

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (R-FL 13) announced today that a total of \$2 million sought by the freshman lawmaker for area transportation needs is included in the fiscal year 2008 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill. The bill includes federal funding Buchanan sought to reduce congestion and improve safety on I-75 in Manatee and Sarasota counties, increase capacity at the I-75 and University Parkway interchange, and improve the flow of traffic on U.S. 41 from Charlotte County to North Port. The bill, expected to be on the floor of the House today, also includes federal funding requested by the Congressman to enhance and expand public transit in Sarasota County.

“The safe and efficient flow of traffic is important for our economy and our quality of life,” said Buchanan. “For years, this region has gotten back about half as much as we pay in to the highway trust fund through federal gas taxes. Meanwhile, the region has grown significantly, increasing traffic and causing gridlock. This bill provides much-needed funding to help reduce congestion and improve safety on area roads.”

The Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) thanked the Congressman for his efforts on behalf of the region.

“The MPO has identified funding shortages of over \$3 billion dollars in its 25 year transportation plan and its current project priority list for the two county area will take another 71 years to complete based upon current funding levels. The projects listed in the bill submission are critical transportation needs which would benefit citizens and business persons in the Sarasota/Manatee area. “

The bill includes the following:

- \$500,000 to help reduce congestion and improve safety on I-75 through Manatee and Sarasota Counties;
- \$500,000 to help increase capacity at the I-75 and University Parkway interchange – the busiest and most congested interchange in the Sarasota/Manatee area;
- \$500,000 to widen US 41 from SR-776 to the City of North Port, modify intersections, upgrade traffic signals, and improve drainage;
- \$500,000 to help Sarasota County Area Transit expand its fuel efficient fleet to better support areas of residential and employment density and promote regional economic development.

The transportation funding bill was approved by the House Appropriations Committee and is expected to be passed this week by the full House.