



February 13, 2016

Dear Gov. Scott,

The Florida Keys Scenic Corridor Alliance supports the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in their efforts to secure funding to address issues related to the condition of the pedestrian bridges in the Florida Keys. These bridges are an essential part of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail and the trail is an integral part of the Florida Keys Scenic Highway.

The Scenic Highway is also an All American Road, one of only 31 in the whole country. To receive such a designation a byway must have features that do not exist elsewhere in the United States and are unique and important enough to be tourist destinations unto themselves. Our Old Historic Key Bridges are a part of our uniqueness. As an advocate for the scenic highway, the alliance works to preserve, protect, and enhance these unique resources found along the corridor.

One of our goals is to improve recreational and scenic opportunities along the highway. The Overseas Heritage Trail parallels and complements the scenic highway. The two were meant to provide different perspectives of the same experience. As the Master Plan for the scenic highway was being established, a Master Plan for the Heritage Trail was also being created. The trail and its bridges provide much of the recreation that is available along the highway. Unfortunately, the trail, due to the deterioration of the Old Historic Key Bridges, has had to close off some of its most popular sections.

These bridges provide historical value as remnants of Flagler's overseas railroad, as well as provide a chance for the millions of visitors who come to the Florida Keys to bike, hike, fish, and take in the scenic splendor of our tropical waters. This trail is a world class attraction and it is our hope that the bridges can be made whole again.

The trail is used by our residents as well and it is a priority of theirs to see the trail continuous and usable. Before the trail was even completed, entire sections were rendered unavailable and this has been an undesirable outcome for the many users of the trail and highway.

The funding for this project is necessary to address the safety issues that have led to the interruption of the progress that was being made to complete the trail.

The Scenic Highway's goals cannot be realized until the Heritage Trail's rehabilitation has been successful. The Scenic Corridor Alliance continues to support the development and implementation of the Overseas Heritage Trail and looks forward to seeing it completed with the Old Historic Key Bridges made safe and usable again.

President and Board members of the FKSCA  
Judy Hull  
<http://scenichighwayflkeys.com/>

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RESOLUTION NO. 029 - 2016

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION'S 2016 LEGISLATIVE BUDGET REQUEST IN THE AMOUNT OF \$13.5 MILLION TO ADDRESS THE SIGNIFICANT SAFETY CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE 23 HISTORIC PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES ALONG THE FLORIDA KEYS OVERSEAS HERITAGE TRAIL; AND PROVIDING DISTRIBUTION INSTRUCTIONS AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**WHEREAS**, there are 23 historic bridges that currently serve as part of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail and they span approximately 63 miles in Monroe County extending from East Rockland Key at Rockland Channel Bridge (MM 9.8), the southernmost bridge, to Lower Matecumbe Key at Channel #2 Bridge (MM 73), the northernmost historic bridge; and

**WHEREAS**, the 23 bridges are a subset of 42 bridges originally constructed as part of the Overseas Railroad, completed in 1912; and

**WHEREAS**, in the early 1940s, the Overseas Railroad was converted to the Overseas Highway, and as part of this the 13-foot wide railroad bridges were widened using steel and concrete cantilevers to 27 feet to accommodate two lane vehicular traffic; and

**WHEREAS**, in the early 1980's the historic bridges were decommissioned to vehicular traffic as new, parallel vehicular bridges were constructed by DFOT as part of US1; and

**WHEREAS**, the 23 bridges remain on the National Register of Historic Places; and

**WHEREAS**, the 23 bridges are an essential part of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail. The Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Master Plan (completed in 2000) was prepared by Monroe County in partnership with FDEP, FDOT, and the National Park Services to fulfill the expressed vision by Monroe County citizens to have a continuous trail along US 1 spanning the length of the Keys; and

**WHEREAS**, based on bridge inspection reports conducted in 2012-2013 by FDEP and a review of the reports conducted in 2013 by FDOT, the 23 historic bridges along the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail, have been determined to be "structurally deficient" and have deteriorated to various states of disrepair, especially the cantilevered deck slab overhangs on many of the bridges which are deteriorated and crumbling; and

**WHEREAS**, the bridges now pose safety issues for both trail users and boaters such that bridge closures, and hence closure of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail, have already occurred due to public safety concerns and signs warning boaters of falling debris have additionally been placed at various bridge locations; and

**WHEREAS**, the bridge conditions also pose environmental hazards as the debris of the deteriorating bridge elements is falling into the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary which is also classified as Outstanding Florida Waters, and the entire sanctuary is considered a Habitat Area Particular Concern due

to its important ecological role in the life cycles of federally managed fish species, and is critical habitat for a number of listed species federal refuges, and the bridges span state refuges, parks and FDEP-designated aquatic preserves; and

**WHEREAS**, Florida DEP, working with FDOT, has prepared a legislative budget request in the amount of \$13.5 million, the primary focus of which is to address the integrity issues of the bridge structures in order to improve safety conditions for trail users and boaters; and

**WHEREAS**, the FDEP legislative budget request will allocate funds toward the removal of the most severely deteriorated cantilever/overhang sections of the bridges and for a Project Development and Environment study that will further examine improvement options, costs, and funding sources to address the deficiencies of the 23 bridges; and

**WHEREAS**, this project is intended address significant safety and environmental hazards and to to reinstate the use of the historic bridges for recreational purposes by allowing for the completion of the trail, meeting the goals of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Master Plan.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA THAT:**

1. Monroe County fully endorsed Florida Department of Environmental Protection's 2016 Legislative Budget Request and wishes to express its gratitude for the support of the Florida Departments of Environmental Protection and Transportation, the Legislature, and the Governor.
2. The Clerk is directed to send copies of this resolution to:
  - a. Governor Rick Scott;
  - b. The Monroe County Legislative Delegation;
  - c. President Andy Gardiner, Florida Senate;
  - d. Speaker Steve Crisafulli, Florida House of Representatives;
  - e. Florida DEP Secretary Jon Steverson; and
  - f. Florida DOT Secretary Jim Boxold.
3. This resolution shall take effect upon adoption.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** by the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County, Florida, at a regular meeting of the Board held on the 10th day of February, 2016.

Mayor Heather Carruthers  
 Mayor Pro Tem George Neugent  
 Commissioner Danny Kolhage  
 Commissioner David Rice  
 Commissioner Sylvia Murphy

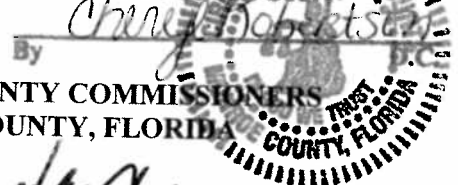
YES  
YES  
YES  
YES  
YES

STATE OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY OF MONROE  
This Copy is a True Copy of the Original on File in this Office. Witness my hand and Official Seal.

This 12 day of Feb

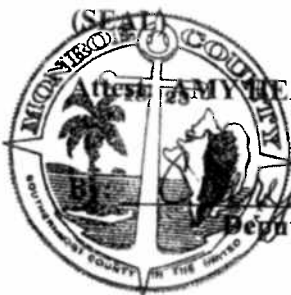
A.D., 20 16

AMY HE  
Clerk



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: [Signature]  
Mayor



AMY HEAVILIN, CLERK

[Signature]  
Deputy Clerk