



Official Calls For Funding Of Local Road Projects

By LAURA KINSLER The Tampa Tribune

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TAMPA - Hillsborough County Commissioner Ken Hagan moved out of his Cross Creek home a few years ago, but he hasn't forgotten what New Tampa traffic is all about.

As chairman of the county's Transportation Task Force, Hagan said he will recommend that the county chip in \$10 million to help Tampa pay for needed road projects that could reduce congestion in north Tampa.

Those projects include the final phase of Cross Creek Boulevard and the highway overpass connecting New Tampa Boulevard to Tampa Palms. Hagan said he also would recommend the county contribute to Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio's top transportation priority: 40th Street.

"We've partnered with the city before," Hagan said. "They are all projects that are critical to the entire community."

The county is considering a \$500 million bond for transportation improvements. The task force was charged with recommending how best to divvy it up. Half of the bond money would go for road projects, and the remaining \$250 million would be used for transit, intersection improvements, right-of-way acquisition and traffic management.

Tampa completed the widening of Cross Creek Boulevard from Clay Gully to Cory Lake Isles last month. The final 2.27-mile segment is scheduled for widening in 2009. Hillsborough County has earmarked \$1.5 million for that project, and the Florida Department of Transportation has added about \$1 million. That leaves a shortfall of about \$6 million.

Hagan said he would recommend adding \$3 million for Cross Creek Boulevard. He also wants to dedicate \$4 million toward the New Tampa Boulevard bridge linking West Meadows and Tampa Palms. The highway overpass is critical to the proposed east-west toll road.

The bridge over Interstate 75 once was estimated to cost \$11 million, but the cost has swelled to between \$19 million and \$22 million.

"The cost continues to escalate, and we don't have the funds to do it," said Steve Daignault, the city's administrator for public works.

Another project the city started but can't afford to finish is 40th Street. The most expensive segment, which includes a bridge over the Hillsborough River, is under construction.

Hagan said he would recommend adding \$3 million toward those final segments, which are immediately north and south of the bridge section.

The task force meets 1:30 p.m. Monday in the Frederick B. Karl County Center. The three city projects are just a part of the discussion, Hagan said. The task force is finalizing its countywide 5-year works program, which also includes projects in Plant City, Temple Terrace and unincorporated Hillsborough County. Final recommendations will go to the county commissioners in the summer.

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