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4

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Date WEDNESDAY
AUG. 23, 2006

County puts tax hike for transit on ballot

But debate looms on which projects may get funds

BY SCOTT WYMAN
STAFF WRITER

Broward County voters will decide Nov. 7 if they want to raise the sales tax by a penny to pay for transportation improvements, but a major fight looms next week among county commissioners over how the money would be spent.

Commissioners ended months of debate over the referendum Tuesday, narrowly adopting ballot language similar to that proposed by tax supporters. The tax proponents wanted

WHAT'S NEXT

Commissioners will hash out spending details of the referendum Tuesday at the Governmental Center in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

It's a workshop, so there will be no chance for public input.

If you would like to comment, call 954-357-7000 or go to www.broward.org for commissioner contact information.

In other action, the County Commission:

Delayed a decision on redevelopment plans for eastern Pompano Beach until next spring.

Finalized language for November

referendums on whether to raise property taxes to pay for a \$500 million court expansion, and whether to ask voters whether they favor allowing homeowners to take their homestead tax break with them when they move.

Approved secret agreements with the federal Transportation Security Administration concerning security at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. Federal officials had accused the airport of security lapses and threatened to fine the county. The content is being withheld because of state and federal security regulations.

wording that spelled out how the area could benefit, hoping that boosts their chance of success.

The commission now must

approve a plan to expand transit and ease congestion over the next 30 years. The People for Progress group that is campaign-

ing for the tax crafted a \$12.6 billion proposal that includes passenger rail, increased bus service and synchronized traffic lights, but their ideas have been under intense fire.

Business executives and environmentalists joined U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Miramar, Lauderdale Mayor Richard Kaplan and other elected officials in urging commissioners to move ahead with the November referendum. They characterized improved transit as vital to the county's future, considering the growth that is projected to occur.

"I cannot imagine the gridlock and pollution when Broward County has 1 million more people if there is not an expansion of mass transit," said Barry Heimlich, president of the Broward County Audubon Society.

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TAX

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The decision to schedule the referendum came on a 5-4 vote. Mayor Ben Graber and Commissioners Jim Scott, Kristin Jacobs, Ilene Lieberman and Diana Wasserman-Rubin supported it, while John Rodstrom, Suzanne Gunzburger, Josephus Eggelletion and Lois Wexler voted no.

The final language said raising the sales tax to 7 cents from 6 cents will pay for a plan "to reduce traffic congestion, synchronize traffic signals, improve roads, expand transportation services for seniors and disabled individuals, and provide convenient rapid transit systems."

The dissenting commissioners tried to cut the proposed tax hike in half and rewrite the ballot question in a way they said would be more neutral. They complained about the \$1 million-plus that People for Progress has spent on consultants and automated calls in Wexler's and Gunzburger's districts that said those commissioners were against transit for seniors.

"This is a very deceptive issue, and I can't wait to get into the war," said Eggelletion, who again vowed to mount a campaign to defeat the tax.

When commissioners sit down next week to hash out details on the spending, much of the debate will focus on some key issues: whether to include a light rail line planned along Interstate 595, whether enough is done to help current riders and whether outlying suburbs are receiving a fair share of the money.

Leaders of People for Progress defend their plan as based largely on the county's own long-range transportation plans and work done for them over the past year by national transit consultants. The first light rail would be along State Road 7, while wait times on key routes would be cut from 15 minutes to 10 minutes at rush hour and express buses would be started to Miami and Boca Raton.

"There is one absolute: There will be more people in Broward and they will need transportation," Hastings told commissioners. "If we don't step properly into the future, we will stumble."

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Penny hike on November ballot

Broward voters will now get to decide on Nov. 7 whether they want to pay more sales tax to fund transportation improvements.

BY ERIKA BOLSTAD
ebolstad@miamiherald.com

Now, it's up to Broward voters

Is traffic so bad that they'll vote in November to pay an extra penny in sales tax to help ease congestion and

improve public transportation?

"Simply doing nothing preserves the status quo," said Commissioner Ilene Lieberman, one of five Broward County Commissioners who approved language Tuesday for the Nov. 7 ballot.

"Ultimately, it's the voice of the people that have to speak to us. I'm for giving the voters a voice."

The question will be one of two tax measures voters

will decide on the ballot. Commissioners also will ask voters to approve a \$500 million bond issue to build a new courthouse.

If the transportation sales tax increase is approved, Broward's sales taxes will jump from 6 to 7 cents on every dollar. The tax would raise an estimated \$260 million a year, which would be used to help Broward compete for matching federal transportation grants.

Most of the money will go toward creating a light rail network and adding hundreds of new buses to the county fleet.

About a dozen people spoke Tuesday in favor of putting the issue to voters, saying county residents have to be willing to pay for good transportation.

"I'm always amazed when it comes time for us to make

TAX QUESTION

Here's what Broward County Commissioners decided to put on the November ballot:

Shall Broward County implement an enhanced county-wide plan to reduce traffic congestion, synchronize traffic signals, improve roads, expand transportation services for seniors and disabled individuals, provide expanded, more frequent bus services, provide safe facilities and amenities, and provide for convenient rapid transit systems and services by levying a one cent sales tax for transportation purposes only, with proceeds deposited in a designated trust fund with oversight of expenditures provided by a citizens advisory committee?

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significant change," said U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Miramar. "Everybody says, 'Tax him, tax [her]; tax that man behind that tree, but don't tax me.' I support this particular measure, and I feel strongly that if we don't step properly into the future, we'll stumble."

FOUR 'NO' VOTES

Commissioners Ben Graber, Kristin Jacobs, Jim Scott, Diana Wasserman-Rubin and Lieberman voted in favor of the tax.

Commissioners Josephus Eggleton, Suzanne Gunzburger, John Rodstrom and Lois Wexler voted no.

"I don't have any hope that people who really need public transit are going to get a whole lot of things they really deserve," Eggleton said.

Commissioners will meet

next Tuesday to discuss the specifics of their plan, including the composition of a citizen advisory committee that would help oversee how the money will be spent. They'll also be deciding how to prioritize which projects are tackled first.

"Let's roll up our sleeves, let's get to work, let's create a plan," Jacobs said.

It won't be an easy task. Even the strongest supporters of the tax say they're not willing to pay for an educational campaign that the main backers of the penny tax, People for Progress, want to conduct.

The People for Progress campaign already has run into trouble by using automated phone calls to target voters in districts where commissioners had said they would oppose the tax.

The automated telephone calls told voters that their county leaders planned to take away transportation from seniors, said Commissioner Gunzburger.

VOW NOT TO FUND

She vowed not to give any county money to People for Progress.

"I'm just very disappointed in the way that they are running their campaign," Gunzburger said.

Contractor James Cummings, chairman of People for Progress, said they intend to run their campaign "like any other legitimate political campaign."

"We plan to educate the people," Cummings said. "If the people don't like it, they'll say no. If we get our message out, what the people are getting, it will be successful."

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TRANSPORTATION

ISSUE: Transit referendum advances.

The Broward County Commission on Tuesday gave the people an opportunity to determine their own future. The people couldn't ask for more than that.

In a 5-4 vote, the commission agreed on language for a referendum on a proposed 1-cent increase in the local sales tax. The revenue would be used to expand mass transit and make other much-needed transportation improvements countywide over a 25-year period, at an estimated cost of \$12.6 billion.

Mobility problems will likely undermine Broward's economy and quality of life if the county doesn't start preparing now to accommodate the enormous growth that is inevitable.

The plan has the support of a long list of cities, institutions and organizations in the county. All of them recognize that mobility problems will likely undermine Broward's economy and quality of life if the county doesn't start preparing now to accommodate the enormous growth that is inevitable.

Four commissioners and others who are critical of the tax and spending plan, which was put together by People for Progress, a group of leading business executives, have raised some legitimate concerns. Supporters should forthrightly address them.

Supporters' campaign for the tax should be conducted in the open, and should seek the backing and cooperation of those commissioners who favor improved mass transit but would have preferred a half-cent proposal and more neutral language for the ballot. By the same token, opponents of the referendum as written must not engage in sabotage. This issue is too important to succumb to politics and infighting.

Already, densities are being increased in certain areas around the county with an eye toward improved mass transit to serve those denser population zones. These land-use changes will only succeed in making crowding and congestion worse if plans for better mass transit do not move forward.

Commissioner Jim Scott said it best on Tuesday: this is a matter of "substantial public interest." The commission is right to let the voters decide.

BOTTOM LINE: The commission is right to let voters decide, but opponents' concerns must be addressed.

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Aug. 16 Broward County commissioners will decide next week whether to ask voters for permission to raise the sales tax from 6% to 7% for 25 years to build a better mass transit system. Do you support the tax?

22.4%
Yes. (1640 responses)

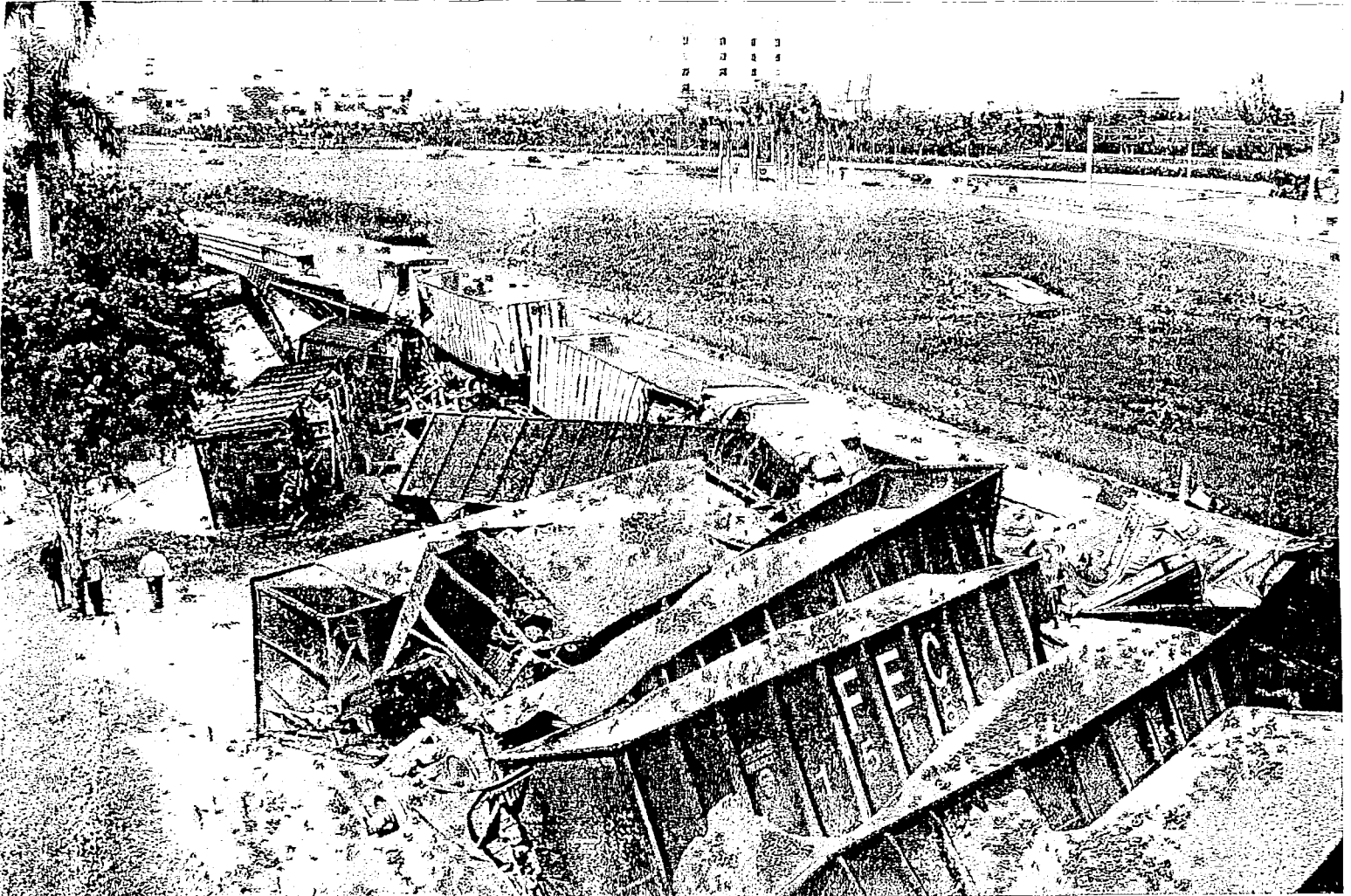
74.1%
No. (5423 responses)

3.5%
I'm not sure. (259 responses)

7322 total responses

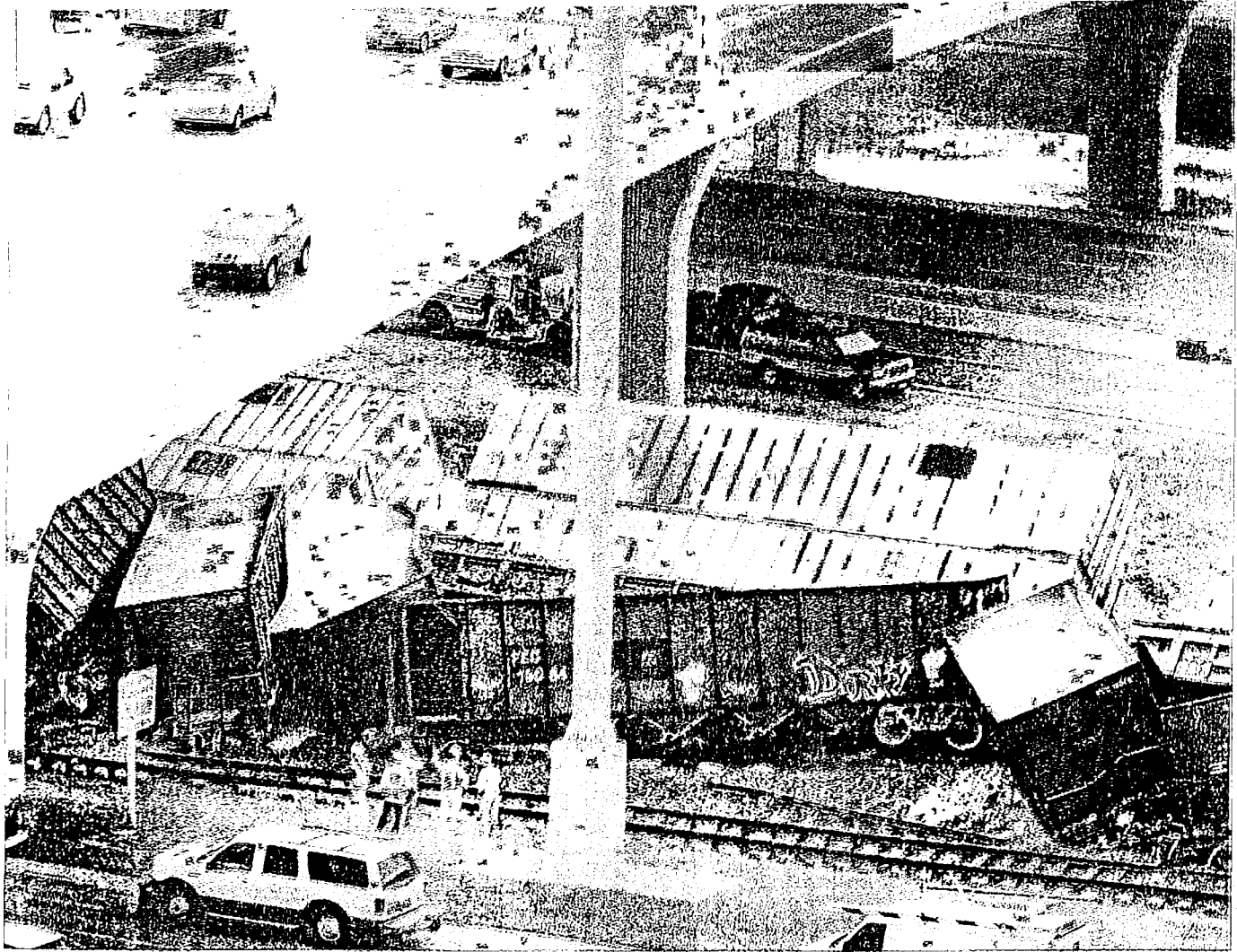
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Rocky road



NO INJURIES: Florida East Coast Railway cars loaded with gravel lay strewn beside the railroad tracks Tuesday between Fort Lauderdale-Llywood International Airport and U.S. 1. No one was injured when two FEC trains, both carrying building supplies, collided shortly after noon. About 30 cars were derailed. No roadways were affected. Workers were still clearing the scene late in the afternoon, and a Broward Sheriff's Office hazardous materials team determined that three rail cars carrying flammable or corrosive substances were not leaking. FEC Railway investigators are working to determine what caused the collision. Staff photo/Michael Laughlin

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JARED LAZARUS/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

DERAILMENT: Vehicles headed to the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport pass over the spot where two freight trains crashed and several cars derailed. On the ground, rescue personnel assess the damage.

2 trains derail in crash

■ Two trains collided around noon Tuesday, disrupting service on the rail line from Fort Lauderdale north to Jacksonville and closing it to southbound traffic.

BY WANDA J. DeMARZO
wdemarzo@MiamiHerald.com

It was just a small collision, a side-swipe between two freight trains, but it shut down railway tracks from Jacksonville to points south.

The accident, which occurred around noon Tuesday on tracks near Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, is not expected to be cleared until mid-morning today. No one

was injured.

"We don't know what caused the accident," said Brian J. Nicholson, of the Florida East Coast Railway. "Right now we have a clean-up problem."

Here's what happened, according to investigators:

Train 208, made up of three locomotives and 136 "hopper" cars loaded with rock, was headed north on the FEC tracks. "Hopper

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cars" are funnel-shaped containers in which materials, like grain or coal, can be easily dispensed.

Train 141 traveled southbound, with three locomotives and 93 cars, seven of which were loaded with mixed freight. The cars were containers offloaded from freighters, then loaded onto the train's flat bed.

As Train 208, traveling about 30 to 35 mph, passed the airport, it glanced off the side of Train 141. The force of the impact derailed 32 cars from Train 208. Rocks from the wreck went flying like missiles around the crash site.

The impact caused four cars on Train 141 to derail. Those cars, called "intermodal cars," are the equivalent of 11 containers, all filled with different freight, "anything from clothing to food items," Nicholson said.

The contents spilled over the tracks. The spill did not cause any environmental issue, Nicholson said.

Normally the intermodal train carries hazardous materials, said Colon R. Fulk, an expert on train safety and a Member of National Transportation Safety Task Force.

"You all got real lucky," said Fulk, of Sherrills Ford, N.C.

"Several months ago in Texarkana, a intermodal train struck a freight train and we had to evacuate everyone with half a mile. It was extremely difficult cleaning out the hazardous materials."

The accident forced the closing of the railway line between Jacksonville and Fort Lauderdale, except for local service. The line is closed between Fort Lauderdale and

the Hialeah train yard until the debris from the accident is completely removed.

The economic impact of the shutdown is not known at this time.

The airport Perimeter Road is closed while the

clean-up is under way, but it should reopen by mid-morning, said Steve Belleme, spokesman for Broward County Aviation Department.

Vehicle traffic in and out of the airport flowed smoothly Tuesday, Belleme said. Air-

port shuttle buses were being rerouted and additional shuttles were called to minimize the impact to travelers.

Passengers using remote parking should allow an extra 30 minutes to accommodate any reroutes, he said.

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Grant may help Davie build bridge
08/21/2006 © Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

Davie The town is hoping to get state aid for a bridge that would extend Oakes Road over Florida's Turnpike.

The Town Council recently approved applying for a \$500,000 grant from the Florida Department of Transportation.

Davie is working with the South Florida Regional Planning Council to conduct a feasibility study for the bridge. The money would go toward the study and an initial design, and the town would not be required to provide matching funds, said acting Town Administrator Ken Cohen.

The bridge would fit in well with the town's State Road 7 Corridor Master Plan, adopted by the council in September, Cohen said.

The plan offers a long-term vision for the industrial and commercial area bounded by the turnpike on the west, State Road 7 on the east, State Road 84 to the north and the Seminole Indian reservation on the south. "This will help out the east side," said Councilman Bryan Caletka. "In the long term, this bridge would lead to development for retail on the eastern side of the turnpike."

He added that the bridge would improve the area's traffic conditions.

"People in Davie now have to either take Griffin Road or State Road 84," he said. "This would allow people to evade traffic up Davie Road and quickly circle back."

Mayor Tom Truex agreed that the bridge would be a positive for the town.

"We need that bridge for a connection from ... [east to west] of the turnpike," he said. "This will help the whole flow of traffic."

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Officials balk at biotech deal

Firm wants to be funded by taxpayers

BY ANDY REID
STAFF WRITER

After failing to get a \$21 million commitment from Palm Beach County commissioners Tuesday, the head of a biotech company trying to move to Boca Raton said he might take his jobs somewhere else.

The California-based Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies wants taxpayer money to help build new research facilities with 189 jobs.

But commissioners, still smarting from committing \$240 million to lure The Scripps Research Institute to Jupiter, have balked at the potential cost.

The commission agreed Tuesday to keep negotiating, but institute founder and President Richard Houghten said he needed a written commitment to move forward.

Houghten said after hearing "it's my way or the highway" from some commissioners; he plans to start talks with two other Florida communities also trying to lure the company.

"The highway is pointing north," Houghten said. "I can't hold off any longer."

Houghten would not name the other governments that made offers to Torrey Pines, but local officials have said Port St. Lucie is among the suitors.

Houghten said he would keep talking with Palm Beach County officials, but needs a deal by Sept. 5 to secure more than \$30 million in state incentives.

It takes government help to lure nonprofit research and development companies, such as Scripps and Torrey Pines, which lead to other high-tech, for-profit companies that follow, said Kelly Smallridge,

president of the Palm Beach County Business Development Board.

Losing Torrey Pines would be a serious setback for the cluster of biotech businesses the county and state intended to create by bringing in Scripps, said Kenneth Kirby, founder of the biotech company TransDermal Technologies in North Palm Beach.

Tuesday's commission meeting was a "train wreck" that adds to the poor business image the county acquired during more than two years of sometimes contentious negotiations with Scripps, Kirby said.

But Commissioner Burt Aaronson said business leaders sold commissioners on investing in Scripps by saying the company would create the "magnet" for attracting spin-off businesses like Torrey Pines.

"They didn't say the magnet that is going to require more money," Aaronson said.

Torrey Pines originally asked for \$37 million from the county to go along with about

\$32 million from the state to help build a 100,000-square-foot headquarters.

County officials countered with an offer for \$21 million.

Boca Raton agreed Monday to provide 10 acres, appraised at \$11 million, near Florida Atlantic University and Boca Raton Airport along Northwest Spanish River Boulevard.

Houghten said the county's proposal leaves him about \$16 million short. He said the county needs to either offer more money, reduce job creation requirements or give the company ownership of the new building sooner.

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Institute talking to cities outside Palm Beach County

By Deana Poole

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Wednesday, August 23, 2006

WEST PALM BEACH — Nervous that a deal can't be struck with Palm Beach County, the president of a California-based biomedical research institute said Tuesday he will start entertaining offers from cities farther north.

"We don't have time to negotiate till the cows come home," said Richard Houghten, president of Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies. "And we won't."

Houghten's remarks came after Tuesday's county commission meeting, where proposed contract terms were debated for more than an hour. After several heated exchanges, commissioners voted 6-0 to keep working on a deal so the nonprofit institute can locate in Boca Raton.

Houghten said he'll continue to work with Palm Beach County, but has no choice but to look elsewhere at the same time. Port St. Lucie and Orlando have tried to lure Torrey Pines with more money.

The institute must have an agreement in hand by Sept. 5 to take advantage of state money the legislature earmarked for biotech institutes, he said. Houghten's proposal is scheduled to go before the state's legislative budget commission on Sept. 12.

"That's the deadline when the state says this ship has sailed," Houghten said. "What I

heard (from the county) is that 'it's my way or the highway.' At this point, the highway is to the north."

County officials still hope a deal can be worked out.

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"At this point in time, we hope that we're still a viable option," said Deputy County Administrator Verderea Baker. "We'll work toward an agreeable arrangement for both parties. If we cannot achieve that goal, then, yes, we wish them well."

Supporters say that the addition of Torrey Pines in south county, combined with Scripps' presence in north county, would provide a strong research-based foundation that eventually will draw for-profit businesses to the county. And losing Torrey Pines, officials say, would be a blow to economic development efforts and biotechnology businesses.

"We had a rocky start with Scripps, but most of that was over the site," said Commissioner Karen Marcus. "I don't know that this would send a good message."

Kelly Smallridge, president of the county's Business Development Board, said: "It bothers me terribly that we've been working on this since February and now other cities can come in in the last two weeks and throw out a proposal."

But Commissioner Burt Aaronson took a tougher business stand. When told Houghten planned to negotiate with other cities, he said simply: "Let him."

Aaronson said while Houghten will be looking out for the best interests of the institute, Aaronson wanted to make sure the taxpayers were protected.

The county was asked to commit \$21 million for Torrey Pines as part of a larger incentive package that includes land and temporary space from the city of Boca. Those contributions would be used to seek money from the state.

The proposal calls for the institute to have a 100,000-square-foot facility in Boca Raton on 10 acres of land that the city would donate. The city also would provide about 15,000 square feet of temporary space for the institute's employees. The city commission on Monday agreed to the land and space donations, which are valued at \$11 million.

The institute has agreed to create 189 jobs over 10 years and retain that number of jobs for another 15 years. If the institute were to default on its contract, the building would revert back to county ownership.

But the biggest sticking point that emerged Tuesday was a request that the institute own the building once it created the 189 jobs. The institute then could use the building as collateral to borrow money. But the county doesn't want to give the building to the institute until the end of the contract, after making sure it follows through with its promise to create and maintain those jobs.

Aaronson flatly rejected the idea.

"Do you think the taxpayers of this county are going to give you something and then let you go ahead

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and mortgage it without the assurance that that mortgage is going to be paid off?" Aaronson asked.

Houghten noted that the institute originally sought an incentive package of more than \$94 million, which included a \$37 million request from the county. Houghten said he was told that amount was unacceptable, as was reducing the number of jobs it promised. He said he was trying to find creative ways to make up the shortfall.

Commissioner Mary McCarty said while this is an opportunity for the county to leverage the state money, she said Torrey Pines isn't a "200-pound gorilla" like Scripps.

"I wouldn't call you (Torrey Pines) an anchor for the biotech cluster," she said. "It's more of a bobber."

McCarty said she didn't want to allow the institute to reduce the number of jobs it was required to produce and thinks the institute should be in Boca Raton for a "substantial amount of time" before it could own the building. She said it seemed as though the county commission offering more money for the institute was the only solution.

After the meeting, Boca Raton Mayor Steven Abrams was optimistic that Torrey Pines still might move to Boca Raton.

Negotiations will continue this week, Baker said, but the county will not have any more flexibility to offer more money or reduce the job numbers.

Houghten said commissioners are unlikely to offer more than \$21 million or budget from their stand on retaining ownership of the Torrey Pines building for 15 years after it has fulfilled its job-creation requirements. And at this point, he is unwilling to tinker with the job numbers.

"I think, in all candor, the county doesn't get it," Houghten said. "The clock is ticking. We're running out of time."

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County, cities agree on need to collaborate to solve housing, traffic woes

By Jemifer Sorentrue

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Wednesday, August 23, 2006

WESTPALM BEACH — Palm Beach County commissioners and local municipal leaders agreed Monday they need to work more closely together to solve two of the area's most pressing issues — affordable housing and traffic.

For the first time in roughly 2 1/2 years, the commission sat down with the Palm Beach County League of Cities to discuss a slew of issues, including regional transportation, congested roads and housing for the county's workforce.

It was the first time the two groups had met since the county ramped up its efforts to lure The Scripps Research Institute here.

Both groups agreed they must meet four times a year from now on.

"We want to be aggressive on business development, yet every new business we bring in here we have to find affordable housing for them and we have to figure out how to solve the transportation problem," County Commissioner Burt Aaronson said. "All of us working together, we have to figure out what we want first, what we want second, and what we want third."

Lantana Mayor Dave Stewart, who serves as one of the league's vice presidents, said part of the problem is that developers are only building large homes that most county

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residents can't afford.

"In the early '80s, you had homes that were 900 to 1,200 square feet," Stewart said. The average size for a new home today is around 2,600 feet, he said.

Aaronson said leaders may need to look at

land in the Glades, an area where roads aren't as congested, for a solution to the affordable housing problem.

"We keep trying to put everything east," Aaronson said. "That's why we have traffic problems.... Maybe we have to start having a different mind-set and not neglect our second coast."

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North Palm Beach County news briefs: August 23
08/23/2006 © Jupiter Courier

Traffic signals to get generator power

Traffic signals at specific Jupiter intersections are to be equipped with generator power so that they work in the wake of hurricanes.

Palm Beach County and the Florida Department of Transportation are installing switches at the intersections of Indiantown Road and Central Boulevard; Indiantown Road and Center Street; Indiantown Road and Military Trail; Indiantown Road and Alternate A1A; Indiantown Road and US 1; Donald Ross Road and Alternate A1A.

The Town of Jupiter is working with the county on a joint effort to add switches also to the intersections of Military Trail and Indian Creek Parkway; Riverside Drive and Alternate A1A and Center Street and Alternate A1A.

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Driver killed when car collides with oncoming SUV at 441 near Delray

sun-sentinel.com

August 22, 2006, 11:05 AM EDT

DELRAY BEACH – A driver was killed Tuesday morning after his car crashed into another vehicle on the 12600 block of U.S. 441 north of West Atlantic Avenue, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office reported.

The crash occurred at 6:44 a.m. when the driver of a four-door Pontiac, headed south on 441/State Road 7, apparently lost control of the car and it crossed the median into the northbound lanes.

The Pontiac then collided with the left side of an oncoming Chevrolet SUV. The car's driver was ejected and pronounced dead at the scene by the county's Fire-Rescue.

The impact of the crash, meanwhile, forced the SUV to overturn. The driver was quickly cut from the wreckage and then taken to Delray Community Hospital.

The investigation continues.

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SR 7 crash west of Delray kills Wellington man, 22

By Stephanie Slater, Laura Ammerman

Palm Beach Post Staff Writers

Wednesday, August 23, 2006

An early-morning crash on State Road 7 Tuesday left one man dead and another with minor injuries and snarled traffic for hours between West Atlantic Avenue and Boynton Beach Boulevard while the crash was investigated, authorities said.

A four-door Pontiac was southbound on SR 7 just north of Atlantic at about 6:45 a.m. when the driver, Michael Roy Cosola, 22, of Wellington, lost control and crossed the median into the northbound lanes, authorities said.

A northbound Chevrolet SUV struck the left side of the Pontiac.

Cosola died after he was ejected from the car.

The Chevrolet landed on its left side, and rescue crews removed the trapped driver, Daniel Parsons, 58, of Boca Raton. He was treated at Delray Medical Center for minor injuries and released.

All northbound lanes were closed near the accident, west of Delray Beach, until early afternoon.

Cosola's driver license was restored this month after a 30-day suspension from

accumulated infractions ranging from speeding to careless driving, according to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

The county sheriff's office asks that any witnesses contact investigator Judith Kirchen at (561) 688-3688

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Martin OKs buying land for Palm City corridor

By Jason Schultz

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Wednesday, August 23, 2006

STUART — Martin County will buy the last piece of land it needs to build a hotly debated road between Palm City and Port St. Lucie.

The county commission voted 3-2 on Tuesday to spend \$2.4 million for 90 acres that represents the bulk of the right of way needed to build the 5-mile-long Western Palm City Corridor from Martin Highway to Port St. Lucie Boulevard.

The land is owned by Shadow Lake Groves Inc., a sod and citrus farming operation and one of the largest private landowners in Martin County. The farming operation is owned by the Washington, D.C.-based Kiplinger family, which also owns the Kiplinger Washington Editors Inc. financial publishing company.

The county had previously bought land from Port St. Lucie landowners and received land donated from developers of an industrial park and the Tusawilla residential subdivision just west of Florida's Turnpike.

Commission Chairman Susan Valliere and Commissioner Sarah Heard voted against the purchase.

"This represents the worst kind of urban sprawl," Heard said. "Urban fees should not be used to blaze a new urban trail through

rural land."

Other officials say the new corridor is needed because existing roads are congested.

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Vallier said she did not want to see taxpayer money used to build the road and that the Kiplingers should contribute to the construction because the Tusawilla developer gave money to help build the road.

Commissioner Doug Smith said the Kiplinger family has been in the community for decades and made numerous contributions not connected to the road. The family has been in Martin County since the 1950s and helped to rebuild the historic Bay Tree Lodge in Sewall's Point in 1992.

County officials had been negotiating with Shadow Lake Groves employees for years to acquire the land. In June, officials started the proceedings needed to take the land through eminent domain, but negotiations between the two sides continued until an agreement was reached.

The commission borrowed more than \$40 million this year to build the corridor and another road, the Green River Parkway in Jensen Beach. The commission also voted to extend its gas tax to 2036 so it could borrow another \$30 million over the next two years to complete those roads next year.

County officials still have to get permission from Port St. Lucie officials to connect the new road to the city's street system.

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Vermont Herald
Sun Sentinel
Palm Beach Post
Palm Beach Daily News

Governor expected to announce Burnham site today

By Hillary Copsey and Robert Barba
TCPalm.com

August 23, 2006, 8:20 AM EDT

For good or bad, Port St. Lucie and Orlando should be able to stop waiting for the Burnham Institute today.

Gov. Jeb Bush was expected to announce early this afternoon where the La Jolla, Calif.-based biotechnology research center will locate its Florida campus. Burnham executives should join the governor to deliver the news.

Including \$156 million in state funding, each city has incentive packages on the table worth about \$300 million. Each has offered land, construction of a lab, pledges from state universities and area hospitals, and philanthropic contributions.

Fort Pierce-based WQCS-FM 88.9 intends to broadcast the governor's announcement live from Tallahassee. Port St. Lucie City Council members plan to gather in their City Hall offices to receive the news.

"I'm extremely nervous," Vice Mayor Patricia Christensen said. "I still feel confident that they will choose Port St. Lucie, but then you always have that little ounce of apprehension and fear that, 'What if they don't?'"

Government officials will join business leaders at 3 p.m. in Tradition Hall in Port St. Lucie to celebrate their victory or at least commend their work on the recruitment effort.

"Hopefully we'll be able to celebrate," said Sen. Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie.

Palm Beach County officials, who committed more than \$240 million to lure The Scripps Research Institute to Jupiter, were also keeping their fingers crossed.

"If they go to St. Lucie County, it will make our marketing efforts and recruiting efforts more effective," said Kelly Smallridge, president of the Palm Beach County Business Development Board. "The closer the better."

While it doesn't matter to the state which location Burnham chooses, the Port St. Lucie site would favor the regional biotech hub Palm Beach County officials envision.

"It's just another piece of the bioscience puzzle," said Ed Sabin, president of the county's not-for-profit Economic Development Research Institute.

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Lawson asks for insurance help

By Bill Cotterell
DEMOCRAT POLITICAL EDITOR

State Sen. Al Lawson asked Gov. Jeb Bush Tuesday to help head off an eight-fold increase in life-insurance premiums for retired state employees.

Lawson said he expects the governor to call a special session on property and casualty insurance in October or November - probably in October - so the current legislative leadership can deal with problems of rising insurance rates and shrinking availability of coverage after eight major hurricanes in two years.

Lawson, D-Tallahassee, said Bush agreed to consult his legislative staff on the feasibility of including retiree insurance as part of the special session's official agenda.

The Department of Management Services this month notified retirees of a pending rate increase from \$4.20 a month to \$35.79 monthly for their \$10,000 in coverage.

They can keep the current rate by cutting their coverage to \$2,500.

Retirees loudly protested the increase at an Aug. 9 rally.

"He is asking the staff to look into the situation in more detail about state retirees and their life insurance," said Lawson after meeting privately with Bush for a half-hour. "I don't have a firm commitment, but he was really kind of concerned about it."

The insurance enrollment period starts Sept. 19 for state employees and

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retires. It lasts for 30 days.

Bush vetoed a budget provision that would have extended a state subsidy and kept coverage steady. He said state law does not permit use of legislatively appropriated monies to subsidize insurance premiums.

The veteran senator said Bush gave no indication when a special session will be called. But Lawson said he expects it to be in October, before the elections.

"They're dealing with a couple of dates," he said. "They really would like to keep in place the Senate president and House speaker in doing this special session because everybody's been working on it. In my estimation - and he didn't say this - I would look more to October."

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Traffic fatalities at highest level in 15 years, federal agency says

Motorcycle deaths up 13%

BY SHOLNN FREEMAN
THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON • The number of people killed on U.S. roadways in 2005 climbed to the highest level in 15 years, an increase tied to rising deaths among motorcyclists and pedestrians, the federal government reported Tuesday.

A total of 43,443 people died in traffic accidents last year, up 1.4 percent from the previous year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The agency said the motorcycle death toll rose for the eighth straight year. Last year, 4,553 motorcyclists died on the roadways, up 13 percent from the previous year. The

agency said 4,881 pedestrians were killed last year, up 4.4 percent.

"The traffic environment is getting more dangerous," said Adrian Lund, president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "People are driving a lot faster. We've lost momentum in reducing alcohol-impaired driving and unprotected road users, like pedestrians, and to some extent motorcyclists are going to suffer from that."

Lund said state governments need to adopt stricter helmet laws. Twenty states have mandatory helmet laws for motorcyclists. Most recently, Pennsylvania, Florida and Texas have rolled back their helmet laws, according to a NHTSA spokesman. Other states began removing helmet laws in the late 1970s after federal incentives to

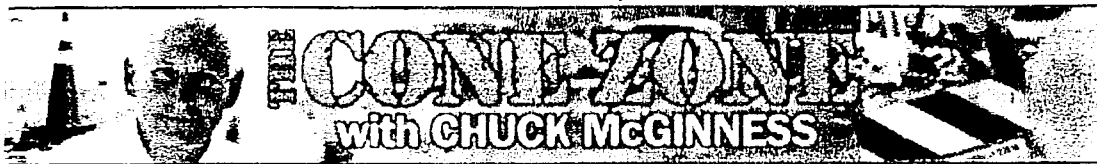
promote them ended. According to NHTSA, states that have repealed helmet laws have seen sharp rises in motorcycle deaths.

Acting Secretary of Transportation Maria Cino said in a statement that the government had "zero tolerance" for any roadway deaths and urged motorcyclists to wear helmets and for all drivers to buckle up and stay sober. The U.S. Transportation Department oversees NHTSA.

NHTSA said it has launched an investigation into the rising number of pedestrian deaths.

NHTSA collects crash statistics annually from around the country and Puerto Rico to produce the report, based on the Fatality Analysis Reporting System. The full report is available at www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov

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Highways Deaths Up, Both Nationwide and Locally

By [Chuck McGinness](#) | Tuesday, August 22, 2006, 04:43 PM

The number of people killed on our nation's highways was up 1.4 percent in 2005, mainly because of an increase in pedestrian and motorcycle deaths.

Here in Palm Beach County, fatalities rose 8.4 percent.

That's a quick synopsis of a report released today by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, just as police gear up for the annual Labor Day crackdown on drunk driving.

The total number of fatalities increased from 42,836 in 2004 to 43,443 in 2005. There's really no question why, said Acting Secretary of Transportation Maria Cino.

Motorcycle deaths rose 13 percent. Almost half of the people who died were not wearing a helmet.

Meanwhile, pedestrian fatalities were up 4.4 percent. The agency is still investigating the reasons why.

Still, there was some good news in the report, Cino said. The number of

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young drivers (ages 16 to 20) killed declined 4.6 percent, while fatal crashes involving young drivers dropped 6.3 percent. Also, the number of people injured in vehicle crashes decreased 3.2 percent.

To reduce the number of motorcycle fatalities, the Federal Highway Administration will be conducting education campaigns to encourage drivers to get proper training and always wear helmets.

More than \$600 million will be available over the next three years to states for programs to improve pedestrian safety.

In Palm Beach County, the number of fatalities jumped from 178 in 2004 to 193 in 2005.

A breakdown of the stats showed that alcohol-related deaths increased 19.4 percent (67 to 80); the number of pedestrians killed rose 22.2 percent (27 to 33); the number of bicyclists killed increased 12.5 percent (8 to 9) and the number of motorcyclists killed increased 28.5 percent (21 to 27). More than half of the motorcyclists who died — 14 — were not wearing helmets.

Surprisingly, the number of speeding-related fatalities decreased 53 percent (30 to 14). Anyone who's been on I-95 lately may find that hard to believe.

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