



Florida Department of Transportation

Rick Scott
Governor

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

Ananth Prasad, P.E.
Secretary

Business of Beautification

To me, in sum, beautification means our total concern for the physical and human quality we pass on to our children and the future. Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, 1993

Now and for the next few years, to make Florida the most attractive place to do business, to attract visitors and businesses to invest more time and money in Florida, the Department can implement **bold** roadside beautification projects using many large trees, and few if any shrubs. With thoughtful site specific design, this **Consistent, Predictable, and Repeatable** approach will produce the highest visual impact and distinctive sense of place at the lowest design, construction, and maintenance cost. Ten, twenty, thirty, and forty foot tall or taller trees generously and safely placed at the most highly traveled interchanges and gateways into and through the state (Florida's most visible landscapes) will instantly create a welcoming and enjoyable experience; the first and lasting impression of the state and individual communities. Overstocked Florida based nurseries are discounting large trees by 50% or more, and in at least one case offering 0% financing. Palms, especially in Central and South Florida, are the state's signature trees; what visitors and investors expect to see, what they pay to see. Palms are the only type of trees that can feasibly and effectively be transplanted (and re-transplanted if need be) when mature. No other type tree can provide such instant impact, and be as resilient to Florida's extreme weather events. Each District, in conjunction with other agencies, can identify and program the ten highest priority roadside landscapes (e.g., state line, sea ports, airports, rail stations, scenic highways, beaches, historic sites, resorts, REDI communities, national parks and forests); where beautification is most able to help attract and grow



business. Decisions about the selection, placement, and care of trees can continue to be made with full participation of the local governments and maintaining agencies. Where necessary to fully implement highest priority projects, the Department can budget and accept responsibility for landscape maintenance.

For the future, as the economy strengthens and as the highest priority roadside landscapes are being completed, beautification can be routinely integrated into the processes used to plan, design, construct, and maintain roadways; roadways that accommodate **bold** performing landscapes that enhance private enterprise and public health and safety. Roadside landscape projects can mimic natural processes that manage stormwater, filter air, abate noise, shade pedestrians, conserve energy, provide habitat, *and* be beautiful. **Bold** leadership at all levels within the Department can make it possible to create and sustain memorable landscapes that contribute to the State's overall well being.

Emphasis can increase on conservation and management of existing trees, and planting roadsides with many small trees that will grow large. There can be less emphasis on planting large trees. Less expensive smaller trees and widespread planting of tree seedlings will grow quickly to beautify and reforest urban, suburban, and rural roadsides. Planting and managing a diverse community of native and non-native tree species reinforces the **bold** landscapes already in place, and helps overcome other design, construction, and maintenance challenges. This simple and sound investment approach grows in value and pays meaningful environmental and economic dividends indefinitely, unimpeded by current or future recessions.

Let's get to work making beauty *everyone's* business at the Department of Transportation. A work plan developed by the District Landscape Architects and Managers describes strategies, tactics, and measures that can, upon implementation, increase and sustain the return on Florida's investment in highway beautification.

Work Plan Highlights:

- Strengthen the Department's Highway Beautification Policy to show renewed commitment.
- Increase landscape expertise in each District planning, design, construction, and maintenance office
- Address landscape conservation and improvements early in roadway planning, project development, and design (including drainage, utilities, ped/bike). The roadway design needs to safely accommodate the landscape design.
- Develop landscape project performance measures and targets tied to other department programs (safety, pedestrian and bicyclists, safe routes to schools, accessibility, drainage, transit, maintenance).
- Document the direct economic benefits of each landscape project, including number of full-time and part-time employees, suppliers, nurseries, etc.
- Develop system to track and monitor landscape projects over time and space. Create a report card for landscape projects with annual report cards on how the project matured and the cost and quality of care. Document what has been invested, where, and how the investment is growing.
- Utilize landscape projects to enhance mobility and safety, e.g., midblock crossing, delineation, headlight glare, traffic calming, etc.
- Upgrade online resources for landscape stakeholders. Include instruction and information about roadside landscape design, construction, and maintenance.
- Emphasize "right plant in right place", "sustainable", and "non-invasive" as well as "native".
- Establish specifications and method of payment for landscape soil to be placed during roadway construction and for soil replacement when necessary during landscape construction.
- As stand-alone projects, enhance oversight during landscape construction:
 - Develop process for maintaining agency to participate in final acceptance.
 - Revise inspection reports to include mulch, weeds, litter, etc.
 - Develop minimum education and experience requirements for landscape CEI.
 - Authorize post design services for RLA of record.
 - Develop process to pay contractor during establishment periods
- Improve landscape maintenance. Determine design life of the landscape project, and who and how maintenance will be paid for the duration. During design, establish a maintenance cost limit that cannot be exceeded. Review and approve landscape maintenance plans and projected annual maintenance costs before completing design. Determine if investment on front end can save on long term maintenance. Reconfirm agreements *before* installation. Develop and retain expertise in the art and science of tree care, roadside forestry, land and landscape management for safety, value, beauty, and soil and water quality.
- Develop programmatic landscape recommendations and requirements to minimize maintenance, e.g., large trees widely spaced with few shrubs to accommodate large machine mowing. Establish design guidelines for low and high maintenance commitments.
- Publish online photo gallery of successful landscape projects.
- Include landscape quality in customer satisfaction surveys.
- Explore opportunities for public private partnerships for landscape design, construction, and maintenance.