment strategies...As the ingredients come together, Florida's metropolitan regions will become more competitive."

#### **About ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean**

The ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council includes the seven counties located along Florida's east coast, stretching from Indian River through Monroe Counties, and the Caribbean Basin. Its more than 800 members work locally on issues such as infrastructure, sustainability and housing. For more information go to [www.seflorida.uli.org](http://www.seflorida.uli.org).

#### **About the Urban Land Institute**

The Urban Land Institute ([www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)) is a global nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Established in 1936, the Institute has nearly 33,000 members representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines.

Carla Coleman, Executive Director  
ULI SE Florida/Caribbean  
Phone: 954-783-9504  
[Carla.coleman@uli.org](mailto:Carla.coleman@uli.org)