

NEBA News

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May- June 2007

April Meeting- DOT Report On Interstate-10 Expansion

by: **Jim Ashlock**

An overflow NEBA crowd at Lucy Ho's Restaurant heard a detailed report April 10 on the extensive modifications of Interstate-10 now underway and the impact it will have on the area around the Thomasville Road intersection.

Tommie Speights, public information director for the DOT district encompassing Tallahassee, outlined the expansion of the interstate roadway from four to six lanes and creation double-lane access ramps. The contractor for the \$60 million segment from Meridian Road across Thomasville Road to the bridge over Capital Circle is Anderson Columbia, which was given 1,000 days to complete the work from its beginning in November, 2006.

Speights explained that the two extra lanes on I-10 will be in the middle of the current roadway, replacing the grassy median with a barricade to prevent crossover traffic. But the main construction that will affect traffic during construction will be work on the bridges across Thomasville and Capital Circle.

"The two bridges over Thomasville Road will be removed and replaced," Speights said. "The Capital Circle overpass will be widened," he added, work which motorists will note is already underway. Consequently, drivers can expect a lot of orange and white barrels in the area for a time, together with temporary detours in some cases.

Concerns had arisen among businesses near the Thomasville intersection that access/exit ramp expansion might cut into commercial areas, but Speights assured that this would not happen. Also, intersection of the ramps with Capital Circle and Thomasville Road will receive new traffic signals to enhance traffic flow at those points. One example cited was the left-turn point where northbound Thomasville traffic often backs up waiting to head westbound on I-10. Speights said double-lanes there, and new traffic lights, should ease this problem.

Speights said DOT received numerous phone calls and e-mails complaining about the extensive elimination of trees and vegetation in the work area. But he said that when completed, the intersections would receive extensive landscaping and lighting to make them more attractive than before.

Additionally, major facilities have been installed to control storm water drainage off the roadway, routing it into control ponds.

The work around Thomasville Road is one of three segments of I-10 widening now underway. One involves the stretch between Meridian Road and Old Bainbridge Road, a \$54 million project begun by Archer Western Contractors last October with 750 days to do the job.

Monroe Street will be widened to accommodate reconstruction of entrance/exit ramps and the Monroe Street overpass will be widened. New storm water retention ponds will be constructed in this area, together with sound barrier walls and high-mast lighting.

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Vision 2020 Program



I to r-President Rich Blankenship, Program Chair Maureen Thompson and Christopher Campell-Vision 2020

Christopher Campbell CEO of Vision 2020 was the guest speaker for our May Meeting.. 2020 is a business accelerator program which will use money from private investors to help turn ideas or products into successful businesses. Leon County commissioners have voted to give \$725,000 to Vision 2020 for start-up costs and ongoing expenses. They'll consider giving \$300,000 more in the next fiscal year. The business accelerator hopes to raise \$5 million in private investments over the next year to 18 months.

"I-10" from front page

The third segment is westward from Old Bainbridge Road to the I-10 rest areas. C.W. Roberts Contracting, Inc. has this \$37 million job with 800 days for completion from the start of work last January. Bridges over the River will be widened to handle the six lanes and entrance/exit lanes will be modified.

Speights noted that the I-10 work was but one project

among several in Tallahassee, reflecting DOT's efforts to keep up with traffic growth here. Widening Capital Circle Northwest is due for completion before year's end, and Mahan Drive is being widened to its intersection with I-10. Widening Capital Circle Southwest past the airport is a Blueprint 2000 project where final routing has yet to be determined.

Access www.movingi-10forward.com for details on the I-10 work.

Gangs and Community Youth Development

by: Carolyn Pippenger

At our June 12th meeting we had two speakers. They were Leslie Rabon, Criminal Intelligence Analyst with the Leon County Sheriff's Office who discussed the gang situation in Leon County. The other speaker was Buddy Streit, President of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Big Bend who gave what he termed a "Business person's view of Youth Development."

Crime Analyst Leslie Rabon stated that her office currently knows of approximately 200 documented gang members in our community. They are in every area of town, in high schools, middle schools and now even in elementary schools. She told NEBA members about a time she interviewed an 8 year old who said it was his "destiny" to belong to a gang because of his family up-bringing.

Also according to Rabon, street gangs are getting more organized and educated. They, are apparently getting good jobs, sometimes because they supply false ID, history, etc. Tattoos are many times the primary way law enforcement officers have of identifying gang members.

Law enforcement relies heavily on organizations to help curb this activity by providing alternative "role models", lawful activities and other incentives to stay out of gangs. She encourages business owners to contact law enforcement when they see graffiti in their area so it can be investigated.

Boys & Girls Club President Buddy Streit cited several statistics that show education in Leon County needs improvement:

- * 9% of the Leon County School's 3rd grade students were retained in 3rd grade
- * 1500 in all of the Leon County Schools were retained another year
- * 30% of 6th graders were reading at only level 3 in the FCAT tests
- * 50% of 9th grade students read at levels 1 or 2 on the FCAT

Employers surveyed around the area indicated that 42% of employee work force is deficient in holding a job due to inadequate work skills, work ethics or education.

Most youth gang members have no effective parenting, do

not have good role models and very little positive influences around them. Boys and Girls Club attendees have a 90% or better chance at improved reading abilities, better role models in their early lives and motivation to excel. He recommends we, as employers:

- * Encourage employees to be better parents
- * Serve on boards for non-profit agencies to assist children
- * Get involved with local elected officials about spending tax dollars to assist these children
- * Think about supporting non-profit agencies that help children where there is a positive influence.

Streit concluded his remarks by reminding us not to lose focus during the upcoming tax-cut battles. He pointed out that if reducing taxes has the consequence of reducing funding for organizations that serve our youth, the resulting long-term costs will far outweigh the savings.

Calendar

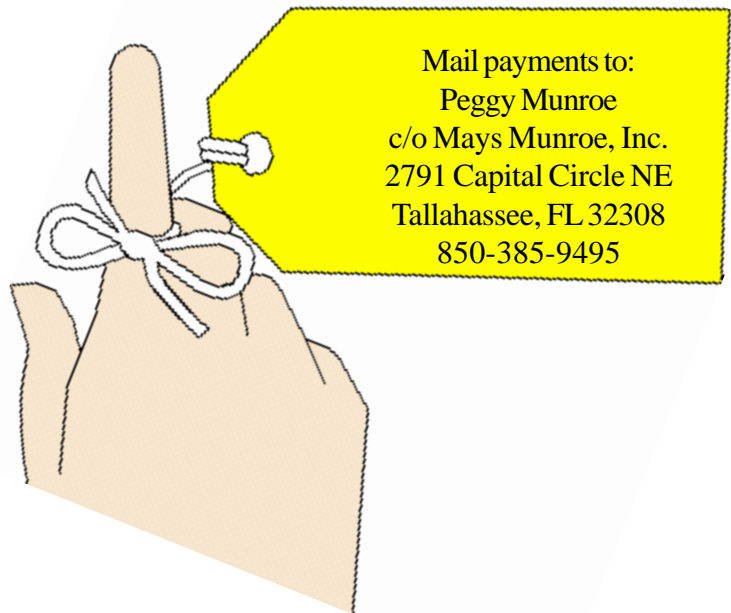
**NEBA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at Lucy Ho's-
1700 Halstead Blvd.
from 1:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m.
Cost is \$9.00 per person**

July 10- Dominic Calabro, President, Florida Tax Watch and Stephen Hogge, NEBA Board Member and organizer of a local tax watch group

August 14- Bert Hartsfield, Leon County Property Appraiser.

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