May 21, 2015

Mr. Billy Hattaway, Secretary

Florida Department of Transportation District 1

billy.hattaway@dot.state.fl.us

Post Office Box 1249

Bartow, FL 33831-1249

Dear Secretary Hattaway:

Duval County is a leading travel destination. The county licenses 17,997 hotel rooms, campground spaces and short-term rental units. These facilities generate an estimated $5.5 million in room taxes that allow the Jacksonville Convention & Visitors Bureau – Visit Jacksonville and the Beaches -- to market the county nationwide. Visitors who stay in these facilities spend additionally in restaurants, attractions, transportation and other services, while providing substantial receipts for retailers. Tourism-generated dollars support 22,000 full-time jobs. Duval County understands the importance of tourism. It’s a county-leading economic sector. We welcome visitors.

Among them, the county sees an increasing number who arrive by bicycle and who, otherwise arriving by air and/or by car, ride bicycles during their stays. Many come to ride with the North Florida Bicycle Club and with St. Johns River Riders. Other cyclists through the year arrive on self-guided tours. In July of this year, a touring group of approximately 25 will tour our Beach towns as the first group to traverse the four-state Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which is a portion of the 3,000-mile Canada-to-Key West East Coast Greenway. We want to turn this trickle into a valued business sector.

Data for the economic impacts of bicycle touring are summarized at <http://www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/implement-a-us-bike-route/benefits-and-building-support/economic-impact/>.

FDOT can provide important assistance for touring cyclists by allowing the posting of East Coast Greenway way-finding signs at intervals along its route through Duval County and through the 12 additional counties of the route through Florida. Such signage programs are now in place through most of the 14 Greenway states north of Florida to Maine. These signs are important for more than cyclists’ safety; they tell cyclists that Florida is part of a national trail system that generates word-of-mouth marketing to the cycling world. Cyclists know they’re welcome in Florida.

They find back up from cycling pages on the VISIT FLORIDA website, from a comprehensive trail website under compilation by the Department of Environmental Protection, and from Florida pages at [www.greenway.org](http://www.greenway.org). We urge FDOT to permit the installation of signs along the East Coast Greenway route. Many co-partners will work with FDOT and the Florida Legislature to help fund these signs, their posting and maintenance, including county government offices, tourism authorities such as ours, foundations and the private sector. The Duval County Tourist Development Council welcomes FDOT’s facilitation of this program.

Sincerely,

Annette Hastings, Executive Director

Duval County Tourist Development Council