



2024 Legislative Priorities and Key Issues

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2024 Primary Chamber Priorities

TRANSPORTATION / ROAD IMPROVEMENTS / INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

Project: 1	Appropriation Request:
Continue widening of US 41 from Middle School Rd. in Inverness to CR 486	Request is for legislative support of the requests of the County and City of Inverness to make this project a high priority of the FDOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chamber aligns with the County and City of Inverness and supports the work of the Citrus/Hernando MPO to place the widening of US 41 from SR44 to SR 200 as its #1 priority. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We appreciate the Legislature’s support of the project and the first phase of widening of US 41 from SR 44 to Middle School Rd. began in October 2023. • We respectfully request the Legislature’s support for widening from Middle School Rd. to CR 486 as the next step in continuing toward SR 200. 	

Project: 2	Appropriation Request:
Continued widening of CR 491 from W Pine Ridge Blvd to SR 200	Support funding for this project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the central area of the County grows, continued widening along the 6.8-mile segment of CR 491 from W Pine Ridge Blvd to SR 20 is needed from both a safety standpoint as well as an evacuation route. • The extension of the Suncoast Parkway as it progresses to CR 486 will further burden the capacity of 491 to handle traffic growth. Additionally, a 550-acre parcel at the corner of CR 491 and US 41 has been approved for mixed use industrial, commercial and a workforce housing development as the Holder Industrial Park. As this parcel develops, it will create increased truck, commercial and private traffic travelling to I-75 in Ocala or the Suncoast Parkway. 	

Project: 3	Appropriation Request:
Halls River Road Multi-Use Path (MUP)	Request is for legislative support of the requests of the County to FDOT for the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Homosassa has completed their multipurpose path in Old Homosassa. This request is to extend the path 3.2 miles along Halls River Road from the community of Riverhaven, to US 19 which will connect with the Old Homosassa path and continue to the newly constructed path along US 19. • The Halls River MUP stemmed from a petition by residents and businesses along the road. The County currently has \$1 million to contribute towards the project. • The Chamber supports the County’s request for allocation to FDOT to manage and implement the project. 	

Project: 4	Appropriation Request:
Turkey Oak Complete Street	Request is for legislative support of the requests of the City of Crystal River for \$12,500,000 to FDOT for the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Crystal River is seeking State appropriations to fund the design and construction of the Turkey Oak Complete Street project from US-19 to Highway 44. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Turkey Oak is a critical component of the City’s transportation grid. The existing street is primarily a two-lane road with limited turn lanes. ○ The City is seeking to redesign and build a complete street that has wide sidewalks, street trees, rain gardens, enhanced stormwater infrastructure, bicycle infrastructure, and safer turn lanes. Each of these components will create a safer transportation corridor for all users. Additionally, similar projects have shown that complete streets lead to high quality economic development and redevelopment along the corridor. • The Chamber supports the City’s request for appropriations for this project. 	

WORKFORCE SUPPORT

Project: 5	Appropriation Request:
Support for various local and state workforce initiatives.	No appropriation request. The desire of the Chamber is for the legislature to focus on solutions to help support critical workforce issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida, as in many other states, continues to suffer issues that inhibit businesses from being able to find and retain a qualified workforce. Hindrances include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of support for mental health issues ○ Education deficiencies and skills gaps ○ Affordable / attainable housing ○ Lack of childcare options 	

- The Chamber requests support from the Legislature for:
 - Programs such as The Children’s Movement of Florida to improve childhood development and early learning, including The Future Project, Bosses for Babies and Reading Pals
 - Support for Career and Technical Education (CTE) training to develop skilled workers ready to step into the workforce
 - Streamlining of permitting to help bring affordable housing options more quickly to be able to serve struggling workforce population.

INSURANCE CRISIS AND REFORM: PROPERTY / CASUALTY AND AUTO

Project: 6	Appropriation Request:
Address critical property insurance issues to create a stable insurance market with affordable rates for homeowners and business owners	No appropriation request. The desire of the Chamber is for the legislature to focus on solutions to now solve consumer cost issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While we recognize it will take a few years for the beneficial effects of the reforms of the last few years to be felt in the consumer’s pocket, the Chamber urges the Legislature not to take their foot off the gas. Continued work to address the challenges being faced by both the consumer as well as insurers is essential, including insuring that Citizens Property Insurance remains actuarially sound. 	

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING WATER, AIR AND SOIL QUALITY

Project: 7	Appropriation Request:
Support for resiliency projects	Request is for legislative support for direct appropriations or of the Florida DEP budget, the FWC budget and any other agencies that may provide funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chamber recognizes that our environment is heading to a critical tipping point, and that water, air and soil are three natural resources that we cannot live without. We urge the legislature to support the research and take urgent steps to protect our lands and coastlines and help reduce environmental degradation. • The Chamber urges the Legislature to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support and fund resiliency projects to protect and harden Florida coastlines from the damage of hurricanes, storms and high tides, and work toward creating living coastlines that serve to protect through natural methods. ○ Protect local autonomy to determine the right development, right time and right location for building in their locales. 	

Project: 8	Appropriation Request:
Local Water Quality Projects	Request is for legislative support for direct appropriations or of the Florida DEP budget, the FWC budget and any other agencies that may provide funding for these local projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Septic -to-Sewer Conversion, Water Quality, Water Supply and Storm Water Structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Chamber supports Florida Springs Initiative Funding for the continued conversion of septic to sewer throughout Citrus County and the expansion of central wastewater collection systems in areas within the first order magnitude spring sheds, including storm water management and construction of infrastructure. • Kings Bay Restoration Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to fund restoration and maintenance as required to finish and maintain the project. • Homosassa River Restoration Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to fund restoration and maintenance as required to finish and maintain the project. • FWC Aquatic Plant Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Chamber supports the continued funding of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission for harvesting and plant control throughout the waterways of Citrus County. 	

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Project: 9	Appropriation Request:
Support for healthy recreational projects	Request is for legislative support for these local projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chamber recognizes that a healthy community is more productive, supportive and tolerant of one another. Beyond pure medical care, recreation can be a source to develop health and wellness. • The Chamber urges support for recreational infrastructure, including trail connectivity, boat ramps, and other infrastructure that provide opportunities for outdoor activities that highlight the beauty of Florida. • Support for the Barge Canal Boat Ramp (Technical Services) as requested by the County. • Support for a Halls River Multi-Use Path (Technical Services) as requested by the County. (See Project 3 above.) 	

Project: 10	Appropriation Request:
Support toward construction of an Inverness Extension of the Citrus YMCA	Request is for legislative support for these local projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citrus County has a thriving YMCA that opened its doors in 2015. Since that time, its membership levels exceeded all projections; hence, the Y has continued to expand to service the needs of members and Citrus residents alike. An extension of YMCA programs has previously been established on the west side of the county in Crystal River. 	

- There is now a need for an extension of YMCA programs on the east side of the county in a central location in the Inverness area for a health and wellness facility, and to provide after-school childcare options in the area. The proposed new YMCA facility will be in partnership with the Suncoast YMCA, The City of Inverness and HCA Florida Citrus Hospital.
- The Chamber supports this project as a recognized need for our community.

Chamber Support for Local Partner Projects & Priorities

Citrus County

- **Funding State Aid to Public Libraries:** Public libraries are critical to the State’s economy, essential to the social infrastructure of our communities, and provide a foundation for success at all levels. The State Aid to Libraries program enables public libraries to provide important services and assistance essential for creating opportunities, ensuring access, and driving innovation. This makes our communities more competitive economically and gives residents the educational tools they need to succeed. The Chamber supports the continuation of this state grant.
- **Sadowski Housing Trust Fund:** SHIP funding under the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund allows local governments to help assist in providing safe, decent, and affordable housing for Florida’s at-risk population. It is crucial to Citrus County that funds remain in the Sadowski Fund so that we can continue to assist our most vulnerable population.
- **Small County Outreach Project Funding for Local Transportation Initiatives**
- **FloridaCommerce Office of Broadband Funding for Expansion of Services**

City of Crystal River

- **City Hall Reconstruction: \$10 Million**
 - The City was recently allocated a \$1.35 million FY23 Legislative appropriation for the “Crystal River Government Center Project”, to include design and Permitting (for the future reconstruction) of a new City Hall and Emergency Operations Center. In August 2023, the City experienced the devastating effects of Hurricane Idalia, during which City Hall (an approx. 19,000 sq. ft. facility) was flooded, with City operations continuing at a temporary location. Since that time, staff has modified to the scope of the project to include pre-construction activities (i.e., demolition of the damaged building); however, the need for additional funding of the reconstruction is now more critical than ever. Due to the repetitive nature of flood occurrences, the replacement of both City Hall and the Fire Department are proposed to be above the 100-year, 2070 projected coastal surge elevation (9 feet above the surrounding grade of City Hall). The facility would consist of a two-story building with the first floor only used for parking and/or temporary activities that would be suspended in advance of a large coastal surge, as well as replacement of the recently demolished Creative Playground and all related infrastructure.

City of Inverness

- **To be forthcoming**