Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization

Statement of Oliver Gilbert, III, Chairman,

Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization and

Mayor, City of Miami Gardens

Before the Subcommittee on Highways & Transit Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure United States House of Representatives

Hearing on

Pricing and Technology Strategies to Address Congestion on and Financing of America's Roads

September 11, 2019

Good morning, Chair Norton, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the distinguished House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. Giving special attention and admiration to my Congresswoman Frederica Wilson. Today, I stand as her Mayor and Resident and someone who is awed by her service through voice and example for her community. Thank you all for your service to your congressional districts and to this country. Here your voices define not just who we are but who we are to become as an America.

I am Oliver Gilbert, Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). I am also the Mayor of Miami Gardens. Thank you for the opportunity to address the topic of "Pricing And Technology Strategies To Address Congestion On And Financing Of America's Roads." Before I get into the technical aspects of my testimony, I want to offer some general thoughts on transportation and how we should see it as a growing and developing America.

I engage your imagination to view a road as not just pavement and asphalt. I ask that you see traffic independent of its congestion; to see rail without regard to its cost. While all the things mentioned are relevant, roads are pathways to something greater. They are instruments of economic development and job creation. Traffic is an impediment not just to our growth economically but to our development as a community. Rail is not just something to carry trains. Rail, specifically the Metrorail in Miami Dade County, carried a young boy from Miami Gardens to the University of Miami every day. It helped him get his law degree. Ultimately, it's responsible for him being the mayor of his hometown Miami Gardens. I stand before you today in large part because someone invested in meaningful and efficient public transportation. Today, I advocate that we pay their brilliance forward and find ways to expand rail, create dynamic interactions with regard to roads, reduce congestion, all the aforementioned promote conservation of time and of the planet.

Expressway System Built Out in Miami-Dade

The expressway system in Miami-Dade has reached its limit, and we have no room to build our way out of congestion. Heavy congestion has become a way of life in Southeast Florida. We have one possible new extension of an expressway, and beyond that we must provide travel choices and alternatives that include:

1. Rebuilding and fine-tuning operations of existing expressways such as express lanes; and

2. Expanding rapid public transit through the Miami-Dade Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan.

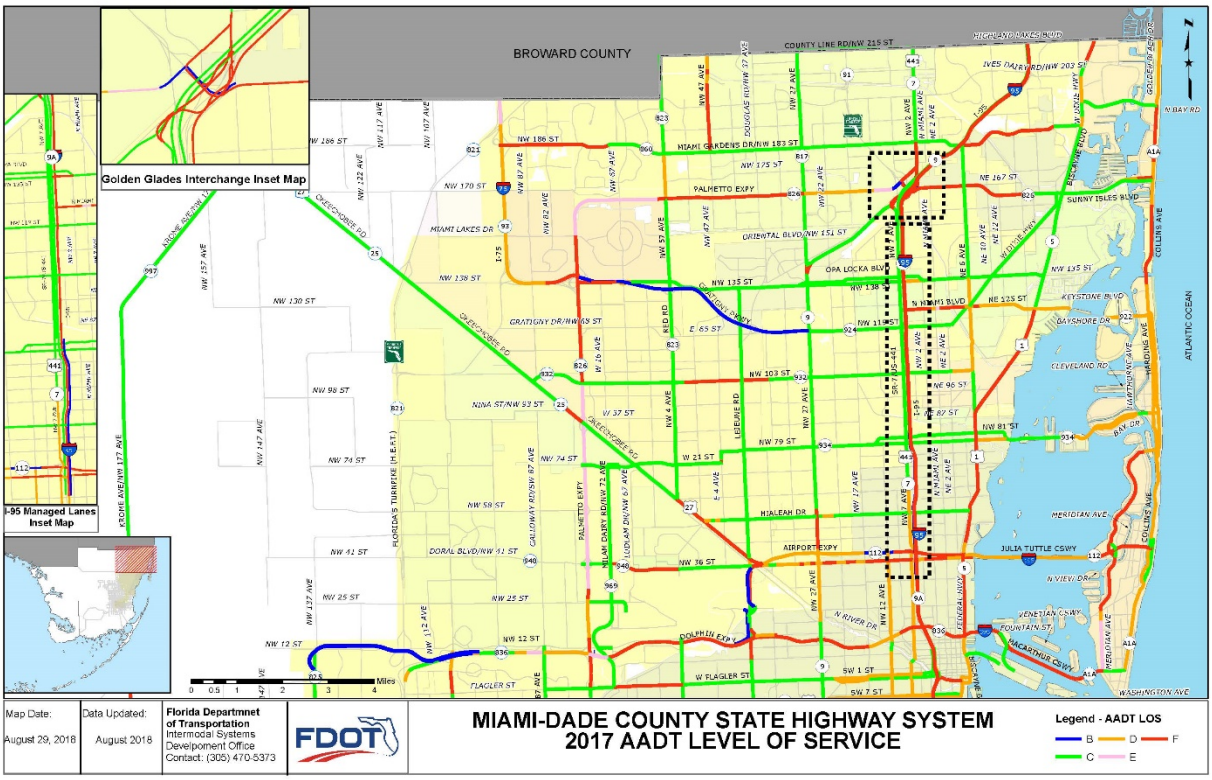

Figure 1. Level of Service depicting I-95 Corridor

Electronic Tolled Express Lanes Improve Throughput

The fine-tuning of highway operations has involved providing a choice for users of highly congested expressways through "express lanes," which are electronic tolled lanes (SunPass electronic tolls only) within expressways that also include non-tolled lanes. Managed lanes which we term express lanes are expressway lanes dynamically tolled based upon congestion levels, where tolls fluctuate per the amount of traffic using these lanes. The goals of 95 Express are to reduce overall traffic congestion; provide a safe and predictable trip, in terms of travel time, for express lane motorists; maintain an express lane free-flow speed of 45 mph or greater for users including express buses; and increase the overall throughput of vehicles per hour on the entire expressway facility. The express tolls are electronically set by software and detection equipment that detects the speed and level of traffic in the express lanes and raises the toll when speeds drop and lowers the toll when speeds rise compared to a preset speed. A section of 95 Express is shown in Figure 2 below

where the lanes to the right are non-tolled and "poles" separate the tolled express lanes to the left. Vanpools, buses, and registered carpools use the express lanes toll free.

Figure 2 – Source: Florida Department of Transportation (http://floridaexpresslanes.com/southeastfl/)

The 95 Express lanes projects were developed and funded through an Urban Partnership between the United States Department of Transportation, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), local Metropolitan Planning Organizations, local transit agencies and the State of Florida with general funding. This Urban Partnership was facilitated by you through the congressionally created Value Pricing Pilot Program that allowed the conversion of High Occupancy Vehicle lanes (HOV) to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. Subsequent changes in Federal law by Congress expanded the ability to provide toll lanes within existing non-tolled expressway facilities that have been codified into Title 23 and Title 49 of United States Code. Thank you for your support of these innovative options for highly congested expressways. A special thank you to Congressman Daniel Webster, who as a leader in the Florida Senate led the effort for state general funds and FDOT funds to match the Federal Urban Partnership grant to move the pilot 95 Express project forward.

We are pleased that the express lane tolls in Southeast Florida are supporting Express Bus service in the express lanes. Our Express Bus system on the express lanes has been highly successful and provides a viable alternative to driving a car in the

express lanes. We plan to expand the Express Bus network to all the current and future express lanes to ensure that all travelers have an option to take advantage of more reliable travel times provided by the express lanes. Express Bus ridership for Miami-Dade Express rose 48% from 2008 to 2010 (depicted in Figure 3 on the next page), after the express lanes were implemented in mid-2009.

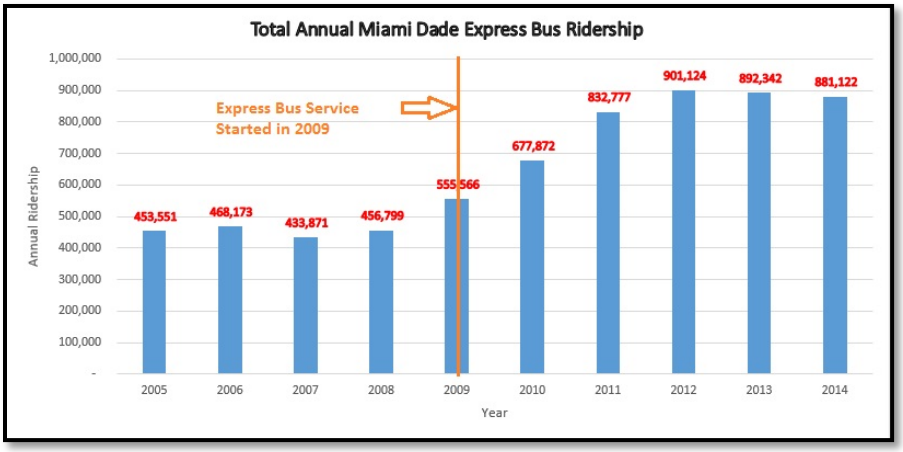

Figure 3 Source: Florida Department of Transportation

The success of 95 Express resulted in rapid growth of express lanes in Southeast Florida and across Florida's major metro areas. For example, we started 95 Express as a pilot in 2008 with Phase 1, being 7 miles that fully opened in 2010. As of September 2019, we have 62 miles of express lanes open in Southeast Florida (shown below in green in Figure 4) that provide a choice for daily travelers and visitors on most expressways, being I-95, I-75, I-595, Palmetto Expressway and soon on Florida's Turnpike Homestead Extension. By 2024, South Florida will have a total of 155 miles of express lanes (shown in green and red on Figure 4) open to traffic with 188 miles (shown in blue in Figure 4) under consideration as express lanes in the future (as shown in Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Source: Florida Department of Transportation (http://floridaexpresslanes.com/southeastfl/)

In the Texas A&M Transportation Institute Report Titled, 2019 Urban Mobility Report, "Miami" Urbanized Area, which includes Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties, has the 4th ranked population and the 12th ranked level of congestion. We believe the rating of 12th on congestion compared to 4th on population is in part due to providing choices for travelers on our congested expressway system such as express lanes and Bus Express Rapid Transit (BERT) service. As the express lane network and BERT was coming on-line, we improved from ranking 10th on hours of driver delay in the early 2000s to 12th on hours of driver delay in 2017. This is a remarkable improvement considering the Miami Urbanized Area population grew from a rank of 5th in the early 2000s to 4th in 2017 while also improving in the hour of driver delay congestion index. This is not to say our congestion is good by any means; it does, however, indicate that express lanes and BERT have helped make the congestion more tolerable and improved the commute times for all lanes including the non-tolled lanes.

We learned many lessons during the past decade on pricing and technology to provide choices and alternatives to congested expressways. They include:

- **Communication is essential** because express lanes are not "normal" operations for expressways. A consistent level of communication to elected officials, press, public, transportation professionals, and expressway system users is essential. This can be very challenging. When the first express lanes were proposed in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties in Florida, there was not a point of reference to help frame how express lanes work. Communication is also essential over time as newly elected officials assume office and the press, public and users change.
- **Providing a higher level of service in express lanes is essential** including enforcement, roadway service to clear issues timely, and clear and timely message signs on toll information so drivers can make decisions about using the express lanes or continue in the non-tolled lanes.
- **Express lanes reduce travel times** for the express lane users significantly while also improving travel times for those in the non-tolled lanes. A higher overall speed in the expressway corridor moves more vehicles through the corridor per hour throughout the day.

SMART Rapid Transit Plan

Express lanes are essential, but we believe the best long-term alternative to highly congested roadways in Miami-Dade is to expand our rapid transit network. The Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization designated the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit Plan or SMART Plan our top priority. This involves the BERT network and the addition of six rapid transit corridors. We are seeing high growth around existing rapid transit stations, and near the private sector premium rapid intercity rail service called Brightline-Virgin Rail currently running between Miami and Palm

Figure 5 – Source: Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization (http://miamidadetpo.org/smartplan.asp)

Beach with construction underway to Orlando.

The South Corridor of the SMART Plan is in the development and funding stage with a local funding commitment of $100 million, as well as Florida DOT committing $100 million, and a request with the Federal Transit Administration for a Small Starts grant of $100 million. The remaining five rapid transit corridors will reach the locally preferred alternative stage in the next six to twelve months and will be presented to Florida DOT and the Federal Transit Administration for development and funding in 2020. The Miami-Dade County Commission and Mayor have allocated over $9 billion of future local funds over 40-years as the local share of funding for the SMART Plan. This includes harnessing the fees and taxes from development along existing and new rapid transit corridors to help fund the local share. The SMART Plan Rapid Transit and BERT corridors are shown in Figure 5 above.

Automated Vehicles

In addition, the Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization is working with Florida DOT and the industry on the future of automated vehicle technology. With the growth in popularity of Autonomous Connected Electric Shared (ACES) vehicle technology, it is imperative that current infrastructure be adaptable to accommodate these future platforms/technologies. Express lanes and their underlying technology infrastructure provide a great opportunity for integration of automated vehicles on our public roadways given the less complex maneuvers and the safety that comes with separating special use lanes.

We look forward to improved automated vehicle technology and will consider adjusting the use of the expressway such as automated vehicle uses of the express lanes to best facilitate those vehicles when they become a significant part of the future.

Conclusion

Thank you for providing the tools to support electronic express lanes and BERT in the express lanes, and we certainly want these tools to continue. We support a public transit program that includes a strong capital program for the Federal Transit Administration to help support implementation of the Miami-Dade SMART Plan.

We support innovative project delivery approaches that best solve the cost-effective and timely delivery for each major project.

Our assessment is congestion in Miami-Dade County will require ALL innovations, choices, and alternatives including electronic express lanes, modern rapid transit, and automated vehicles to provide Residents and visitors with more reliable travel options in the future.

A future that is of our creation. A future that will determine whether a young boy or girl can build upon their dreams and become the mayor of their hometown. A future that will enhance economic development and increase the amount of time that we get to spend with our families. A future that will use every tool and resource available to create the South Florida and America we deserve. We are not just talking about congestion and traffic. We are talking about growth, development, education, and opportunity. We are talking about the American dream.

Thank you for your partnership again. Thank you for your support and your leadership. Together, we go forward.

Reference Information on Express Lanes in Florida

Florida Department of Transportation and partners have developed a network of express lanes in Southeast Florida that now includes the facilities in the table below that are open or under construction in Florida's major metro areas. The map in Figure 6 and Table 1 in the outline below illustrate the express lanes network statewide. http://floridaexpresslanes.com/

Table 1 – Florida Express Lanes

Open to Use and Under Construction as of September 2019

Northeast Florida

- **Northeast Florida Express (I-295)** in the Jacksonville metro area
  - I-95 to Buckman Bridge (5 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open to traffic
  - SR 9B to J. Turner Butler Boulevard (5 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open 2020

Central Florida

- **Beachline Express (SR 528)** in the Orlando metro area

  - I-4 to Florida's Turnpike Mainline (4 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open to traffic
  - Florida's Turnpike Mainline to McCoy Road (4 miles): 1 express lane per direction open Fall 2019
- **I-4 Express** in the Orlando metro area - SR 434 to Kirkman Road (21 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open 2021
- **Florida's Turnpike** in the Orlando metro area - Osceola Parkway to Beachline West Expressway / SR 528 (6 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open 2021

Tampa Bay

- **Veterans Express** in the Tampa metro area - Hillsborough Ave. to Dale Mabry Hwy. (9 miles): 1 express lane per direction open to traffic
- **Crosstown Parkway Express** adjacent to the Selmon Crosstown Parkway in Tampa – approximately 10 miles – 3 reversible lanes open to traffic
- **I-275** in St. Petersburg metro area - Gandy Boulevard to 4th Street N (4 miles): 1 express lane per direction open 2022

Southeast Florida

- **95 Express** in Miami/Fort Lauderdale/Palm Beach metro areas
  - Junction of I-95 and SR 836/I-395 in downtown Miami to Golden Glades interchange (7 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open to traffic
  - Golden Glades interchange to Broward Boulevard (14 miles): 1 to 2 express lanes per direction open to traffic
  - Broward Boulevard to SW 10th Street (19 miles): 2 express lanes per direction – open 2020
  - SW 10th Street to Glades Road (5 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open 2022
- **595 Express** in the Fort Lauderdale metro area – I/595/I-75/Sawgrass Expressway to Turnpike Mainline (10 miles): 3 reversible express lanes open to traffic
- **75 Express** in the Fort Lauderdale/Miami metro areas
  - Miami Gardens Drive to I-595 (11 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open to traffic
  - Palmetto Expressway/SR 826 to Miami Gardens Drive (4 miles): 1 express lane per direction open to traffic
- **Palmetto Express** in the Miami metro area - West Flagler Street to NW 154th Street (9 miles): 2 express lanes per direction open to traffic
- **Florida's Turnpike Homestead Extension** in the Miami metro area (opens in segments through 2024)
  - Biscayne Drive to Killian Parkway (14 miles): 1 express lane per direction
  - Killian Parkway to Dolphin Expressway/SR 836 (7 miles): 2 express lanes per direction
  - I-75 to Turnpike Mainline (8 miles): 1 express lane per direction

Under Study as of September 2019 (under consideration in the planning stages)

Northeast Florida

- I-295 (9 miles)
- I-95 (26 miles)

Central Florida

- Florida's Turnpike Mainline (46 miles)
- I-4 (41 miles)

Tampa Bay

- I-275 (21 miles)
- SR-60 (3 miles)
- I-4 (25 miles)
- I-75 (42 miles)

Southeast Florida

- Florida's Turnpike Mainline (88 miles)
- Florida's Turnpike Homestead Extension (14 miles)
- I-95 (50 miles)
- Sawgrass Expressway (21 miles)
- Palmetto Expressway (15 miles)

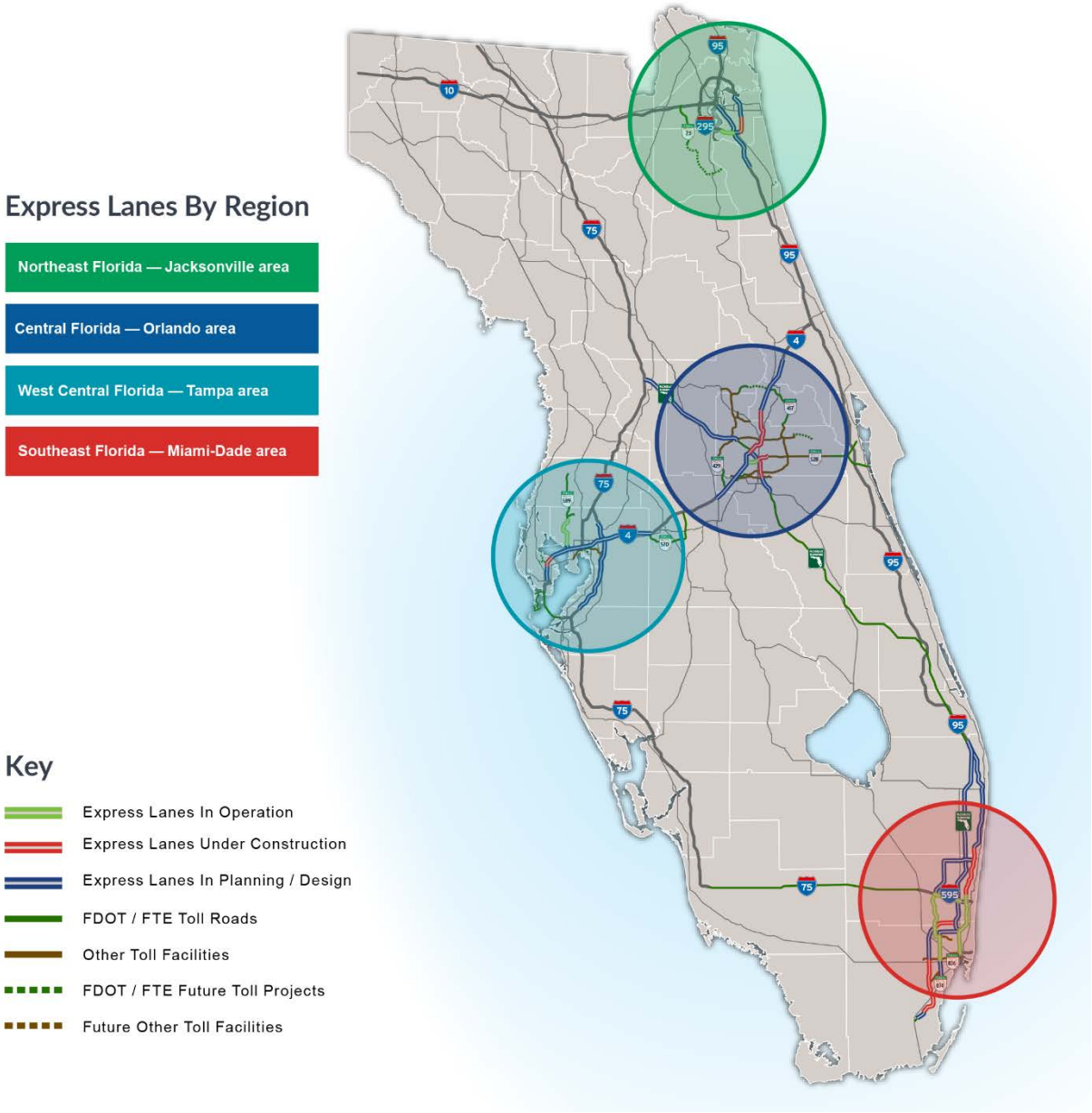

Figure 6 Source: Florida Department of Transportation