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[300+ Industry Leaders Talk Transportation Public-Private Partnerships at 21st Annual ARTBA Conference](#)

Published on October 4, 2009 in [Dixie Contractor](#) and [Industry Activities](#). [0 Comments](#) Tags: [ARTBA](#), [construction](#), [construction industry](#), [Federal Highway Administration](#), [Florida](#), [Florida DOT](#), [highways](#), [Interstate Highway System](#), [transportation](#).

More than 300 transportation design and construction executives, financial services and consulting professionals, and government officials came to Nation's Capital September 24-25 to discuss the role of public-private partnerships (P3s) in  financing transportation infrastructure projects. Attendees at the 21st Annual [American Road & Transportation Builders Association](#) (ARTBA) [Public-Private Ventures \(PPV\) in Transportation Conference](#) heard compelling remarks from Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell (D), Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez, Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Stephanie Kopelousos, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development Secretary William Ankner, Ph.D., senior congressional staff and others.

Governor Rendell said options like a national infrastructure bank and other P3 deals should “get under way now,” adding that he would like to see Congress set the groundwork for their expanded use under the next highway/transit investment bill. Looking to the gas tax as a financing mechanism for surface transportation, Rendell said Congress lacked political courage to take tough, but required action. “There’s fear in Washington about raising the gas tax. We’ve elected the biggest bunch of wusses I’ve ever seen in politics. They’re scared of their shadow, they’re scared to invest, they’re scared to spend—they’re terrified,” he said. Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez spoke about his agency’s focus on safety and the benefits provided by recovery act funds for transportation infrastructure investments.

Secretary Kopelousos discussed the importance of P3s in Florida, saying that 91 percent of recent projects have been toll-financed. She pointed to seven unique lessons learned from P3s in her state, including: being flexible in procurement, securing government and community support, selecting the right project, knowing the overall market and understanding appropriate timing, having the best experts on your team to create the deal, ensuring transparency, and being persistent.

A panel of senior staff members from the Senate Environment and Public Works, and House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee also discussed the role of P3s as a mechanism for supporting new capacity projects, and outlined challenges they see facing the industry as Congress negotiates the next highway/transit authorization bill.

During the conference, ARTBA recognized Juan Santamaria, chief operating officer of ACS Infrastructure Development, Inc., and Gerry O'Reilly, director of transportation development for Florida Department of Transportation District Four, with the "Entrepreneur of the Year Awards." The awards are presented annually to private and public sector professionals who have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of P3s that advance transportation infrastructure improvements. Florida's I-595 Corridor Improvements received the "Project of the Year" Award. Additional project information is available at www.I-595.com. The website provides in-depth information on the project. The following is a brief overview.

FDOT established a very aggressive schedule for the procurement of a concessionaire to design, build, finance, operate and maintain (D/B/F/O/M) the project. The entire process from advertisement through contract award was accomplished in less than 13 months, which involved the continual collaboration of legal, financial and technical Department and consultant staff. Effective communication between FDOT and the shortlisted concessionaire teams, including one-on-one meetings and responses to proposer questions, ensured the development of a comprehensive contract documents package as well as a competitive bidding process. Some of the major procurement process milestones included:

- October 1, 2007 – Issued Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to interested proposers
- December 3, 2007 – Shortlist of concessionaire teams (4 teams total)
- December 11, 2007 – Issued Draft Request for Proposals (RFP) to shortlisted teams
- April 18, 2008 – Issued Final RFP
- September 5, 2008 – Received technical and financial proposals from shortlisted teams
- October 24, 2008 – Issued Notice of Intent to Award contract to ACS Infrastructure Development (ACSID)
- March 3, 2009 – Contract Execution

On March 3, 2009, FDOT signed a public-private partnership (P3) agreement with [I-595 Express, LLC](#), a consortium created by ACS Infrastructure Development, who will serve as the Concessionaire to design, build, finance, operate and maintain (D/B/F/O/M) the I-595 Corridor Improvements project through the 35-year agreement term.

