

2020 Budget Turkey Watch Report

*An analysis of the transparency and
accountability of the budget process*

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The 2020 Florida TaxWatch Budget Turkey Report
An Analysis of the Transparency and Accountability of the Budget Process

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THE 2020 BUDGET TURKEY WATCH REPORT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE BUDGET PROCESS

IS THE RESULT OF AN ANNUAL INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF FLORIDA'S NEW BUDGET BY FLORIDA TAXWATCH. THE REPORT WAS STARTED IN 1983 AND PROMOTES ADDITIONAL OVERSIGHT AND INTEGRITY IN THE STATE'S BUDGETING PROCESS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT: BECAUSE MONEY APPROPRIATED BY THE LEGISLATURE BELONGS TO THE TAXPAYERS OF FLORIDA, THE PROCESS MUST BE TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE, AND EVERY APPROPRIATION SHOULD RECEIVE DELIBERATION AND PUBLIC DEBATE. THE BUDGET REVIEW IDENTIFIES APPROPRIATIONS THAT CIRCUMVENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS IN PUBLIC BUDGETING.

BUDGET TURKEYS ARE ITEMS, USUALLY LOCAL MEMBER PROJECTS, PLACED IN INDIVIDUAL LINE-ITEMS OR ACCOMPANYING PROVISOR LANGUAGE THAT ARE ADDED TO THE FINAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL WITHOUT BEING FULLY SCRUTINIZED AND SUBJECTED TO THE BUDGET PROCESS. THE BUDGET TURKEY LABEL DOES NOT SIGNIFY JUDGMENT OF A PROJECT'S WORTHINESS. INSTEAD, THE REVIEW FOCUSES ON THE FLORIDA BUDGET PROCESS, AND THE PURPOSE OF THE BUDGET TURKEY LABEL IS TO ENSURE THAT ALL APPROPRIATIONS USING PUBLIC FUNDS RECEIVE THE DELIBERATION, DEBATE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY THEY DESERVE. WHILE A PROJECT MAY BE WORTHWHILE, BUDGET TURKEYS TEND TO SERVE A LIMITED (NOT STATEWIDE) AREA, ARE OFTEN NOT CORE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT, ARE MORE APPROPRIATELY FUNDED WITH LOCAL OR PRIVATE DOLLARS, AND CAN CIRCUMVENT COMPETITIVE BIDDING OR SELECTION AND OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

THE \$93.2 BILLION BUDGET PASSED BY THE FLORIDA HOUSE AND SENATE FOR FY2020-21 CONTAINS 180 APPROPRIATIONS ITEMS WORTH \$136.3 MILLION QUALIFYING AS BUDGET TURKEYS. THESE ARE ONLY A PORTION OF THE RECORD 829 MEMBER PROJECTS IN THE BUDGET WORTH MORE THAN ONE-HALF BILLION DOLLARS.

The annual Budget Turkey Report spotlights legislative projects placed in the budget without proper opportunity for public review and debate

BUDGET TURKEYS AND MEMBER PROJECTS SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNCERTAIN FISCAL ENVIRONMENT CREATED BY COVID-19

Like virtually every aspect of life, the virus will have a profound effect on the state's fiscal condition. The increased costs of combating the virus, coupled with the economic shutdown's effects on state revenues, puts Florida in a precarious budget situation. The billions of dollars in federal aid that have been received by Florida will help, but will it be enough to fill the budget hole? The size of that hole is still far from being known. As a state that relies extensively on transaction taxes and tourist spending to fund our government, Florida is going to see an unprecedented drop in revenue. The data needed to assess even the short-term impact are just now becoming available. The actual tax collection data that reflect April sales activity (likely the worst month) will not be out until later this month. We also have no idea how long the virus will be a factor and how long the negative economic effects will linger after it is gone.

In light of a potential budget deficit, Florida TaxWatch is not only recommending the Governor veto all the Budget Turkeys, but also apply a strict standard to all member projects. This report also identifies specific groups of member projects that require extra scrutiny. Some of these may be very good projects that are more statewide in nature, serve our most vulnerable citizens, advance important state goals, or are simply additional funding for programs already in the base budget. But these are drastic times. The Governor summed it up very well at his post-session press conference. To paraphrase: When doing vetoes, there are projects that just shouldn't be funded, projects that might do some good but are lower-priority, and there are even good projects that in a bad budget situation you need to pass on. The Governor should, and surely will, give leeway to health care appropriations and others that will help the state and its citizens deal with the challenges presented by the virus. It should be noted there are only two health and human services appropriations on the Budget Turkey list, both of which were added in conference.

APPROPRIATIONS (MEMBER) PROJECT RULES HAVE REDUCED TURKEYS, NOT MEMBER PROJECTS

The appropriations project rules adopted four years ago have reduced the number of Budget Turkeys. Each House member project requires a bill to be approved by an appropriations subcommittee and the Senate requires a member request form. The House bill and Senate form numbers appear alongside the project in the budget, clearly identifying them as member projects. This has greatly reduced the number of items being added to the budget for the first time during the budget conference committee process, in fact the joint rules of the Legislature prohibit it. Projects added during the conference used to comprise a significant percentage of Budget Turkeys.

However, in this past session there were 12 member projects added in conference, the most since the rules were implemented. There were also 42 projects that were taken out of the budget by agreement of both chambers in the conference process, only to be added back at the last minute through the supplemental ("sprinkle") lists. It appears the practice of adding projects during conference is returning.

The new rules have increased the transparency of member projects—taxpayers and the media can at least see what was being proposed. While the new rules have (relatively) limited the number of turkeys, they have not limited member projects—they are just added sooner. This year’s budget contains a record 829 member projects worth \$503.3 million. This brings the four-year total (since the rules were adopted) to more than 2,600 funded members projects worth \$2.2 billion.

House members in 2020 filed 1,634 bills requesting appropriations projects, totaling \$2.3 billion (an average of \$19 million per member). Similarly, the 40-member Senate requested 1,579 projects, totaling \$2.5 billion (an average of nearly 40 projects and \$62.5 million per member).

It must be remembered that the state shares approximately \$5 billion of state revenue directly with local governments and school districts and billions of dollars more are sent down to the local level every year through the state budget. Adding more through budget earmarks is done at the expense of statewide priorities, core functions, and accountable programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To further promote the integrity of Florida’s budget process, and to get a handle on the proliferation of member projects, Florida TaxWatch offers these recommendations:

Legislative Appropriations Project Rules – The member project rules that were put in place four years ago should become permanent and continue to be improved upon. The practice of detailing the recurring projects in the base budget should also be continued.

Competitive Selection Processes – The lack of a systematic review and selection process in some areas of the budget has become a glaring problem. Member projects are peppered throughout the budget, but there are several line-items where one can count on numerous projects ending up.

To make sure that these projects are funded with a coordinated, statewide vision, compete for limited funding fairly, and meet specified requirements to qualify for funding, Florida TaxWatch recommends that if the Legislature is going to fund such projects, it create a competitive review and selection process in statute for each of the following areas:

- Housing and Community Development Projects
 - Water Projects
 - School and Instructional Enhancements
 - Private College and University Projects
 - Special Local Law Enforcement Projects
 - Local Fire Service
 - Fixed Capital Outlay for Local Fire Services
 - Economic Development Projects
 - Workforce Projects
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Supplemental Funding Lists – It has become routine for the budget conference process to end with each chamber accepting the other chamber’s supplemental funding lists worth more than \$100 million each. This is done without public debate or discussion and the lists have been developed and already agreed to in private. The list includes increased funding for some projects already in the budget and can also introduce new projects, sometimes including items that had not been discussed before. This year’s sprinkle lists contained a likely record number of items. The Senate list contained 170 items worth \$129.5 million; the House funded 134 items with \$137.4 million. This means \$267.0 million in hard-earned taxpayer dollars were spent as almost an afterthought, after all the various budget areas had been “closed-out.” It is understandable that there can be some money left over when negotiations are finished. Adding money to existing programs in this way, while certainly not the best budget practice, is not as bad as adding new projects, but these supplemental funding lists should be prohibited.

Local Transportation Projects – A few years ago, the Legislature created the Economic Development Transportation Projects program to fund transportation projects that promote economic development and growth. It became a way to simply add local transportation projects to the budget. Last year, the House attempted to repeal this program. While the statute was not repealed, the budget no longer has a line-item for the Road Fund and there is now a line-item simply called Local Transportation Projects. While this is a more truthful description, it also removes even the appearance of a selection process. Projects that are not part of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Work Program take scarce transportation dollars away from the vetted and comprehensively planned projects that are in the Work Program. If Local Transportation Projects are going to stay, a formal competitive selection process, with whatever criteria the Legislature sees fit, should be established. Most importantly, a set amount of funding should be established so FDOT may include it in the Work Program and the Legislature should not exceed that amount unless it uses general revenue to fund the additional cost. Florida TaxWatch recommends that the Legislature stop earmarking these projects and allow a formal process to decide which projects have the highest return on investment to ensure they are considered within the state’s coordinated transportation planning process.

BUDGETING WITHOUT DISCIPLINE

Just as the Rule of Law is critically essential in a civil society, so is the integrity, transparency and accountability of the budget process to ensure the highest and best use of the taxpayers’ hard earned money.

FLORIDA TAXWATCH 2020-21 BUDGET TURKEYS

Florida TaxWatch offers this annual report to help the Governor in his deliberations. In addition to projects that qualify as Budget Turkey, this report highlights other areas in the budget that contain numerous member projects that, while they do not qualify, certainly deserve close scrutiny by the Governor.

CRITERIA

The Florida TaxWatch Budget Turkey criteria are clearly defined. Appropriations must violate sound budgeting practices in at least one of these ways to be designated as a Budget Turkey:

- A project that circumvents established review and selection processes or has completed the established process but is funded ahead of much higher priority projects (as determined by the selection process);
- Appropriations that are inserted in the budget during conference committee meetings, meaning they did not appear in either the final Senate or House budgets; and
- Appropriations from inappropriate trust funds; duplicative appropriations; and appropriations contingent on legislation that did not pass.

THE PROJECTS

Appropriations Added in Conference

The appropriations below were all added in the conference committee, meaning they were not in either the House and/or Senate budget as passed by the respective chambers. Conference additions used to make up a large portion of the Budget Turkey list, but the appropriations (member) project reforms have limited such additions. That is a very good improvement to the budgeting process. Unfortunately, it seems this old practice is starting to resurface, and this is the most conference additions since the new rules. House and Senate rules provide that the inclusion of member projects that were not included in a previous budget makes the budget out of order. Further, most of these items were added through the sprinkle list, meaning they did not appear until truly the last minute. Some of these projects would have been included in the Budget Turkey Report, even without being added in conference. They appear in other sections of this report, but they are only counted once in the item and dollar totals.

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
DOE	150	FAMU - Mandarin Institute		200,000		Leon	4535	1801
DCF	319A	Florida Caregiving Youth Expansion Project		250,000		Palm Beach	2895	1178
DCF	376	Community Health of South Florida - Children's Crisis Center		250,000		Miami-Dade	4851	1637
FDLE	1261	Hills. Sheriff's Explosive Ordinance Disposal Team - Resp. Veh.		546,250		Hillsborough	2143	
DLA	1318	The Florida Council On The Social Status of Black Men & Boys		150,000		Statewide		2560
DACS	1483C	South Florida Fairgrounds Multi-Purpose Exhibition Building		250,000		Palm Beach	3665	1625
DEP	1635A	Punta Gorda Boca Grande Area Water Quality Improvements		100,000		Charlotte	4317	1743
DOT	1958A	Rales Rides - Senior Transportation Program	159,520			Palm Beach	3927	1383
DEO	2279A	Surfside Turnkey Solar Power System		200,000		Miami-Dade	4551	2530
State	3153A	Italian Club of Tampa		1,000,000		Hillsborough	4069	2363
DOH	Sec. 39	Mayo Clinic Cancer Center of Jacksonville	1,500,000			Duval		2641
DEO	Sec. 92	SRQ A&P Mechanic School and Airline Maintenance Hangers		3,000,000		Manatee	3867	1947

Projects Added Back to Budget by the Sprinkle Lists

Another practice that appears to be increasing is adding appropriations back to the budget through the sprinkle lists after they had been removed earlier in conference. While many projects had their appropriation increased significantly in the sprinkle lists, the below projects would not have received funding without being added at the very last minute. Some of these projects appear in other sections of the Budget Turkey Report, but they are only counted once in the item and dollar totals.

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
DOE	35	Inclusive Transition and Employment Management Program		750,000		M-D, Broward	9043	1156
DOE	65B	St. Thomas University Trade and Logistics Program		220,000		Miami-Dade	2443	1159
DOE	66A	St. Thomas University Trade and Logistics Program - FCO		280,000		Miami-Dade	2443	1159
DOE	100	FL Youth Leadership, Mentoring and Character Education Pilot		150,000		Leon	4567	1606
DOE	100	Women of Tomorrow Mentor & Scholarship Program		500,000		Miami-Dade	4351	
DOE	110	School Bond Issuance Data Base		500,000		Statewide	4495	
DOE	114	Breakthrough Miami		500,000		Miami-Dade		1333
DOE	114	Children in Action Literacy and Science Enrichment Routines		200,000		Miami-Dade	4047	1369
DOE	114	Crockett Foundation Coding Explorers Program		50,000		Broward		1279
DOE	114	East River High School - Agriculture Education Program Expansion		60,000		Orange	3905	1581
DOE	114	Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach		300,000		Miami-Dade	2535	
DOE	114	Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital Patient Academics Program		450,000		Pinellas	4859	2362
DOE	114	Proposal for Non-public CTE Certification Pilot Program		200,000		Okaloosa	4207	2516
DOE	114	Safer, Smarter Schools		2,000,000		Statewide	2845	1473
DOE	114	St. Johns Schools Classroom to Careers/Flagships		50,000		St. Johns		2484
DOE	114	Tampa Museum of Art- Art on the House- Education & Outreach		50,000		Hillsborough	2559	1284
DOE	114	Teach for America, Inc		250,000		Statewide	4885	2511
DOE	115	Special Olympics Florida Unified Champion Schools		250,000		Statewide	3261	1362
DOE	117A	Key West Collegiate Academy Building		500,000		Monroe		2573
DOE	118	Pinellas County-Pinellas Schools Joint Use Highpoint Recreation		500,000		Pinellas	4113	2174
DOE	150	FIU - Individualized C		750,000		Miami-Dade		2094
DACS	1524	Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee Sustainable Space Garden		300,000		Sarasota	2095	1232
DACS	1524	North Miami Food Pantry		100,000		Miami-Dade	3437	2283
DEP	1635A	Hernando County Glen Water Reclamation Facility Denitrification Upgrades		900,000		Hernando	3513	1858
DEP	1635A	IMPOWER/Grove Sewer Connection		220,000		Seminole	2335	2546
DEP	1635A	Miami Beach 75th Street Booster Station		200,000		Miami-Dade	2537	1112
DEP	1635A	North Miami Septic to Sewer Conversions		200,000		Miami-Dade	3439	2282
DEP	1635A	Orange City Blue Spring Nutrient Reduction - Septic to Sewer Conversion		500,000		Volusia	3025	1969
DEP	1635A	Pasco County Quail Hollow Blvd. South (SW-530)		850,000		Pasco	3181	2275
DEP	1635A	Pinecrest Stormwater Improvements		150,000		Miami-Dade	3807	1556

DEP	1635A	Polk Regional Water Cooperative Heartland Headwaters		500,000		Polk		
DEP	1635A	Surfside Abbott Avenue Drainage Improvements		250,000		Miami-Dade	3875	2400
DEP	1635A	Temple Terrace Golf and County Club Water Conservation		958,000		Hillsborough	9175	2465
DEP	1635A	Volusia County Ariel Canal Water Quality Improvements		500,000		Volusia	2381	2056
DEP	1635A	Wellington Wetlands Reuse Project		220,000		Hillsborough	2371	1132
DEP	1635A	West Palm Beach SCADA Cybersecurity Technology Upgrades		250,000		Palm Beach	4007	1710
DEP	1676C	Ponte Vedra Beach North Beach and Dune Restoration		3,000,000		St. Johns	4759	2505
GOV	2646	Coral Springs - Westside Facility Hardening Project		250,000		Broward	4623	2020
DEO	2272	Discovery Learning Center Transportation Services - Pinellas		175,000		Pinellas	4393	2301
DEO	2288A	Income Tax Consulting & Preparation		300,000		Leon	2115	2043
DFS	2424A	Cedar Hammock Fire Control District Regional Training Tower		1,000,000		Manatee	2307	2557
State	3153A	Camp Matecumbe - Historic Pedro Pan Hall Renovation - Miami-Dade		250,000		Miami-Dade	2353	1591

College & University Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

Last year, the Legislature passed a bill to strengthen the Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) selection process of the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Division of Colleges for higher education construction projects. It created a point system to prioritize the projects with the focus on finishing projects that are already in the pipeline before adding new ones with significant future year funding needs—a long-time Florida TaxWatch recommendation; however, the Legislature still does not seem to be paying much attention to the priority list, although the argument could be made that things have improved in recent years. The Legislature funded seven college construction projects this year. The three below were all member requests, two of which were not even on the 57-project priority list and the other was the 27th priority and not recommended until at least four years out. Even though only two of the eight top priorities that make up the BOG's first year request were funded, none of the seven university projects that were funded is on the Budget Turkey list. There was uncertainty surrounding the top two priorities (Florida Poly and New College) and the others that were funded make up the second-year request. Two university lab schools were also funded, which the House had recommended for funding in another line-item (still with PECO funds).

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
DOE	23	SEMINOLE STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA - Renovation of Building V	717,438		S	Seminole	2061	1944
DOE	23	SEMINOLE STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA - S/LM Building G (701) Roof Replacement & Envelope Renovation	1,284,470		S	Seminole	3075	1943
DOE	23	STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA, MANATEE-SARASOTA - Parrish Center Phase 1	5,000,000		S	Manatee	3163	1226

Agricultural Promotion and Education Facilities

Florida has a program (established in Section 288.1175, Florida Statutes) to allow local governments and fair associations to apply for state funding for facilities that can be used to promote agriculture in Florida, such as county fair agricultural exhibition halls. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is charged with reviewing applications, making sure projects qualify and ranking requests based on factors such as the proposed use of funds, the amount of local match, projected attendance, and history of the requester. This year, the department provided the Legislature with a ranked list of 13 construction projects that met the requirements for funding. Despite this process, the department does not request money for these projects in its legislative budget request and the Governor did not recommend funding. The Legislature funded nine projects worth \$3.6 million. Three of these projects were not part of the approved, prioritized list—thereby circumventing the process. The South Florida project was added during conference through the sprinkle list. While the other six projects qualified for funding, the Governor should scrutinize them closely.

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
DACS	1483C	Arcadia Rodeo Multi-Functional Facility		200,000	H	DeSoto	3217	1739
DACS	1483C	Martin County Fair Association Agriplex & Fairgrounds		200,000	H	Martin	2175	
DACS	1483C	South Florida Fairgrounds Multi-Purpose Exhibition Building		250,000		Palm Beach	3665	1625

Beach Projects

The Florida Beach Management Funding Assistance Program provides and manages grants to local governments for the planning and implementation of beach and inlet management projects including beach restoration and nourishment, environmental studies and monitoring, inlet sand transfer, and dune restoration. These grants are reviewed and ranked in priority order and submitted to the Legislature, which this year provided \$50 million for approved projects. These projects circumvented the grant application and ranking process.

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
DEP	1676A	Madeira Beach - Beach Groin Replacement		250,000	HS	Pinellas	2611	1273
DEP	1676B	Fernandina Beach Dune Protection and Restoration Project		500,000	S	Nassau	2829	1365
DEP	1676C	Ponte Vedra Beach North Beach and Dune Restoration		3,000,000	S	St. Johns	4759	2505

Local Parks

The Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) is a state competitive grant program that allows local governments to apply for financial assistance grants to develop and/or acquire land for public outdoor recreational use. It is administered by the Department of Environmental Protection, which reviews the grants. This year the department submitted a ranked list of 134 eligible projects to the Legislature, requesting \$12.3 million. After not providing any funding for FRDAP last year, the Legislature funded the entire list this year. In addition, the 17 local parks below that were not approved through the process received \$4.9 million.

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
DEP	1729A	Coral Springs Parks & Recreation Security Initiatives		100,000	HS	Broward	3191	1795
DEP	1729A	Deering Estate Foundation's Field Study Research Center Phase 2		600,000	H	Miami-Dade	2627	1068
DEP	1729A	Green Cove Springs Public Safety and River Access Project		300,000	HS	Clay	4949	2442
DEP	1729A	Gulfport Linear Breakwater Park Project		250,000	H	Pinellas	4087	1421
DEP	1729A	Historic Fort Meade Peace River Park Outpost		250,000	H	Polk	2127	1741
DEP	1729A	Lake County Lake Apopka Ferndale Preserve		500,000	H	Lake	3565	1088
DEP	1729A	Lakeland's Se7en Wetlands Educational Center		400,000	H	Polk	2467	1742
DEP	1729A	Mangonia Park Addie L. Green Park Improvements		250,000	H	Palm Beach	3395	1623
DEP	1729A	Pahokee King Memorial Park Improvements		235,000	H	Palm Beach	2029	2293
DEP	1729A	Plantation - Special Needs Playground Equipment		250,000	HS	Broward	2153	1719
DEP	1729A	Royal Palm Beach Commons Park All-Access Playground		250,000	HS	Palm Beach	3125	2090
DEP	1729A	Seminole County Lake Monroe Trail Loop		450,000	HS	Seminole	3063	1952
DEP	1729A	Sunrise Bicycle & Pedestrian Greenways and Trails Master Plan Update		100,000	HS	Broward	4619	1482
DEP	1729A	Tamarac ADA Compatible Caporella Park Enhancements		400,000	H	Broward	2787	1277
DEP	1729A	Taylor County Southside Park Renovation		50,000	H	Taylor	2949	1553
DEP	1729A	Town of Jay - Bray Hendricks Park Master Plan		300,000	H	Santa Rosa	2931	1609
DEP	1729A	West Inverness City Trail and Withlacoochee State Trail Connector		200,000	H	Citrus	3467	

Transportation Projects Not in the Work Program

The Legislature continues to fund an excessive (and growing) number of local member transportation projects that are not in the FDOT Work Program. The Budget Turkey Watch report always flags these programs. The Work Program is developed jointly each year with metropolitan planning organizations, local governments, and the federal government. The Work Program is funded through the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF) and spending those limited dollars on other projects can leave approved projects unfunded, negatively impacting the Work Program and Florida's coordinated, statewide transportation system.

The Legislature created the Economic Development Transportation Projects (Road Fund) program to give lawmakers some discretion to add projects that promote economic development and increase jobs. FDOT,—with input from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Enterprise Florida—is supposed to review the projects and give final approval. The law contains requirements and criteria for evaluation; however, this fund simply became a way to get local projects in the budget.

This year, there is only \$5.8 million allocated in the work program for these projects, but the Legislature has consistently exceeded that amount. Beginning three sessions ago, when the House unsuccessfully attempted to eliminate the Road Fund, the budget no longer has a line-item for the Road Fund, but instead one simply called Local Transportation Projects. While this is a more truthful description, it also removes even the appearance of a selection process. This Local Transportation Projects line-item appears again this year, funding 77 projects at a cost of \$81.3 million, meaning \$75.5 million in Work Program funding will be impacted. This is 10 projects more than last year, although the total is \$4.0 million less.

Florida TaxWatch recommends that the Legislature stop earmarking these projects to allow the process to decide which projects have the highest return on investment and to ensure they are considered within the state's coordinated transportation planning process. The Legislature should stick to the amount provided in the work program, unless it provides additional general revenue. Most of these projects are local roads, which the statutes do not authorize to fund from the STTF (except for specific programs), such as the economic development transportation program. Some projects may not qualify as transportation projects and others have other avenues to pursue funding. The list also includes a “back of the bill” appropriation of unexpended funds from a local transportation member project that was funded (and appeared on the Budget Turkey list) two years ago.

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
DOT	1958A	44th Avenue East Extension	10,000,000		S	Manatee	4931	2488
DOT	1958A	Anderson Snow Road & Corporate Boulevard Improvements	1,000,000		H	Hernando	3499	
DOT	1958A	Autonomous Transit AV Technology, Workforce and Economic Opportunity	1,000,000		H	Duval	4713	2126
DOT	1958A	Bay Parkway - Phase 1 and 2	921,855		H	Bay	4593	2198
DOT	1958A	Boynton Beach Town Square Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing	75,000		S	Palm Beach	2495	1547
DOT	1958A	Burnt Store Road South Segment	1,000,000		H	Lee	9013	2078
DOT	1958A	Charlie Johns Street Traffic Signal - Blountstown	325,000		S	Calhoun	2965	1607
DOT	1958A	Charter School Safety Zone Improvements	900,000		HS	Duval	2773	1928
DOT	1958A	City of Apopka Harmon Road Extension	500,000		S	Orange	2699	1963
DOT	1958A	City of Callaway Roadway Repairs	1,000,000		H	Bay	3901	2202
DOT	1958A	City of DeFuniak Springs Airport Runway 9-27 Widening and Extension	650,000		S	Walton	9259	2225
DOT	1958A	City of Lynn Haven Road Repairs	1,000,000		H	Bay	3903	2201
DOT	1958A	City of Pembroke Pines Senior Transportation Program	288,000		S	Broward	3175	2067
DOT	1958A	Deltona - Normandy Blvd at Providence Intersection Improvements	500,000		S	Volusia	3159	1705
DOT	1958A	Doral Intersection Signalization Pedestrian Safety	350,000		HS	Miami-Dade	4201	1832
DOT	1958A	FECR Corridor Rail Safety Improvements	750,000		H	Duval	2771	1925
DOT	1958A	Glades Communities Street Resurfacing and Reconstruction	500,000		S	Palm Beach	4089	1829
DOT	1958A	Goodland Drive Rehabilitation Project - Collier	1,000,000		S	Collier	4839	1024
DOT	1958A	Green Mountain Connector - Lake	750,000		S	Lake	2009	1079
DOT	1958A	Hegener Drive Extension - Port St. Lucie	2,256,759		S	St. Lucie	3915	2273
DOT	1958A	Highland Beach Crosswalks	201,523		H	Palm Beach	2185	1384
DOT	1958A	Hillsborough County Veterans' Lake Trail	1,000,000		S	Hillsborough	2867	2058
DOT	1958A	Historic Infrastructure Restoration and Downtown Redevelopment Plan	850,000		H	Clay	4907	2453
DOT	1958A	Keep Florida Beautiful	800,000		S	Statewide	3409	2312
DOT	1958A	Keystone Airport Road Infrastructure - Bradford	1,190,000		S	Bradford	3451	2504
DOT	1958A	Keystone Heights Traffic Signal Upgrade	1,000,000		H	Clay	4933	
DOT	1958A	Lacoochee Industrial Area Right-Of-Way Improvements - Pasco	5,469,395		S	Pasco	2099	1906
DOT	1958A	Land O' Lakes US 41 Landscape Rehabilitation	850,000		H	Pasco	2023	
DOT	1958A	Lee County Sanibel Causeway Shoreline Stabilization	4,250,000		HS	Lee	9025	1692
DOT	1958A	Lois Avenue Complete Street Project - Tampa	300,000		H	Hillsborough	3413	2025
DOT	1958A	Loxahatchee Groves North Road Equestrian/Multi-Use Trail	47,500		H	Palm Beach	4095	2246
DOT	1958A	McNab Road Streetscape Improvements Project	500,000		S	Broward	3927	2567
DOT	1958A	Miami Biscayne Baywalk	2,000,000		H	Miami-Dade	2863	1976
DOT	1958A	Miami Lakes East ADA Pedestrian Mobility Infrastructure	500,000		H	Miami-Dade	3975	1197
DOT	1958A	Miami-Opa Locka Executive Airport Infrastructure Improvements	1,000,000		S	Miami-Dade	3731	1900
DOT	1958A	Moccasin Wallow Road Expansion	3,600,000		H	Manatee	9219	2138
DOT	1958A	Mount Sinai Road Improvements	1,000,000		H	Miami-Dade	3137	1830

DOT	1958A	Mutter Road Connection	1,000,000		H	Osceola	3859	2319
DOT	1958A	Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan - Phase I	300,000		H	Broward	4401	2475
DOT	1958A	New Smyrna Beach - Washington Street Roadway Improvements	1,024,855		S	Volusia	3131	1700
DOT	1958A	North Bay Village - Sidewalk/ADA Upgrades	206,250		HS	Miami-Dade	2461	1419
DOT	1958A	North Miami Beach - NE 153 St/NE 21 Avenue ADA and Roadway Improvements	350,000		H	Miami-Dade	2777	1570
DOT	1958A	North Miami Beach - NE 35 Avenue Roadway Improvements	500,000		HS	Miami-Dade	2795	1572
DOT	1958A	NW 74th St Improvements	500,000		H	Miami-Dade	3361	1828
DOT	1958A	Panama City Watson Bayou Dredging - Channel and Basin	1,750,000		H	Bay	2933	2081
DOT	1958A	Panama City Watson Bayou Turning Basin Bulkhead	1,500,000		H	Bay	2695	2080
DOT	1958A	Paradise Coast Trail - Collier	250,000		S	Collier		1167
DOT	1958A	Pea Ridge Connector	750,000		HS	Santa Rosa	2937	2160
DOT	1958A	Pedestrian Crossing Installation	750,000		HS	Duval	2767	1927
DOT	1958A	Pedestrian Safety on Collector Streets	300,000		HS	Miami-Dade	3977	2088
DOT	1958A	Pembroke Road Extension - Pembroke Pines	900,000		H	Broward	4435	2074
DOT	1958A	Pioneer Trail/Tomoka Farms Road - Right-of-Way	500,000		H	Volusia	4155	
DOT	1958A	Ponte Vedra SR A1A Corridor Intersection Improvements	1,000,000		H	St. Johns	4761	2045
DOT	1958A	Punta Gorda Airport Taxiway "E" Extension and General Aviation Ramp	1,200,000		HS	Charlotte	4321	2061
DOT	1958A	Rales Rides - Senior Transportation Program	159,520			Palm Beach	3927	1383
DOT	1958A	Southwest Ranches Safety Guardrail - Appaloosa Trail	350,000		S	Broward	3173	1821
DOT	1958A	Space Maritime Access Feasibility Study	300,000		H	Brevard	9237	
DOT	1958A	St. Cloud Seaplane Base	375,000		HS	Osceola	3857	2320
DOT	1958A	St. Johns County CR 2209 Extension	1,000,000		S	St. Johns	4763	2044
DOT	1958A	Sunny Isles Beach Pedestrian Park Bridge	1,000,000		H	Miami-Dade	2871	1420
DOT	1958A	SW 44th Avenue Extension Project - Ocala	1,000,000		H	Marion	3257	1915
DOT	1958A	Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority Operations	1,500,000		H	Tampa Bay	2483	1937
DOT	1958A	The Bluffs Entrance/Transportation Upgrades - Escambia	750,000		S	Escambia	2557	1838
DOT	1958A	Town of Jay - Roadway Improvements	300,000		HS	Santa Rosa	2929	1400
DOT	1958A	Town of Loxahatchee Groves Southern D Road Improvements	768,863		H	Palm Beach	4099	2247
DOT	1958A	Traffic Calming Horace Mann Middle School	300,000		H	Miami-Dade	3635	1840
DOT	1958A	Traffic Safety - Miami Shores Village	300,000		H	Miami-Dade	3771	2121
DOT	1958A	Transportation Disadvantaged Ambulance - Jackson County	500,000		HS	Jackson	4679	2208
DOT	1958A	Treasure Island Curb and Roadway Improvements	900,000		HS	Pinellas	2425	1020
DOT	1958A	Underline Multi-Use Trail/Mobility Corridor	1,500,000		HS	Miami-Dade	2837	1835
DOT	1958A	US 301 - Pretty Pond Road - Medical Arts Court Intersection Improvements - Zephyrhills	2,300,000		S	Pasco	2301	1907
DOT	1958A	US 331/CR 30A Improvements - Walton County	1,000,000		H	Walton	9197	2220
DOT	1958A	Village of Indiantown Road/Storm Water Drainage Reconstr.	2,000,000		HS	Martin	2639	2168
DOT	1958A	Washington County - Crystal Lake Paving Improvements	850,000		S	Washington	4981	2232
DOT	1958A	Washington County Twin Pond Road Paving Project	350,000		H	Washington	4663	2230
DOT	1958A	William Burgess Boulevard Extension	900,000		HS	Nassau	2209	1924
DOT	1958A	Wilton Drive Streetscape Improvements	750,000		HS	Broward	2571	2566
DOT	Sec. 110	County Road 220 construction and other road improvements	4,000,000		S	Clay	4959	2450

Acquisition, Restoration of Historic Properties

The Department of State has grant programs to fund historic preservation—Small Matching (up to \$50,000) and Special Category (up to \$500,000) grants. The Legislature funded the Small Matching list in its entirety, without earmarking other projects. The Legislature provided \$5.6 million, enough to fund the first 19 (of 38) approved projects on the Special Category list. At the expense of the others, 12 additional projects that bypassed the evaluation process were earmarked. The \$1 million for the Italian Club was added in conference, through the Senate sprinkle list. These 12 almost received as much funding as the 19 that went through the grant process. Conferees had agreed not to fund Camp Matecumbe but it was added back into the budget by the sprinkle list.

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
State	3153A	Historic Bush House Renovations		200,000	H	Okaloosa	2743	2214
State	3153A	Bay of Pigs - Brigade 2506 Museum		1,500,000	H	Miami-Dade	3725	1831
State	3153A	Camp Matecumbe - Historic Pedro Pan Hall Renovation - Miami-Dade		250,000	S	Miami-Dade	2353	1591
State	3153A	Groveland Train Depot		189,313	S	Lake	4589	2012
State	3153A	Pioneer Florida Museum Association, Inc. Center - Pasco		100,000	S	Pasco		2299
State	3153A	Homeland Heritage Park Renovation - Polk		250,000	S	Polk	2517	1878
State	3153A	Jackson House Restoration - Tampa		500,000	S	Hillsborough	4569	1604
State	3153A	Fighting for the Forgotten: Zion Cemetery Memorial - Tampa		50,000	S	Hillsborough		2574
State	3153A	Fighting for the Forgotten: Ridgewood Cemetery Memorial - Tampa		50,000	S	Hillsborough		2576
State	3153A	Exterior Restoration Sidney Berne Davis Art Center Phase I		500,000	S	Lee	4873	2018
State	3153A	Lincolnvillle African American Museum and Cultural Center - St. Augustine		750,000	S	St. Johns	4755	2397
State	3153A	Italian Club of Tampa		1,000,000		Hillsborough	4069	2363

Cultural and Museum Grants

The Legislature provided \$13.6 million for the Department of State 2020-2021 Cultural and Museum General Program Support Grants ranked list. This will be split among nearly 500 recipients that were approved through the process. These cultural programs requested \$43.7 million, meaning they will receive an average of less than one-third of their requests. The Legislature also awarded six recipients that bypassed the competitive evaluation and prioritization process a total of \$3 million. Each of these will receive many times over the highest amount awarded to the approved grant recipients. Its not surprising when an organization avoids the grant process and instead approaches a legislator to submit a request for funding. In the Cultural Facilities Grants program, the Legislature funded 11 of the 29 approved facilities and added \$1.2 million for four projects outside the process. Three of the below recipients (The Straz Center, the Truman Little White House, and the St. Augustine Lighthouse) will also be receiving funding through other state grants programs.

PROJECTS IN THIS CATEGORY

AGENCY	LINE ITEM	PROJECT	GR	TF	H/S	COUNTY	HB	SEN FORM
State	3180	Miami Military Museum and Memorial		400,000	H	Miami-Dade	2063	1057
State	3180	Harry S. Truman Little White House Digitization and Protection of Archival Collection - Key West		250,000	H	Monroe	2733	2093
State	3180	African American History Museum and Library at Roosevelt High School		200,000	H	Palm Beach	3781	1620
State	3180	PIAG Museum - Art for the Community		360,870	H	Miami-Dade	9105	2009
State	3180	Florida Holocaust Museum - Pinellas		750,000	S	Pinellas	2181	1019
State	3180	Straz Center for the Performing Arts - Master Plan - Tampa		1,000,000	S	Hillsborough	2163	2274
State	3186	Miami Military Museum and Memorial		600,000	H	Miami-Dade	2063	1057
State	3186	Happy Workers Learning Center Rehab/Restoration		300,000	H	Pinellas	3469	1939
State	3186	Richloam Museum		50,000	HS	Hernando	3501	1908
State	3186	St. Augustine Lighthouse Tower Preservation		250,000	H	St. Johns	4757	

Other Projects Recommended for Scrutiny by Governor

In light of the current COVID-19 crisis and the increased costs and revenue shortfalls that come with it, TaxWatch is recommending that the Governor review all member projects with the assumption that they should be vetoed unless their benefits are vital to the people of Florida. The member projects below do not qualify as Budget Turkeys, because they followed the appropriations project rules, were not added in conference, and there is no established selection process for these projects (see Recommendations). However, they are areas that have historically contained numerous member projects that deserve special scrutiny.

DEP 1635A Water Projects – Rightly so, the restoration and protection of Florida’s valuable water resources have risen to a top priority for Governor DeSantis and the Legislature. Florida TaxWatch supported the Governor’s recommendations—and the Legislature’s enactment—to increase water funding and adopt recommendations from the Blue-Green Algae Task Force. But the annual spending of tens of millions of dollars on earmarked local member water projects is still problematic and it is contrary to the Governor’s and the Task Force’s recommendation that funding for projects should be determined using the best scientific data to ensure that limited funds for a massive need be spent where they will get the best return on investment. There is a Water Projects Grant Program in statute, but over the years that process has been stripped of most of its criteria, requirements, and oversight. Florida TaxWatch has continually recommended in this report a formal grants process, with review and prioritization by experts, for local water projects. The Governor recommended a \$150 million matching grant program for wastewater and stormwater improvements, including septic conversion and remediation. This would support the Task Force findings to address nutrient loads to impaired waterbodies affected by blue-green algae. The Legislature funded the program at \$25 million and earmarked a staggering 169 local projects worth \$76.6 million. Fourteen of these projects are included as Budget Turkeys because they were added through the sprinkle lists but all of them deserve a thorough vetting by the Governor and the Department of Environmental Protection.

It should be remembered that in addition to more than \$625 million in water quality funding in the budget, there are long-standing local assistance programs such as \$290 million for wastewater treatment facility construction, \$247 million for drinking water facility construction loans and \$13.0 million for small county wastewater treatment grants.

DEO 2272 Housing and Community Development Projects – Thirteen projects worth \$4.3 million.

Many of these could have been funded in other places in the budget. Projects include an aquarium, a botanical garden, compensation for property owners, land acquisition for economic development, design of a consolidated local government complex, art and museum programs, and a nature center. All projects a local community would love to have, but are they all things the state should be funding, especially with the fiscal uncertainty facing our state?

DEO 2288A Economic Development Projects – Nine projects worth \$10.0 million. This list has tightened up in the last couple of years, with most of the projects seeming to have more of a clear economic development focus. It should also be mentioned that Florida TaxWatch has issued a research report on BRIDG,¹ a non-profit, state-of-the-art microelectronics manufacturing facility with the capability to build “smart sensors.” BRIDG has the potential to generate thousands of high-skill, high-wage jobs, establish Central Florida as a major hub for information technology research, innovation, and manufacturing in the world. The state has been investing in BRIDG and Florida TaxWatch has recommended it continue to do so.

DEO 2234A Workforce Projects – Nine projects worth \$7.1 million. These projects are in addition to \$262 million in the budget for local workforce development boards.

DOE 114 and 129 School and Instructional Enhancements – Seventy-two projects worth \$34.3 million, and the list keeps growing. This is generally funding for private organizations to provide educational services and programs. This includes 14 projects that have become recurring programs in the base budget. There is generally no formal selection or competitive bid process and no requirement for performance.

Various Non-State Fixed Capital Outlay – There is more than \$71 million in the budget for more than 120 projects for private organizations and local governments to construct, renovate, repair, or even purchase buildings/facilities the state does not/will not own. Governors have vetoed some of this fixed capital outlay spending because local government facilities are a local responsibility and there is no clear statewide return on investment for constructing, maintaining, or renovating privately-owned facilities.

FDLE 1261 Local Law Enforcement Special Projects – Eleven projects worth \$3.5 million.

DFS 2416A Local Government Fire Service – Nine projects worth \$3.2 million.

DFS 2424A Local Government Fire Service Fixed Capital – Twenty-five projects worth \$17.3 million, more than double last year’s budget (11 projects worth \$8.1 million).

¹ Florida TaxWatch, “BRIDG: Growing Florida’s Advanced Manufacturing Sector,” March 2020

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As an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit taxpayer research institute and government watchdog, it is the mission of Florida TaxWatch to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and analysis of issues related to state and local government taxation, expenditures, policies, and programs. Florida TaxWatch works to improve the productivity and accountability of Florida government. Its research recommends productivity enhancements and explains the statewide impact of fiscal and economic policies and practices on citizens and businesses.

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