Committee on Commerce and Tourism

SB 362 — Florida Tourism Marketing

by Senators Hooper, Stewart, Harrell, Baxley, Torres, and Simmons

The bill extends the scheduled repeal date for the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation, doing business as VISIT FLORIDA, and the Division of Tourism Marketing within Enterprise Florida, Inc., until October 1, 2023.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 114-2

Committee on Commerce and Tourism

CS/SB 426 — Economic Development

by Appropriations Committee and Senators Montford, Albritton, and Stewart

The bill modifies the operations and funding requirements of the Regional Rural Development Grants Program to revise the annual maximum grant amounts available to regional economic development organizations; require grant recipients to serve or be located in a rural area of opportunity; and clarify the concept of developing "professional capacity" with regard to how eligible entities may use grant funds. The maximum amount of funds the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) may expend for the program is increased from $750,000 to $1 million annually, and the percentage of grant funds that must be matched with non-state funds is decreased from 100 percent to 25 percent of the state's contribution.

The bill amends the Rural Infrastructure Fund to increase the amount of infrastructure project costs that grant funds can be used for from 30 percent to 50 percent of a project's total cost and clarify that eligible infrastructure projects include the costs associated with improving access to broadband Internet service.

The bill creates transparency requirements for contracts and agreements that expend funds under the Regional Rural Development Grants Program and the Rural Infrastructure Fund.

In addition, the bill modifies the governance and administration of the Florida Development Finance Corporation (FDFC) to require additional reporting on their activities to the DEO and redesign the board of directors to include the director of the State Board of Administration's Division of Bond Finance and the executive director of the DEO, who will serve as the chair of the board. The bill also increases the permitted term of a bond, note, or other form of indebtedness issued under the FDFC Act from 30 fiscal years to 35 calendar years; implements a conflict of interest policy for the FDFC's board of directors; and institutes a sunset repeal, effective July 1, 2023, and every 4 years thereafter, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature.

Lastly, the bill modifies the structure of Florida's workforce development system to replace CareerSource Florida, Inc., (CareerSource) with the state board or the DEO in provisions relating to the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The bill also clarifies the purpose, operation, and structure of CareerSource and the state board; requires the state board, rather than CareerSource, to produce a state plan that creates an educated and skilled workforce; and clarifies the duties of the local workforce development boards. A number of conforming changes made in the bill reflect structural adjustments in the relationship between the DEO, CareerSource, and the state board.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2020.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 118-0

CS/SB 838 — Business Organizations

by Commerce and Tourism Committee and Senator Simmons

The bill amends several sections of the Florida Business Corporation Act, ch. 607, F.S., and its related statutes to:

- Make clarifying and conforming changes to, and fix minor errors in, the 2019 Florida Business Corporation Act legislation (Chapter 2019-90, L.O.F.);
- Modify the laws that govern the makeup of not-for-profit corporations' board committees to allow persons other than board directors to serve on those committees; and
- Re-instate the Florida Department of State's ability to direct interrogatories to a corporation to determine the corporation's compliance with ch. 607, F.S.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 109-0

CS/HB 969 — Broadband Internet Service

by Transportation and Tourism Appropriations Subcommittee; and Reps. Drake and Ausley (CS/CS/SB 1166 by Appropriations Committee; Commerce and Tourism Committee; and Senator Albritton)

The bill transfers the state's broadband program from the Department of Management Services (DMS) to the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), creating the Florida Office of Broadband within DEOs Division of Community Development. The bill transfers specific powers and duties regarding the development, marketing, and promotion of broadband that were previously under DMS. More specifically, the office is directed to perform the following duties:

- Create a strategic plan to increase the use of broadband Internet service in Florida. The plan must include a process to review and verify public input on broadband Internet transmission speeds and availability;
- Build and facilitate local technology planning teams, especially with community members from the areas of education, healthcare, business, tourism, agriculture, economic development, and local government;
- Encourage public use of Internet service through broadband grant programs; and
- Monitor, participate in, and provide input on Federal Communications Commission proceedings that are related to the geographic availability and deployment of broadband Internet in Florida.

The bill also provides that the Department of Transportation may, beginning in Fiscal Year 2022-2023, use up to $5 million annually from the funds transferred to Florida's Turnpike Enterprise to the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance program for projects that assist in the development of broadband infrastructure within or adjacent to a multiuse corridor.

Lastly, the bill repeals ch. 2012-131, L.O.F., which is obsolete language.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2020.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 114-0