

By Senator Grimsley

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Rural Economic Development
3 Initiative; amending s. 288.0001, F.S.; requiring an
4 analysis of the Rural Economic Development Initiative
5 and rural areas of opportunity; amending s. 288.0656,
6 F.S.; revising legislative intent relating to the
7 Rural Economic Development Initiative; redefining the
8 term "rural area of opportunity"; revising the duties,
9 responsibilities, and membership of the Rural Economic
10 Development Initiative; deleting a provision limiting
11 the number of rural areas of opportunity that may be
12 designated; revising reporting requirements; amending
13 ss. 163.3177, 163.3187, 257.193, 288.019, 288.06561,
14 290.0055, 290.06561, 337.403, 339.2818, 339.2819,
15 339.63, 479.16, and 627.6699, F.S.; conforming cross-
16 references; providing an effective date.

17
18 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

19
20 Section 1. Paragraph (f) is added to subsection (2) of
21 section 288.0001, Florida Statutes, to read:

22 288.0001 Economic Development Programs Evaluation.—The
23 Office of Economic and Demographic Research and the Office of
24 Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA)
25 shall develop and present to the Governor, the President of the
26 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the
27 chairs of the legislative appropriations committees the Economic
28 Development Programs Evaluation.

29 (2) The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and
30 OPPAGA shall provide a detailed analysis of economic development
31 programs as provided in the following schedule:

32 (f) By January 1, 2020, and every 3 years thereafter, an

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33 analysis of rural areas of opportunity and the Rural Economic
34 Development Initiative (REDI) established under s. 288.0656.

35 Section 2. Section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended
36 to read:

37 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

38 (1)~~(a)~~ Recognizing that rural communities and regions
39 continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to
40 significantly improve their quality of life and economies,
41 specifically in terms of personal income, education,
42 infrastructure, access to healthcare, and job creation, average
43 wages, and strong tax bases, it is the intent of the Legislature
44 to encourage and facilitate:

45 (a) Job creation through the location and expansion of
46 ~~major economic development projects of significant scale in such~~
47 ~~rural communities.~~

48 (b) Improved community infrastructure, including, but not
49 limited to, roads, utilities, water and sewer facilities, and
50 broadband.

51 (c) The development and expansion of a skilled workforce.

52 (d) Improved access to healthcare.

53 (2)~~(b)~~ The Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as
54 "REDI," is created within the Department of Economic
55 Opportunity, and the participation of state and regional
56 agencies in this initiative is authorized.

57 (3)~~(2)~~ As used in this section, the term:

58 (a) "Catalyst project" means a business locating or
59 expanding in a rural area of opportunity to serve as an economic
60 generator of regional significance for the growth of a regional
61 target industry cluster. The project must provide capital

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62 investment on a scale significant enough to affect the entire
63 region and result in the development of high-wage and high-skill
64 jobs.

65 (b) "Catalyst site" means a parcel or parcels of land
66 within a rural area of opportunity that has been prioritized as
67 a geographic site for economic development through partnerships
68 with state, regional, and local organizations. The site must be
69 reviewed by REDI and approved by the department for the purposes
70 of locating a catalyst project.

71 (c) "Economic distress" means conditions affecting the
72 fiscal and economic viability of a rural community, including
73 such factors as low per capita income, low per capita taxable
74 values, high unemployment, high underemployment, low weekly
75 earned wages compared to the state average, low housing values
76 compared to the state average, high percentages of the
77 population receiving public assistance, high poverty levels
78 compared to the state average, and a lack of year-round stable
79 employment opportunities.

80 (d) "Rural area of opportunity" means a rural community, or
81 a region composed of rural communities, designated by the
82 Governor, which has been adversely affected by ~~an extraordinary~~
83 ~~economic event~~, severe or chronic economic distress and faces
84 competitive disadvantages such as low labor force participation,
85 low educational attainment levels, high unemployment, a district
86 grade of "D" or "F" pursuant to s. 1008.34, high infant
87 mortality rates, and high diabetes and obesity rates and which
88 ~~or a natural disaster or that~~ presents a unique economic
89 development opportunity of regional impact.

90 (e) "Rural community" means:

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- 91 1. A county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
- 92 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is
- 93 contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
- 94 3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph
- 95 1. or subparagraph 2.
- 96 4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an
- 97 incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and
- 98 an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or
- 99 resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as
- 100 rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress
- 101 factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the
- 102 department.

103

104 For purposes of this paragraph, population shall be determined

105 in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to

106 s. 186.901.

107 ~~(4)~~ (3) REDI ~~is shall be~~ responsible for coordinating and

108 focusing the efforts and resources of state and regional

109 agencies on the challenges of the state's rural areas of

110 opportunity and economically distressed rural communities. REDI

111 shall work ~~problems which affect the fiscal, economic, and~~

112 ~~community viability of Florida's economically distressed rural~~

113 ~~communities, working~~ with local governments, community-based

114 organizations, and private organizations that have an interest

115 in the renewed prosperity and competitiveness of growth and

116 ~~development of these communities to find ways to balance~~

117 ~~environmental and growth management issues with local needs.~~

118 ~~(5)~~ (4) REDI shall review and evaluate the impact of

119 statutes and rules on rural communities and shall work to

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120 minimize any adverse impact and undertake outreach and capacity-
121 building efforts to improve rural communities' ability to
122 compete in a global economy.

123 ~~(6)(5)~~ REDI shall facilitate better access to state
124 resources by promoting direct access and referrals to
125 appropriate state and regional agencies and statewide
126 organizations. ~~REDI may undertake outreach, capacity-building,~~
127 ~~and other advocacy efforts to improve conditions in rural~~
128 ~~communities. These activities may include sponsorship of~~
129 ~~conferences and achievement awards.~~

130 (7) (a) REDI shall consist of the following members:

131 1. The executive director of the Department of Economic
132 Opportunity or his or her designee, who shall serve as the
133 chair.

134 2. The Secretary of Transportation or his or her designee.

135 3. The Secretary of Environmental Protection or his or her
136 designee.

137 4. The Commissioner of Agriculture or his or her designee.

138 5. The State Surgeon General or his or her designee.

139 6. The Commissioner of Education or his or her designee.

140 7. The President of Enterprise Florida, Inc., or his or her
141 designee.

142 8. The chair of the board of directors of CareerSource
143 Florida, Inc., or his or her designee.

144 9. The chair of the board of the regional economic
145 development organization for each of the rural areas of
146 opportunity or his or her designee.

147 10. Five members from the private sector, three of whom
148 shall be appointed by the executive director of the Department

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149 of Economic Opportunity, one of whom shall be appointed by the
150 President of the Senate, and one of whom shall be appointed by
151 the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

152 (b) In making their appointments, the executive director,
153 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
154 Representatives shall ensure that the appointments reflect the
155 diversity of Florida's business community and are representative
156 of the economic development goals in subsection (1).

157 (c) The executive director, the President of the Senate,
158 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall consider
159 appointees who reflect the state's racial, ethnic, and gender
160 diversity and who are from rural communities.

161 (d) Each appointed member shall be appointed to a 2-year
162 term, which begins on July 1 and expires on June 30.

163 (e) Initial appointments shall be made by July 1, 2017.

164 (f) A vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of an
165 unexpired term and filled in the same manner as the original
166 appointment.

167 (g) An appointed member may be removed by the appointing
168 officer for cause. Absence of a member from three consecutive
169 meetings results in automatic removal.

170 (h) The chair may request the head of any state agency or
171 organization to serve on an ad hoc committee as needed to
172 address issues or projects relating to rural areas of
173 opportunity and economically distressed rural communities. The
174 chair shall consider requesting the following individuals to
175 serve on an ad hoc committee:

176 1. The executive director of the Fish and Wildlife
177 Conservation Commission or his or her designee.

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- 178 2. The Secretary of State or his or her designee.
 179 3. The Secretary of Children and Families or his or her
 180 designee.
 181 4. The Secretary of Corrections or his or her designee.
 182 5. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice or his or her
 183 designee.
 184 6. The Secretary of Health Care Administration or his or
 185 her designee.
 186 7. A board member of the Florida Regional Councils
 187 Association or his or her designee.
 188 ~~(6) (a) By August 1 of each year, the head of each of the~~
 189 ~~following agencies and organizations shall designate a deputy~~
 190 ~~secretary or higher-level staff person from within the agency or~~
 191 ~~organization to serve as the REDI representative for the agency~~
 192 ~~or organization:~~
 193 ~~1. The Department of Transportation.~~
 194 ~~2. The Department of Environmental Protection.~~
 195 ~~3. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.~~
 196 ~~4. The Department of State.~~
 197 ~~5. The Department of Health.~~
 198 ~~6. The Department of Children and Families.~~
 199 ~~7. The Department of Corrections.~~
 200 ~~8. The Department of Education.~~
 201 ~~9. The Department of Juvenile Justice.~~
 202 ~~10. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.~~
 203 ~~11. Each water management district.~~
 204 ~~12. Enterprise Florida, Inc.~~
 205 ~~13. CareerSource Florida, Inc.~~
 206 ~~14. VISIT Florida.~~

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207 ~~15. The Florida Regional Planning Council Association.~~

208 ~~16. The Agency for Health Care Administration.~~

209 ~~17. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).~~

210
211 ~~An alternate for each designee shall also be chosen, and the~~
212 ~~names of the designees and alternates shall be sent to the~~
213 ~~executive director of the department.~~

214 (i) (b) Each REDI member from a state agency or organization
215 ~~representative must have comprehensive knowledge of his or her~~
216 ~~agency's functions, both regulatory and service in nature, and~~
217 ~~of the state's economic goals, policies, and programs. This~~
218 ~~person~~ shall be the primary point of contact for his or her
219 agency with REDI on issues and projects relating to rural areas
220 of opportunity and economically distressed rural communities and
221 with regard to expediting project review, shall ensure a prompt
222 effective response to problems arising with regard to rural
223 issues, and shall work closely with the other REDI members
224 ~~representatives~~ in the identification of opportunities for
225 preferential awards of program funds and allowances and waiver
226 of program requirements when necessary to encourage and
227 facilitate long-term private capital investment and job
228 creation. The member shall also ensure that each district office
229 or facility of his or her agency or organization is informed
230 about REDI and shall provide assistance throughout the agency in
231 the implementation of REDI activities.

232 ~~(c) The REDI representatives shall work with REDI in the~~
233 ~~review and evaluation of statutes and rules for adverse impact~~
234 ~~on rural communities and the development of alternative~~
235 ~~proposals to mitigate that impact.~~

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236 ~~(d) Each REDI representative shall be responsible for~~
237 ~~ensuring that each district office or facility of his or her~~
238 ~~agency is informed about the Rural Economic Development~~
239 ~~Initiative and for providing assistance throughout the agency in~~
240 ~~the implementation of REDI activities.~~

241 ~~(8)~~(7) (a) ~~REDI may recommend to the Governor up to three~~
242 ~~rural areas of opportunity.~~ The Governor may by executive order
243 designate ~~up to three~~ rural areas of opportunity which will
244 establish these areas as priority assignments for REDI. ~~as well~~
245 ~~as to allow~~ The Governor may, acting through REDI, ~~to~~ waive
246 criteria, requirements, or similar provisions of any economic
247 development incentive. Such incentives shall include, but are
248 not limited to, the Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program
249 under s. 288.106, the Quick Response Training Program under s.
250 288.047, the Quick Response Training Program for participants in
251 the welfare transition program under s. 288.047(8),
252 transportation projects under s. 339.2821, the brownfield
253 redevelopment bonus refund under s. 288.107, and the rural job
254 tax credit program under ss. 212.098 and 220.1895.

255 (b) Designation as a rural area of opportunity under this
256 subsection shall be contingent upon the execution of a
257 memorandum of agreement among the department; the governing body
258 of the county; and the governing bodies of any municipalities to
259 be included within a rural area of opportunity. Such agreement
260 shall specify the terms and conditions of the designation,
261 including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities
262 of the county and any participating municipalities to take
263 actions designed to facilitate the retention and expansion of
264 existing businesses in the area, as well as the recruitment of

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265 new businesses to the area.

266 (c) Each rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst
267 projects, provided that each catalyst project is specifically
268 recommended by REDI, identified as a catalyst project by
269 Enterprise Florida, Inc., and confirmed as a catalyst project by
270 the department. All state agencies and departments shall use all
271 available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law
272 to promote the creation and development of each catalyst project
273 and the development of catalyst sites.

274 (9)~~(8)~~ Before September 1 of each year, REDI shall submit a
275 ~~report~~ to the department, the Governor, the President of the
276 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a
277 complete and detailed report, including, but not limited to ~~on~~
278 ~~all REDI activities for the previous fiscal year as a supplement~~
279 ~~to the department's annual report required under s. 20.60. This~~
280 ~~supplementary report must include:~~

281 (a) A description of the operations of ~~status report on~~ all
282 projects currently being coordinated through REDI, the number of
283 preferential awards and allowances made pursuant to this
284 section, the dollar amount of such awards, ~~and~~ the names of the
285 recipients, and an evaluation of progress toward achieving
286 organizational goals and specific performance outcomes, as
287 established by the department.

288 (b) A description of the accomplishments of REDI and
289 identification of major trends, initiatives, or developments
290 affecting the performance of a program or activity coordinated
291 through REDI.

292 (c) A description of all waivers of program requirements
293 granted.

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294 (d)~~(e)~~ Information as to the economic impact of the
295 projects coordinated by REDI.

296 (e)~~(d)~~ Recommendations based on the review and evaluation
297 of statutes and rules having an adverse impact on rural
298 communities and proposals to mitigate such adverse impacts.

299 Section 3. Paragraph (e) of subsection (7) of section
300 163.3177, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

301 163.3177 Required and optional elements of comprehensive
302 plan; studies and surveys.—

303 (7)

304 (e) This subsection does not confer the status of rural
305 area of opportunity, or any of the rights or benefits derived
306 from such status, on any land area not otherwise designated as
307 such pursuant to s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~.

308 Section 4. Subsection (3) of section 163.3187, Florida
309 Statutes, is amended to read:

310 163.3187 Process for adoption of small-scale comprehensive
311 plan amendment.—

312 (3) If the small scale development amendment involves a
313 site within a rural area of opportunity as defined under s.
314 288.0656(3)(d) ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~ for the duration of such
315 designation, the 10-acre limit listed in subsection (1) shall be
316 increased by 100 percent to 20 acres. The local government
317 approving the small scale plan amendment shall certify to the
318 state land planning agency that the plan amendment furthers the
319 economic objectives set forth in the executive order issued
320 under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~, and the property subject to
321 the plan amendment shall undergo public review to ensure that
322 all concurrency requirements and federal, state, and local

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323 environmental permit requirements are met.

324 Section 5. Subsection (2) of section 257.193, Florida
325 Statutes, is amended to read:

326 257.193 Community Libraries in Caring Program.—

327 (2) The purpose of the Community Libraries in Caring
328 Program is to assist libraries in rural communities, as defined
329 in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ and subject to the provisions
330 of s. 288.06561, to strengthen their collections and services,
331 improve literacy in their communities, and improve the economic
332 viability of their communities.

333 Section 6. Section 288.019, Florida Statutes, is amended to
334 read:

335 288.019 Rural considerations in grant review and evaluation
336 processes.—Notwithstanding any other law, and to the fullest
337 extent possible, the member agencies and organizations of the
338 Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) as defined in s.
339 288.0656(7) (a) ~~s. 288.0656(6) (a)~~ shall review all grant and loan
340 application evaluation criteria to ensure the fullest access for
341 rural counties as defined in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ to
342 resources available throughout the state.

343 (1) Each REDI agency and organization shall review all
344 evaluation and scoring procedures and develop modifications to
345 those procedures which minimize the impact of a project within a
346 rural area.

347 (2) Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must provide
348 for an appropriate ranking based on the proportionate impact
349 that projects have on a rural area when compared with similar
350 project impacts on an urban area.

351 (3) Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must

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352 recognize the disparity of available fiscal resources for an
353 equal level of financial support from an urban county and a
354 rural county.

355 (a) The evaluation criteria should weight contribution in
356 proportion to the amount of funding available at the local
357 level.

358 (b) In-kind match should be allowed and applied as
359 financial match when a county is experiencing financial distress
360 through elevated unemployment at a rate in excess of the state's
361 average by 5 percentage points or because of the loss of its ad
362 valorem base.

363 (4) For existing programs, the modified evaluation criteria
364 and scoring procedure must be delivered to the department for
365 distribution to the REDI agencies and organizations. The REDI
366 agencies and organizations shall review and make comments.
367 Future rules, programs, evaluation criteria, and scoring
368 processes must be brought before a REDI meeting for review,
369 discussion, and recommendation to allow rural counties fuller
370 access to the state's resources.

371 Section 7. Section 288.06561, Florida Statutes, is amended
372 to read:

373 288.06561 Reduction or waiver of financial match
374 requirements.—Notwithstanding any other law, the member agencies
375 and organizations of the Rural Economic Development Initiative
376 (REDI), as defined in s. 288.0656(7)(a) ~~s. 288.0656(6)(a)~~, shall
377 review the financial match requirements for projects in rural
378 areas as defined in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~.

379 (1) Each agency and organization shall develop a proposal
380 to waive or reduce the match requirement for rural areas.

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381 (2) Agencies and organizations shall ensure that all
382 proposals are submitted to the department for review by the REDI
383 agencies.

384 (3) These proposals shall be delivered to the department
385 for distribution to the REDI agencies and organizations. A
386 meeting of REDI agencies and organizations must be called within
387 30 days after receipt of such proposals for REDI comment and
388 recommendations on each proposal.

389 (4) Waivers and reductions must be requested by the county
390 or community, and such county or community must have three or
391 more of the factors identified in s. 288.0656(3)(c) ~~s.~~
392 ~~288.0656(2)(c)~~.

393 (5) Any other funds available to the project may be used
394 for financial match of federal programs when there is fiscal
395 hardship, and the match requirements may not be waived or
396 reduced.

397 (6) When match requirements are not reduced or eliminated,
398 donations of land, though usually not recognized as an in-kind
399 match, may be permitted.

400 (7) To the fullest extent possible, agencies and
401 organizations shall expedite the rule adoption and amendment
402 process if necessary to incorporate the reduction in match by
403 rural areas in fiscal distress.

404 (8) REDI shall include in its annual report an evaluation
405 on the status of changes to rules, number of awards made with
406 waivers, and recommendations for future changes.

407 Section 8. Paragraph (d) of subsection (6) of section
408 290.0055, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

409 290.0055 Local nominating procedure.-

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410 (6)

411 (d)1. The governing body of a jurisdiction which has
412 nominated an application for an enterprise zone that is at least
413 15 square miles and less than 20 square miles and includes a
414 portion of the state designated as a rural area of opportunity
415 under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~ may apply to the department
416 to expand the boundary of the existing enterprise zone by not
417 more than 3 square miles.

418 2. The governing body of a jurisdiction which has nominated
419 an application for an enterprise zone that is at least 20 square
420 miles and includes a portion of the state designated as a rural
421 area of opportunity under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~ may
422 apply to the department to expand the boundary of the existing
423 enterprise zone by not more than 5 square miles.

424 3. An application to expand the boundary of an enterprise
425 zone under this paragraph must be submitted by December 31,
426 2013.

427 4. Notwithstanding the area limitations specified in
428 subsection (4), the department may approve the request for a
429 boundary amendment if the area continues to satisfy the
430 remaining requirements of this section.

431 5. The department shall establish the initial effective
432 date of an enterprise zone designated under this paragraph.

433 Section 9. Section 290.06561, Florida Statutes, is amended
434 to read:

435 290.06561 Designation of rural enterprise zone as catalyst
436 site.—Notwithstanding s. 290.0065(1), the Department of Economic
437 Opportunity, upon request of the host county, shall designate as
438 a rural enterprise zone any catalyst site as defined in s.

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439 288.0656(3)(b) ~~s. 288.0656(2)(b)~~ that was approved before
440 January 1, 2010, and that is not located in an existing rural
441 enterprise zone. The request from the host county must include
442 the legal description of the catalyst site and the name and
443 contact information for the county development authority
444 responsible for managing the catalyst site. The designation
445 shall provide businesses locating within the catalyst site the
446 same eligibility for economic incentives and other benefits of a
447 rural enterprise zone designated under s. 290.0065. The
448 reporting criteria for a catalyst site designated as a rural
449 enterprise zone under this section are the same as for other
450 rural enterprise zones. Host county development authorities may
451 enter into memoranda of agreement, as necessary, to coordinate
452 their efforts to implement this section.

453 Section 10. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section
454 337.403, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

455 337.403 Interference caused by utility; expenses.—

456 (1) If a utility that is placed upon, under, over, or
457 within the right-of-way limits of any public road or publicly
458 owned rail corridor is found by the authority to be unreasonably
459 interfering in any way with the convenient, safe, or continuous
460 use, or the maintenance, improvement, extension, or expansion,
461 of such public road or publicly owned rail corridor, the utility
462 owner shall, upon 30 days' written notice to the utility or its
463 agent by the authority, initiate the work necessary to alleviate
464 the interference at its own expense except as provided in
465 paragraphs (a)-(j). The work must be completed within such
466 reasonable time as stated in the notice or such time as agreed
467 to by the authority and the utility owner.

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468 (h) If a municipally owned utility or county-owned utility
 469 is located in a rural area of opportunity, as defined in s.
 470 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~, and the department determines that
 471 the utility is unable, and will not be able within the next 10
 472 years, to pay for the cost of utility work necessitated by a
 473 department project on the State Highway System, the department
 474 may pay, in whole or in part, the cost of such utility work
 475 performed by the department or its contractor.

476 Section 11. Subsection (7) of section 339.2818, Florida
 477 Statutes, is amended to read:

478 339.2818 Small County Outreach Program.—

479 (7) Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to
 480 funds annually appropriated for projects under this section, a
 481 municipality within a rural area of opportunity or a rural area
 482 of opportunity community designated under s. 288.0656(8)(a) ~~s.~~
 483 ~~288.0656(7)(a)~~ may compete for the additional project funding
 484 using the criteria listed in subsection (4) at up to 100 percent
 485 of project costs, excluding capacity improvement projects.

486 Section 12. Paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of section
 487 339.2819, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

488 339.2819 Transportation Regional Incentive Program.—

489 (4)

490 (c) The department shall give priority to projects that:

491 1. Provide connectivity to the Strategic Intermodal System
 492 developed under s. 339.64.

493 2. Support economic development and the movement of goods
 494 in rural areas of opportunity designated under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s.~~
 495 ~~288.0656(7)~~.

496 3. Are subject to a local ordinance that establishes

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497 corridor management techniques, including access management
498 strategies, right-of-way acquisition and protection measures,
499 appropriate land use strategies, zoning, and setback
500 requirements for adjacent land uses.

501 4. Improve connectivity between military installations and
502 the Strategic Highway Network or the Strategic Rail Corridor
503 Network.

504

505 The department shall also consider the extent to which local
506 matching funds are available to be committed to the project.

507 Section 13. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section
508 339.63, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

509 339.63 System facilities designated; additions and
510 deletions.—

511 (5)

512 (b) A facility designated part of the Strategic Intermodal
513 System pursuant to paragraph (a) that is within the jurisdiction
514 of a local government that maintains a transportation
515 concurrency system shall receive a waiver of transportation
516 concurrency requirements applicable to Strategic Intermodal
517 System facilities in order to accommodate any development at the
518 facility which occurs pursuant to a building permit issued on or
519 before December 31, 2017, but only if such facility is located:

520 1. Within an area designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(8) ~~s.~~
521 ~~288.0656(7)~~ as a rural area of opportunity;

522 2. Within a rural enterprise zone as defined in s.
523 290.004(5); or

524 3. Within 15 miles of the boundary of a rural area of
525 opportunity or a rural enterprise zone.

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526 Section 14. Subsection (16) of section 479.16, Florida
527 Statutes, is amended to read:

528 479.16 Signs for which permits are not required.—The
529 following signs are exempt from the requirement that a permit
530 for a sign be obtained under this chapter but are required to
531 comply with s. 479.11(4)-(8), and subsections (15)-(20) may not
532 be implemented or continued if the Federal Government notifies
533 the department that implementation or continuation will
534 adversely affect the allocation of federal funds to the
535 department:

536 (16) Signs placed by a local tourist-oriented business
537 located within a rural area of opportunity as defined in s.
538 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ which are:

539 (a) Not more than 8 square feet in size or more than 4 feet
540 in height;

541 (b) Located only in rural areas on a facility that does not
542 meet the definition of a limited access facility, as defined in
543 s. 334.03;

544 (c) Located within 2 miles of the business location and at
545 least 500 feet apart;

546 (d) Located only in two directions leading to the business;
547 and

548 (e) Not located within the road right-of-way.

549

550 A business placing such signs must be at least 4 miles from any
551 other business using this exemption and may not participate in
552 any other directional signage program by the department.

553

554 If the exemptions in subsections (15)-(20) are not implemented

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555 or continued due to notification from the Federal Government
556 that the allocation of federal funds to the department will be
557 adversely impacted, the department shall provide notice to the
558 sign owner that the sign must be removed within 30 days after
559 receipt of the notice. If the sign is not removed within 30 days
560 after receipt of the notice by the sign owner, the department
561 may remove the sign, and the costs incurred in connection with
562 the sign removal shall be assessed against and collected from
563 the sign owner.

564 Section 15. Paragraph (d) of subsection (14) of section
565 627.6699, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

566 627.6699 Employee Health Care Access Act.—

567 (14) SMALL EMPLOYERS ACCESS PROGRAM.—

568 (d) *Eligibility*.—

569 1. Any small employer that is actively engaged in business,
570 has its principal place of business in this state, employs up to
571 25 eligible employees on business days during the preceding
572 calendar year, employs at least 2 employees on the first day of
573 the plan year, and has had no prior coverage for the last 6
574 months may participate.

575 2. Any municipality, county, school district, or hospital
576 employer located in a rural community as defined in s.

577 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ may participate.

578 3. Nursing home employers may participate.

579 4. Each dependent of a person eligible for coverage is also
580 eligible to participate.

581

582 Any employer participating in the program must do so until the
583 end of the term for which the carrier providing the coverage is

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584 obligated to provide such coverage to the program. Coverage for
585 a small employer group that ceases to meet the eligibility
586 requirements of this section may be terminated at the end of the
587 policy period for which the necessary premiums have been paid.

588 Section 16. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.