

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2023

Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee FL, 32399-0001

RE: Urge Reversal of Costly Decision to Reject Carbon Pollution Reduction Infrastructure Investments

Dear Governor DeSantis,

We write today to urge you to reverse your costly decision to reject approximately \$320 million under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's Carbon Reduction Program. These funds are intended to improve and modernize Florida's transportation system and reduce air pollution — they are vital to our growing, dynamic state. The State of Florida is the only state in the country to reject the Carbon Reduction Program funding, according to Tampa Bay Times reporting.¹ We have serious concerns that you are not considering the best interests of Floridians and respectfully request information regarding your politicization of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

On November 13, 2023, FDOT Secretary Jared Perdue submitted a letter to the U.S. Department of Transportation indicating that the State of Florida had decided not to participate in the Carbon Reduction Program.² This decision constitutes a stark policy reversal, following months of FDOT planning and the development of the state's Carbon Reduction Strategy, a prerequisite step for Florida to receive the program's \$320 million in funding.³ FDOT's own documents outline the importance of the Carbon Reduction Program — and the investments it would have provided — to the state's transportation goals. Such goals include: providing safe and convenient transportation options, improving traffic flow and reducing congestion and idling, improving energy efficiency, and reducing climate impacts.⁴

¹ Jack Prator and Max Chesnes, *Florida the only state to turn down millions to lessen emissions, feds say*, Tampa Bay Times (Dec. 17, 2023), <https://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/2023/12/16/florida-only-state-turn-down-millions-lessen-emissions-feds-say/>.

² Jim Turner, *Florida declines \$320 million in federal money to help lower emissions*, Creative Loafing (Dec. 5, 2023), <https://www.cltampa.com/news/florida-declines-320-million-in-federal-money-to-help-lower-emissions-16826254>.

³ Under 23 U.S.C. §175, a state must develop a carbon reduction strategy in order to participate in the carbon reduction program. States were required to formalize their carbon reduction strategies by November 15, 2023, two years following the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Records indicate that FDOT previously developed a draft carbon reduction strategy and multiple supporting documents, but those have since been deleted from the agency's website.

⁴ These goals were outlined in the following FDOT PowerPoint, which has since been deleted from the agency's website: "*Carbon Reduction Strategy and Resilience Action Plan*," FDOT (Dec. 12, 2022), https://web.archive.org/web/20230525132552/https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/planning/policy/carbon-reduction/crs-dec-12-meeting_12122022.pdf?sfvrsn=fee2da01_2.

Prior to Secretary Perdue’s letter, FDOT appeared eager to receive the substantial investments provided by the Carbon Reduction Program. An FDOT PowerPoint, dated December 13, 2022, outlines the co-benefits of the carbon reduction activities⁵ supported by the program, including:

- *“Financial savings for Floridians by managing congestion on the transportation network”*
- *“More active and healthier communities throughout Florida”*
- *“Reduction in transportation’s impact on natural resources that will manage effects of climate change”*
- *“Increase access [to transportation] for all Floridians”*
- *“Safer roadways and improved emergency response and recovery times”*
- *“More efficient and agile transportation network for people and freight”*
- *“Faster recovery from disruptions to the transportation network by diversifying energy sources”*

In the same PowerPoint, FDOT outlines several key challenges that Floridians face with our current transportation system. It states, “98% of truck drivers report problems finding safe parking, causing drivers more than 56 minutes of additional drive time to find parking.”⁶ The PowerPoint also notes that Florida drivers deal with uniquely long commute times and that the state ranks among the top 15 states nationwide for diesel emissions.⁷ Another FDOT document, titled “Carbon Reduction Quick Guide,” affirms that the Carbon Reduction Strategy and its implementation with federal funds would help address some of these issues.⁸ “The development and implementation of [the Carbon Reduction Strategy] will help FDOT and [Metropolitan Planning Organizations] further reduce transportation emissions while delivering solutions to make our roadways more efficient and resilient,” FDOT stated.⁹

Prior to your administration’s abrupt reversal and rejection of the \$320 million investment, the State of Florida reportedly planned to use Carbon Reduction Program funding to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips and support public transit, lower building construction emissions, build commercial EV charging stations with safe places for truckers to rest, and expand the SUN Trails system.¹⁰

⁵ *Id.* at page 8.

⁶ *Id.* at page 14.

⁷ *Id.* at page 20.

⁸ See “*Carbon Reduction Quick Guide: Incorporating Carbon Reduction . . .*,” FDOT https://web.archive.org/web/20230525132420/https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/planning/policy/carbon-reduction/2022carbon-emission-reduction-guide-12-12_v5.pdf?sfvrsn=eff0c914_2. This document appears to have been deleted by FDOT as well.

⁹ *Id.* at page 1.

¹⁰ Erika Bolstad, *Big federal dollars for small state projects aim to get more cars off the roads*, Florida Phoenix (Oct. 13, 2022), <https://floridaphoenix.com/2023/10/13/big-federal-dollars-for-small-state-projects-aim-to-get-more-cars-off-the-roads/>.

Our constituents — and all Floridians — deserve to know why the State of Florida unilaterally decided to reject the Carbon Reduction Program investment and forgo each of the projects and benefits that FDOT planned to achieve with the funds. We believe Secretary Perdue’s November 13th letter is woefully insufficient in explaining why Floridians will be the only state residents to miss out on these critical investments.¹¹ The letter fails to explain why Florida residents would no longer need funds to help support traffic safety, lower air pollution, reduce traffic congestion, promote better public transit, and accomplish other meaningful goals previously outlined by FDOT.

In alignment with the Sunshine State’s principles of government transparency, we request the following information from FDOT and your administration:

- (i) What led your administration to reject \$320 million in Carbon Reduction Program funding, following months of FDOT research and planning for the funds, including the development of the Carbon Reduction Strategy?
- (ii) How many taxpayer dollars were utilized by FDOT in the research and development of the Carbon Reduction Strategy, as well as other activities to prepare the state to participate in the Carbon Reduction Program?
- (iii) How does the State of Florida plan to accomplish the critical goals outlined by FDOT — including those pertaining to traffic safety, air pollution reduction, and traffic congestion — without the \$320 million in federal support? Has the State of Florida redirected any state funds to help make up for the substantial loss in available federal funds?
- (iv) Who were the key decision-makers behind the State of Florida’s rejection of the Carbon Reduction Program?

Further, the State of Florida has repeatedly rejected federal funding opportunities that would have supported the health, safety, and prosperity of our state, at the expense of our neighbors.¹²

For example, Florida was one of four states to reject over \$3 million for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) climate pollution reduction grants and one of seven states to fail to submit an application for the EPA’s Solar for All Program, a program to help lower-income

¹¹ As Tampa Bay Times staff reported, “[w]hile Perdue downplayed climate risks in his letter, the now-deleted documents from within his own agency emphasized bracing ‘for current and future impacts of climate change.’” *Supra* note 1.

¹² Your administration has rejected critical state-provided investments in our infrastructure as well. In June 2023, you vetoed SB 284, a bill that would have directed state officials making decisions about purchasing government vehicles to consider the “lowest lifetime ownership costs,” such as costs for maintenance and fuel. A study conducted by the Electrification Coalition and Advanced Energy United found that the bill would have saved the State of Florida approximately \$277 million over 15 years by helping to transition the state’s vehicle fleet to comparative electric alternatives. See *Governor DeSantis Vetoes Total Cost of Ownership Bill, Costing Florida Taxpayers \$277 Million*, Electrification Coalition (July 3, 2023), <https://electrificationcoalition.org/electrification-coalition-governor-desantis-vetoes-total-cost-of-ownership-bill-costing-florida-taxpayers-277-million/>.

communities install solar panels.¹³ Remarkably, our state — following your unilateral veto of a federal grant on June 15, 2023 — became the only state in the country to reject the Department of Energy’s home energy rebate programs.¹⁴ We understand you have taken recent steps to reverse this decision which would make low- and moderate-income Floridians eligible to receive \$346 million in federal support to help weatherize their homes and purchase energy-efficient appliances to help lower energy bills. Those funds are set to go to other states instead unless you successfully work with the Legislature to reverse this decision.¹⁵

Plainly, your repeated rejection of federal investment opportunities will lead our state to a future with more traffic fatalities, higher energy and transportation costs, and worse air pollution. The people of Florida deserve answers, and they deserve a Governor who will not sacrifice the best interests of our state to further an extreme agenda.

Thank you for your swift reply to our inquiry.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



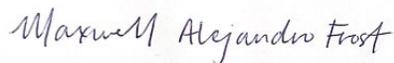
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Lois Frankel
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¹³ Craig Pittman, *Florida fails to ask for federal funds to help poor people buy solar panels*, Florida Phoenix (Nov. 2, 2023), <https://floridaphoenix.com/2023/11/02/florida-fails-to-ask-for-federal-funds-to-help-poor-people-buy-solar-panels/>.

¹⁴ Jennifer Haberkon, *DeSantis tells Biden: Keep your IRA money*, Politico (Aug. 30, 2023), <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/08/30/desantis-refuses-biden-climate-ira-money-00113397>.

¹⁵ *Id.*