

By the Committee on Agriculture; and 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. 288.0656, F.S.; revising
4 legislative intent relating to the Rural Economic
5 Development Initiative; redefining the term "rural
6 area of opportunity"; revising the duties,
7 responsibilities, and membership of the Rural Economic
8 Development Initiative; deleting a provision limiting
9 the number of rural areas of opportunity that may be
10 designated; deleting a provision listing the economic
11 development incentives for which the Governor may
12 waive criteria requirements or similar provisions;
13 deleting a requirement that certain catalyst projects
14 be identified as such by Enterprise Florida, Inc.;
15 revising reporting requirements; amending ss.
16 163.3177, 163.3187, 257.193, 288.019, 288.06561,
17 290.0055, 290.06561, 337.403, 339.2818, 339.2819,
18 339.63, 479.16, and 627.6699, F.S.; conforming cross-
19 references; providing an effective date.

20
21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

22
23 Section 1. Section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended
24 to read:

25 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

26 (1)~~(a)~~ Recognizing that rural communities and regions
27 continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to
28 significantly improve residents' quality of life and their local
29 economies, specifically in terms of personal income, education,

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30 infrastructure, access to health care, and job creation.

31 ~~Therefore, average wages, and strong tax bases,~~ it is the intent
32 of the Legislature to encourage and facilitate their achievement
33 of the following goals:

34 (a) Job creation, through the location and expansion of
35 ~~major economic development projects of significant scale in such~~
36 ~~rural communities.~~

37 (b) Improved community infrastructure, including, but not
38 limited to, roads, utilities, water and sewer systems, and
39 communications.

40 (c) The development and growth of a skilled workforce.

41 (d) Improved access to health care.

42 ~~(2)(b)~~ (2) The Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as
43 "REDI," is created within the department, and the participation
44 of state and regional agencies in this initiative is authorized.

45 ~~(3)(2)~~ (3) As used in this section, the term:

46 (a) "Catalyst project" means a business locating or
47 expanding in a rural area of opportunity to serve as an economic
48 generator of regional significance for the growth of a regional
49 target industry cluster. The project must provide capital
50 investment on a scale significant enough to affect the entire
51 region and result in the development of high-wage and high-skill
52 jobs.

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

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59 (c) "Economic distress" means conditions affecting the
60 fiscal and economic viability of a rural community, including
61 such factors as low per capita income, low per capita taxable
62 values, high unemployment, high underemployment, low weekly
63 earned wages compared to the state average, low housing values
64 compared to the state average, high percentages of the
65 population receiving public assistance, high poverty levels
66 compared to the state average, and a lack of year-round stable
67 employment opportunities.

68 (d) "Rural area of opportunity" means a rural community ~~or~~ or
69 a region composed of rural communities, designated by the
70 Governor, which has been adversely affected by an extraordinary
71 economic event or ~~or~~ severe or chronic economic distress, or which
72 faces competitive disadvantages, such as low labor force
73 participation, low educational attainment levels, high
74 unemployment, school district grades of "D" or "F" calculated
75 pursuant to s. 1008.34, high infant mortality rates, and high
76 diabetes and obesity rates, or which ~~or a natural disaster or~~
77 ~~that~~ presents a unique economic development opportunity of
78 regional impact.

79 (e) "Rural community" means:

- 80 1. A county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
- 81 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is
82 contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
- 83 3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph
84 1. or subparagraph 2.
- 85 4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an
86 incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and
87 an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or

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88 resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as
89 rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress
90 factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the
91 department.

92
93 For purposes of this paragraph, population shall be determined
94 in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to
95 s. 186.901.

96 (4)~~(3)~~ REDI is ~~shall be~~ responsible for coordinating and
97 focusing the efforts and resources of state and regional
98 agencies on the challenges of the state's rural areas of
99 opportunity and economically distressed rural communities. REDI
100 shall work ~~problems which affect the fiscal, economic, and~~
101 ~~community viability of Florida's economically distressed rural~~
102 ~~communities, working~~ with local governments, community-based
103 organizations, and private organizations that have an interest
104 in the renewed prosperity and competitiveness ~~growth and~~
105 ~~development~~ of these communities ~~to find ways to balance~~
106 ~~environmental and growth management issues with local needs.~~

107 (5)~~(4)~~ REDI shall review and evaluate the impact of
108 statutes and rules on rural communities and ~~shall~~ work to
109 minimize any adverse impact and undertake outreach and capacity-
110 building efforts to improve the ability of rural communities to
111 compete in a global economy.

112 (6)~~(5)~~ REDI shall facilitate better access to state
113 resources by promoting direct access and referrals to
114 appropriate state and regional agencies and statewide
115 organizations. ~~REDI may undertake outreach, capacity-building,~~
116 ~~and other advocacy efforts to improve conditions in rural~~

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117 ~~communities. These activities may include sponsorship of~~
118 ~~conferences and achievement awards.~~

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

120 1. The executive director of the department or his or her
121 designee, who shall serve as chair.

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

123 3. The Secretary of Environmental Protection or his or her
124 designee.

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

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

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

128 7. The President of Enterprise Florida, Inc., or his or her
129 designee.

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

132 9. The chair of the board of the regional economic
133 development organization for each of the rural areas of
134 opportunity or his or her designee.

135 10. Five members from the private sector, three of whom
136 shall be appointed by the executive director of the department,
137 one of whom shall be appointed by the President of the Senate,
138 and one of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House
139 of Representatives.

140 (b) In making their appointments, the executive director,
141 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
142 Representatives shall ensure that the appointments reflect the
143 diversity of Florida's business community and have the necessary
144 skills to assist rural communities and regions in achieving the
145 goals specified in subsection (1).

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

150 (d) Each appointed member shall be appointed to a 2-year
151 term.

152 (e) Initial appointments shall be made by July 1, 2018,
153 with members' terms expiring on June 30 of their second year of
154 service.

155 (f) A vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the
156 unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointment.

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

160 (h) The chair may request the head of any state agency or
161 organization to serve on an ad hoc committee as needed to
162 address issues or projects relating to rural areas of
163 opportunity and economically distressed rural communities. The
164 chair shall consider requesting the following individuals to
165 serve on an ad hoc committee:

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

168 2. The Secretary of State or his or her designee.

169 3. The Secretary of Children and Families or his or her
170 designee.

171 4. The Secretary of Corrections or his or her designee.

172 5. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice or his or her
173 designee.

174 6. The Secretary of Health Care Administration or his or

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175 her designee.

176 7. A board member of the Florida Regional Councils
177 Association or his or her designee.

178 ~~(6) (a) By August 1 of each year, the head of each of the~~
179 ~~following agencies and organizations shall designate a deputy~~
180 ~~secretary or higher level staff person from within the agency or~~
181 ~~organization to serve as the REDI representative for the agency~~
182 ~~or organization:~~

- 183 ~~1. The Department of Transportation.~~
- 184 ~~2. The Department of Environmental Protection.~~
- 185 ~~3. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.~~
- 186 ~~4. The Department of State.~~
- 187 ~~5. The Department of Health.~~
- 188 ~~6. The Department of Children and Families.~~
- 189 ~~7. The Department of Corrections.~~
- 190 ~~8. The Department of Education.~~
- 191 ~~9. The Department of Juvenile Justice.~~
- 192 ~~10. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.~~
- 193 ~~11. Each water management district.~~
- 194 ~~12. Enterprise Florida, Inc.~~
- 195 ~~13. CareerSource Florida, Inc.~~
- 196 ~~14. VISIT Florida.~~
- 197 ~~15. The Florida Regional Planning Council Association.~~
- 198 ~~16. The Agency for Health Care Administration.~~
- 199 ~~17. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).~~

200
201 ~~An alternate for each designee shall also be chosen, and the~~
202 ~~names of the designees and alternates shall be sent to the~~
203 ~~executive director of the department.~~

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

223 ~~(c)~~ The REDI ~~representatives shall work with REDI in the~~
224 ~~review and evaluation of statutes and rules for adverse impact~~
225 ~~on rural communities and the development of alternative~~
226 ~~proposals to mitigate that impact.~~

227 ~~(d)~~ Each REDI ~~representative shall be responsible for~~
228 ~~ensuring that each district office or facility of his or her~~
229 ~~agency is informed about the Rural Economic Development~~
230 ~~Initiative and for providing assistance throughout the agency in~~
231 ~~the implementation of REDI activities.~~

232 ~~(8)(7)~~ (a) REDI ~~may recommend to the Governor up to three~~

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

247 (b) Designation as a rural area of opportunity under this
248 subsection is ~~shall be~~ contingent upon the execution of a
249 memorandum of agreement among the department; the governing body
250 of the county; and the governing bodies of any municipalities to
251 be included within a rural area of opportunity. Such agreement
252 must ~~shall~~ specify the terms and conditions of the designation,
253 including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities
254 of the county and any participating municipalities to take
255 actions designed to facilitate the retention and expansion of
256 existing businesses in the area, as well as the recruitment of
257 new businesses to the area.

258 (c) Each rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst
259 projects, ~~provided that each catalyst project is~~ specifically
260 recommended by REDI, ~~identified as a catalyst project by~~
261 ~~Enterprise Florida, Inc., and approved confirmed as a catalyst~~

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262 ~~project~~ by the department. All state agencies and departments
263 shall use all available tools and resources to the extent
264 permissible by law to promote the creation and development of
265 each catalyst project and the development of catalyst sites.

266 (9) ~~(8)~~ Before September 1 of each year, REDI shall submit a
267 ~~report~~ to the department, the Governor, the President of the
268 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a
269 complete and detailed report, including, but not limited to ~~on~~
270 ~~all REDI activities for the previous fiscal year as a supplement~~
271 ~~to the department's annual report required under s. 20.60. This~~
272 ~~supplementary report must include:~~

273 (a) A description of the operations of ~~status report on~~ all
274 projects currently being coordinated through REDI, the number of
275 preferential awards and allowances made pursuant to this
276 section, the dollar amount of such awards, ~~and~~ the names of the
277 recipients, and an evaluation of progress toward achieving
278 organizational goals and specific performance outcomes, as
279 established by the department.

280 (b) A description of the accomplishments of REDI and
281 identification of major trends, initiatives, or developments
282 affecting the performance of a program or activity coordinated
283 through REDI.

284 (c) A description of all waivers of program requirements
285 granted.

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

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

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291 Section 2. Paragraph (e) of subsection (7) of section
292 163.3177, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

293 163.3177 Required and optional elements of comprehensive
294 plan; studies and surveys.—

295 (7)

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

300 Section 3. Subsection (3) of section 163.3187, Florida
301 Statutes, is amended to read:

302 163.3187 Process for adoption of small-scale comprehensive
303 plan amendment.—

304 (3) If the small scale development amendment involves a
305 site within a rural area of opportunity as defined under s.
306 288.0656(3)(d) ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~ for the duration of such
307 designation, the 10-acre limit listed in subsection (1) shall be
308 increased by 100 percent to 20 acres. The local government
309 approving the small scale plan amendment shall certify to the
310 state land planning agency that the plan amendment furthers the
311 economic objectives set forth in the executive order issued
312 under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~, and the property subject to
313 the plan amendment shall undergo public review to ensure that
314 all concurrency requirements and federal, state, and local
315 environmental permit requirements are met.

316 Section 4. Subsection (2) of section 257.193, Florida
317 Statutes, is amended to read:

318 257.193 Community Libraries in Caring Program.—

319 (2) The purpose of the Community Libraries in Caring

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320 Program is to assist libraries in rural communities, as defined
321 in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ and subject to the provisions
322 of s. 288.06561, to strengthen their collections and services,
323 improve literacy in their communities, and improve the economic
324 viability of their communities.

325 Section 5. Section 288.019, Florida Statutes, is amended to
326 read:

327 288.019 Rural considerations in grant review and evaluation
328 processes.—Notwithstanding any other law, and to the fullest
329 extent possible, the member agencies and organizations of the
330 Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) as defined in s.
331 288.0656(7) (a) ~~s. 288.0656(6) (a)~~ shall review all grant and loan
332 application evaluation criteria to ensure the fullest access for
333 rural counties as defined in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ to
334 resources available throughout the state.

335 (1) Each REDI agency and organization shall review all
336 evaluation and scoring procedures and develop modifications to
337 those procedures which minimize the impact of a project within a
338 rural area.

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

343 (3) Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must
344 recognize the disparity of available fiscal resources for an
345 equal level of financial support from an urban county and a
346 rural county.

347 (a) The evaluation criteria should weight contribution in
348 proportion to the amount of funding available at the local

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349 level.

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

355 (4) For existing programs, the modified evaluation criteria
356 and scoring procedure must be delivered to the department for
357 distribution to the REDI agencies and organizations. The REDI
358 agencies and organizations shall review and make comments.
359 Future rules, programs, evaluation criteria, and scoring
360 processes must be brought before a REDI meeting for review,
361 discussion, and recommendation to allow rural counties fuller
362 access to the state's resources.

363 Section 6. Section 288.06561, Florida Statutes, is amended
364 to read:

365 288.06561 Reduction or waiver of financial match
366 requirements.—Notwithstanding any other law, the member agencies
367 and organizations of the Rural Economic Development Initiative
368 (REDI), as defined in s. 288.0656(7)(a) ~~s. 288.0656(6)(a)~~, shall
369 review the financial match requirements for projects in rural
370 areas as defined in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~.

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

373 (2) Agencies and organizations shall ensure that all
374 proposals are submitted to the department for review by the REDI
375 agencies.

376 (3) These proposals shall be delivered to the department
377 for distribution to the REDI agencies and organizations. A

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378 meeting of REDI agencies and organizations must be called within
379 30 days after receipt of such proposals for REDI comment and
380 recommendations on each proposal.

381 (4) Waivers and reductions must be requested by the county
382 or community, and such county or community must have three or
383 more of the factors identified in s. 288.0656(3)(c) ~~s.~~
384 ~~288.0656(2)(c)~~.

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

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

392 (7) To the fullest extent possible, agencies and
393 organizations shall expedite the rule adoption and amendment
394 process if necessary to incorporate the reduction in match by
395 rural areas in fiscal distress.

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

399 Section 7. Paragraph (d) of subsection (6) of section
400 290.0055, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

401 290.0055 Local nominating procedure.—

402 (6)

403 (d)1. The governing body of a jurisdiction which has
404 nominated an application for an enterprise zone that is at least
405 15 square miles and less than 20 square miles and includes a
406 portion of the state designated as a rural area of opportunity

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407 under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~ may apply to the department
408 to expand the boundary of the existing enterprise zone by not
409 more than 3 square miles.

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

416 3. An application to expand the boundary of an enterprise
417 zone under this paragraph must be submitted by December 31,
418 2013.

419 4. Notwithstanding the area limitations specified in
420 subsection (4), the department may approve the request for a
421 boundary amendment if the area continues to satisfy the
422 remaining requirements of this section.

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

425 Section 8. Section 290.06561, Florida Statutes, is amended
426 to read:

427 290.06561 Designation of rural enterprise zone as catalyst
428 site.—Notwithstanding s. 290.0065(1), the Department of Economic
429 Opportunity, upon request of the host county, shall designate as
430 a rural enterprise zone any catalyst site as defined in s.
431 288.0656(3)(b) ~~s. 288.0656(2)(b)~~ that was approved before
432 January 1, 2010, and that is not located in an existing rural
433 enterprise zone. The request from the host county must include
434 the legal description of the catalyst site and the name and
435 contact information for the county development authority

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436 responsible for managing the catalyst site. The designation
437 shall provide businesses locating within the catalyst site the
438 same eligibility for economic incentives and other benefits of a
439 rural enterprise zone designated under s. 290.0065. The
440 reporting criteria for a catalyst site designated as a rural
441 enterprise zone under this section are the same as for other
442 rural enterprise zones. Host county development authorities may
443 enter into memoranda of agreement, as necessary, to coordinate
444 their efforts to implement this section.

445 Section 9. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section
446 337.403, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

447 337.403 Interference caused by utility; expenses.—

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

460 (h) If a municipally owned utility or county-owned utility
461 is located in a rural area of opportunity, as defined in s.
462 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~, and the department determines that
463 the utility is unable, and will not be able within the next 10
464 years, to pay for the cost of utility work necessitated by a

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465 department project on the State Highway System, the department
466 may pay, in whole or in part, the cost of such utility work
467 performed by the department or its contractor.

468 Section 10. Subsection (7) of section 339.2818, Florida
469 Statutes, is amended to read:

470 339.2818 Small County Outreach Program.—

471 (7) Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to
472 funds annually appropriated for projects under this section, a
473 municipality within a rural area of opportunity or a rural area
474 of opportunity community designated under s. 288.0656(8) (a) ~~s.~~
475 ~~288.0656(7) (a)~~ may compete for the additional project funding
476 using the criteria listed in subsection (4) at up to 100 percent
477 of project costs, excluding capacity improvement projects.

478 Section 11. Paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of section
479 339.2819, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

480 339.2819 Transportation Regional Incentive Program.—

481 (4)

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

483 1. Provide connectivity to the Strategic Intermodal System
484 developed under s. 339.64.

485 2. Support economic development and the movement of goods
486 in rural areas of opportunity designated under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s.~~
487 ~~288.0656(7)~~.

488 3. Are subject to a local ordinance that establishes
489 corridor management techniques, including access management
490 strategies, right-of-way acquisition and protection measures,
491 appropriate land use strategies, zoning, and setback
492 requirements for adjacent land uses.

493 4. Improve connectivity between military installations and

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494 the Strategic Highway Network or the Strategic Rail Corridor
495 Network.

496

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

499 Section 12. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section
500 339.63, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

501 339.63 System facilities designated; additions and
502 deletions.—

503 (5)

504 (b) A facility designated part of the Strategic Intermodal
505 System pursuant to paragraph (a) that is within the jurisdiction
506 of a local government that maintains a transportation
507 concurrency system shall receive a waiver of transportation
508 concurrency requirements applicable to Strategic Intermodal
509 System facilities in order to accommodate any development at the
510 facility which occurs pursuant to a building permit issued on or
511 before December 31, 2017, but only if such facility is located:

512 1. Within an area designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(8) ~~s.~~
513 ~~288.0656(7)~~ as a rural area of opportunity;

514 2. Within a rural enterprise zone as defined in s.
515 290.004(5); or

516 3. Within 15 miles of the boundary of a rural area of
517 opportunity or a rural enterprise zone.

518 Section 13. Subsection (16) of section 479.16, Florida
519 Statutes, is amended to read:

520 479.16 Signs for which permits are not required.—The
521 following signs are exempt from the requirement that a permit
522 for a sign be obtained under this chapter but are required to

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523 comply with s. 479.11(4)-(8), and subsections (15)-(20) may not
524 be implemented or continued if the Federal Government notifies
525 the department that implementation or continuation will
526 adversely affect the allocation of federal funds to the
527 department:

528 (16) Signs placed by a local tourist-oriented business
529 located within a rural area of opportunity as defined in s.
530 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ which are:

531 (a) Not more than 8 square feet in size or more than 4 feet
532 in height;

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

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

538 (d) Located only in two directions leading to the business;
539 and

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

541

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

545

546 If the exemptions in subsections (15)-(20) are not implemented
547 or continued due to notification from the Federal Government
548 that the allocation of federal funds to the department will be
549 adversely impacted, the department shall provide notice to the
550 sign owner that the sign must be removed within 30 days after
551 receipt of the notice. If the sign is not removed within 30 days

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552 after receipt of the notice by the sign owner, the department
553 may remove the sign, and the costs incurred in connection with
554 the sign removal shall be assessed against and collected from
555 the sign owner.

556 Section 14. Paragraph (d) of subsection (14) of section
557 627.6699, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

558 627.6699 Employee Health Care Access Act.—

559 (14) SMALL EMPLOYERS ACCESS PROGRAM.—

560 (d) *Eligibility*.—

561 1. Any small employer that is actively engaged in business,
562 has its principal place of business in this state, employs up to
563 25 eligible employees on business days during the preceding
564 calendar year, employs at least 2 employees on the first day of
565 the plan year, and has had no prior coverage for the last 6
566 months may participate.

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

569 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ may participate.

570 3. Nursing home employers may participate.

571 4. Each dependent of a person eligible for coverage is also
572 eligible to participate.

573

574 Any employer participating in the program must do so until the
575 end of the term for which the carrier providing the coverage is
576 obligated to provide such coverage to the program. Coverage for
577 a small employer group that ceases to meet the eligibility
578 requirements of this section may be terminated at the end of the
579 policy period for which the necessary premiums have been paid.

580 Section 15. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.