February 3, 2020

Mr. Nick Uhren, PE
Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency
301 Datura Street
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401

Re: State Road 7 Extension (60th Street North to Northlake Boulevard)

Dear Mr. Uhren:

As you well know, Wellington remains a strong supporter of inclusion of the State Road 7 extension in the TPA’s Long Range Transportation Plan. Wellington was therefore deeply disappointed that a discussion and vote was held at the TPA’s December 12, 2019 meeting to remove two projects, TPA013 and TPA014, from the TPA’s draft LRTP. We understand that this matter will be reconsidered at the TPA’s meeting on February 20, 2020. On behalf of the Wellington Village Council, we enclose Resolution No. R2020-04, adopted by the Wellington Council at its January 28, 2020 meeting, in support of inclusion in the LRTP of the State Road 7 extension project from 60th Street North to Northlake Boulevard. We request that this letter and the attached Resolution R2020-04 be included in the record of the February 20th TPA meeting.

Very truly yours,

Paul Schofield
Village Manager

cc: Mayor Dave Kerner
Commissioner Melissa McKinlay
Commissioner Gregg K. Weiss
RESOLUTION NO. R2020-04

A RESOLUTION OF WELLINGTON, FLORIDA'S COUNCIL
EXPRESSING IT'S CONTINUED AND STRONG SUPPORT
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE STATE ROAD 7
EXTENSION FROM 60th STREET NORTH TO NORTHLAKE
BOULEVARD; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the Village of Wellington is a member of the Transportation
Planning Agency (TPA) of Palm Beach County and the western communities of
Palm Beach County; and

WHEREAS, the residents and businesses in Wellington and western
communities rely on the ability to travel throughout the area; and

WHEREAS, the State Road 7 Extension (60th Street North to Northlake
Boulevard) is a matter of public safety and a common concern for all western
communities in Palm Beach County including the Village of Wellington; and

WHEREAS, the extension of State Road 7 from 60th Street North to
Northlake Boulevard will achieve the following benefits to the Village of
Wellington and the western communities:

- Improve connectivity within and for the western communities;
- Divert traffic off major roadways and intersections in the western
  communities;
- Alleviate congestion on Southern Boulevard, Royal Palm Beach
  Boulevard, Coconut Boulevard, Seminole Pratt Whitney Rd, and
  Okeechobee Boulevard due to this diversion;
- Lessen traffic on local roadways in the western communities due to
  the removal of pass-thru traffic;
- Facilitate future travel demands within the western communities as
  they continue to grow;
- Promote emergency service access and hurricane evacuation by
  providing additional capacity to the immediate area; and

WHEREAS, the extension of State Road 7 from 60th Street North to
Northlake Boulevard project has consistently been included in the long-range
transportation planning documents for the TPA and Palm Beach County for
several decades; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that the extension of State Road 7
from 60th Street North to Northlake Boulevard is required to meet the future
transportation needs based on changes in population, employment, and planned
WHEREAS, local roadways in the western communities cannot be widened due to right-of-way limitations to effectively meet future transportation needs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY WELLINGTON, FLORIDA’S COUNCIL that:

SECTION 1. The foregoing recitals are hereby affirmed and ratified as being true and correct.

SECTION 2. The Wellington Council hereby supports the construction of the State Road 7 Extension from 60th Street North to Northlake Boulevard and further joins the Western Communities Council, Inc., in its support for the same.

SECTION 3. The Village Clerk is hereby directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to Nick Uhren, Executive Director of the Transportation Planning Agency of Palm Beach County, the Honorable Melissa McKinlay, Commissioner of the Palm Beach County District 6, the Honorable Gregg K. Weiss, Commissioner of the Palm Beach County District 2, and Dave Kerner, Mayor of Palm Beach County Commission, District 3.

SECTION 4. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 28th day of January 2020.

ATTEST:

By: [Signature]
Chevelle D. Addie, Village Clerk

WELLINGTON

By: [Signature]
Anne Gerwig, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY

By: [Signature]
Laurie S. Cohen, Village Attorney
RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CENTRAL PALM BEACH COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF PALM BEACH COUNTY AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO COMPLETE THE CONSTRUCTION OF STATE ROAD 7 TO NORTHLAKE BLVD.

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Central Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce was held on the 12th day of February 2020. A quorum of the Board was found to be present and on motion duly made, the following Resolution was considered and passed by a majority of them:

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors of the Central Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce consists of members who have a direct stake in the economic well-being and prosperity of west and central Palm Beach County;

WHEREAS, the construction of State Road (“SR”) 7 to Northlake Boulevard is a critical missing link to the transportation network of west-central Palm Beach County, and will serve tens of thousands of citizens for their daily commuting and transportation needs; and

WHEREAS, the extension of SR 7 is a vital component to the area-wide emergency evacuation network; and

WHEREAS, we understand that Palm Beach County and FDOT have made every effort to minimize if not eliminate any adverse impacts of the road to Grassy Waters Preserve.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED,

The Board of Directors of the Central Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce supports the efforts of Palm Beach County and Florida Department of Transportation to complete the construction of SR 7 to Northlake Blvd. In light of the clear need for the road by the general public, and the fact that any potential adverse environmental impacts have been minimized if not eliminated, we respectfully request that the Palm Beach County Transportation Planning Agency support completion of the SR 7 extension so that this critically important infrastructure project may proceed.

- END OF RESOLUTION -

__________________________               ________________________________
By: John Carter, Chairman of the Board By: Mary Lou Bedford, CEO
Central Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce Central Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce
February 13, 2020

Mr. Nick Uhren, P.E.
Palm Beach Transpiration Planning Agency
301 Datura Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Re: State Road 7 Extension (60 Street North to Northlake Boulevard)

Dear Mr. Uhren:

As you are aware, the Town of Loxahatchee Groves remains a strong supporter of inclusion of the State Road 7 extension in the TPA’s Long Range Transpiration Plan. The Town of Loxahatchee Groves was therefore deeply disappointed that a discussion and vote was held at the TPA’s December 12, 2019 meeting to remove two projects, TPA013 and TPA014, from the TPA’s draft LRTP. We understand that this matter will be reconsidered at the TPA’s meeting to be held on February 20, 2020.

On behalf of the Town of Loxahatchee Groves’ Town Council, a vote was taken at the February 4, 2020 Town Council Meeting to write a letter in support of inclusion in the LRTP of the State Road 7 extension project from 60th Street North to Northlake Boulevard. We request that this letter be included in the record of the February 20th TPA meeting.

Sincerely,

Robert Shorr
Mayor of the Town of Loxahatchee Groves

cc: File
Commissioner Melissa McKinley
Town Manager James S. Titcomb
Town Council of the Town of Loxahatchee Groves
February 17, 2020

Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency
301 Datura Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Mayor Joel Flores
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
City of Greenacres
JFlores@GreenacresFL.gov

Council Member Maria Marino
Palm Beach County TPA Chair
City of Palm Beach Gardens
MMarino@pbgfl.com

Vice Mayor Jim Kuretski
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
Town of Jupiter
JimK@jupiter.fl.us

Mayor Fred Pinto
Palm Beach County TPA Vice Chair
Village of Royal Palm Beach
FPinto@RoyalPalmBeach.com

Mayor Pam Triolo
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
City of Lake Worth Beach
PTriolo@LakeWorth.org

Mayor Steve B. Wilson
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
City of Belle Glade
dbuff@belleglade-fl.com

Commissioner Hal R. Valeché
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
Palm Beach County
HValeche@pbcgov.org

Mayor Scott Singer
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
City of Boca Raton
ssinger@myboca.us

Commissioner Mary Lou Berger
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
Palm Beach County
MBerger@pbcgov.org

Council Member Andy Thomson
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
City of Boca Raton
AThomas@myboca.us

Commissioner Melissa McKinlay
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
Palm Beach County
MMcKinlay@pbcgov.org

Mayor Steven B. Grant
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
City of Boynton Beach
GrantS@bbfl.us

Vice Mayor Robert S. Weinroth
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
Palm Beach County
RWeinroth@pbcgov.org

Mayor Shelly Petrolia
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
City of Delray Beach
Petrolia@mydelraybeach.com

Commissioner Gregg K. Weiss
TPA Agency & Governing Board Member
Palm Beach County
GWeiss@pbcgov.org
By way of introduction, my name is Shai Ozery and I represent 1000 Friends of Florida (1000 Friends) as it relates to opposing the addition of the State Road 7 (SR7) extension through Grassy Waters Preserve, to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). 1000 Friends is a non-profit organization that partners with citizens, community and state leaders, conservation and business groups and others to promote a sustainable Florida. 1000 Friends’ opposition to the re-addition of the SR7 extension to the LRTP stems from the clear violation of the mission of the Grassy Waters Preserve to cleanse and store fresh water needed for residents, agriculture, and the environment, as well as, provide a source of refuge for wildlife. 1000 Friends is therefore opposed to the proposed re-addition of the project, as a danger to the fresh water supply of the residents of Palm Beach County, as well as a danger to threatened and endangered species within the Grassy Waters Preserve, in violation of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Further, community opposition to this project is longstanding and has wide support throughout the State of Florida as demonstrated by the Everglades Coalition’s adoption of a resolution in opposition to the extension attached hereto as Exhibit A. 1000 Friends adopts the Everglades Coalition’s position in opposition to this project and further states:

1. The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of more than sixty local, state and national conservation and environmental organizations.
I. History of the Proposed Project and Legitimate Longstanding Opposition

Concerns by the public, local governments, and non-governmental citizen organizations over this proposed extension have been documented consistently since the inception of the project. In 2015, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) sought an Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) from the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to extend SR7 to Northlake Boulevard and widen the existing portion from Okeechobee Boulevard to 60th Street to four (4) lanes. The City of West Palm Beach challenged the permit, leading to an appeal at the Fourth District Court, and ultimately, FDOT withdrew the permit application in July of 2019, in order to avoid losing at the new administrative hearing. Subsequently, in December of 2019, the Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency (PBTPA) voted to remove SR7 Project from the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) due to concerns that the proposed extension would adversely affect the water supply source for over one hundred and ten thousand (110,000) citizens of Palm Beach County. It should be noted, the likely adverse impacts to Grassy Waters Preserve, as a result of this proposed project, will affect the regional hydrology and function of the ecosystem.

II. Adverse Environmental Impact to South Florida

Gassy Waters Preserve serves as a habitat for numerous species that have been designated as endangered or threatened, including wood storks, red-cockaded woodpeckers, sandhill cranes, white ibises, and little blue herons. Additionally, Grassy Waters Preserve serves as a critical nesting and foraging area for the endangered Everglades snail kite. This proposed project would also directly impact acres of freshwater sawgrass marsh and other freshwater wetlands that have been designated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as Aquatic Resources of National Importance. As a result of these concerns, and others, proceeding with this proposed extension will likely lead to costly State and Federal litigation.

Further, proceeding with this extension allows FDOT to discharge fill material over 59.97 acres of non-tidal wetlands along the 4.1-mile northern segment. Secondary impacts of the Project will impact 159.96 acres of additional wetlands, including the aforementioned fresh-water marsh, mixed shrubs, and hydric pine flatwoods. In addition, the stormwater runoff from much of the proposed northern segment will ultimately end up in Grassy Waters Preserve, degrading and polluting it. The light, noise, contaminant pollution, roadkill, and other disturbances pose a serious risk of irreparable harm to Grassy Waters’ twelve thousand and eight hundred (12,800) acres of pristine wetlands, critical habitat for federally endangered or threatened species, and the primary drinking water source for over one hundred thousand (100,000) Palm Beach County residents.

III. Growth Inducing Impacts to Western Palm Beach County

If this proposed extension is built, induced traffic and development will quickly negate any traffic benefits that were created by the additional capacity. Likewise, induced travel demand must also be considered. Induced travel refers to increased total vehicle miles travelled (VMT) compared with what would otherwise occur if the road was not improved. Demand for increased capacity often creates a highway that, in turn, increases the influx of secondary development and recreation, thus creating demand for yet more increased capacity. That is the case in this instance,
where proposed developments intend to rely upon the SR7 extension, as a necessary roadway improvement. This area lacks the necessary transportation resources to accommodate existing development; therefore, the proposed SR7 extension is particularly likely to lead to a high amount of induced travel as this area is already congested. In general, the more congested a road, the more traffic is generated by capacity expansion. Increased capacity on highly congested roads often generates considerable traffic. Induced travel and induced development considerably reduce, and in some instances negate, the traffic benefits provided by capacity improvements.

1000 Friends has been engaged with Palm Beach County as well as other local governments for decades to discourage urban sprawl in the suburban and exurban communities, by warning of increased traffic demands on existing roadways. The re-addition of this proposed extension upon the LRTP would only create increased pressure for further unsustainable development in suburban and exurban communities in Palm Beach County, by relying on the increase of traffic capacity provided by the extension on SR7.

On behalf of 1000 Friends of Florida, we ask that the Transportation Planning Agency Governing Board vote NO to the re-addition of SR7 extension to the LRTP, thereby protecting this precious source of drinking water and one of the last pristine wetlands left in South Florida.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment on the proposed re-addition of the SR7 extension to the LRTP. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Shai Ozery at Robert N. Hartsell, P.A, as provided below.

Respectfully submitted this 14th day of February 2020.

Sincerely,

Shai Ozery, Esq.
Robert N. Hartsell, P.A.
Counsel for 1000 Friends of Florida
61 NE 1st Street,
Suite C,
Pompano Beach, Florida 33060

Enclosed, Attachment A.
Resolution Opposing the Extension of State Road 7 adjacent to the Grassy Waters Preserve and the Pond Cypress Natural Area

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”) and Palm Beach County are proposing to widen 4.4 miles of State Road 7 from Okeechobee Boulevard to 60th Street and extend State Road 7 an additional 4.1 miles from 60th Street to Northlake Boulevard immediately adjacent to the Pond Cypress Natural Area and the Grassy Waters Preserve;

WHEREAS, the Pond Cypress Natural Area is 1700 acres acquired by Palm Beach County for the purpose of preserving the wet prairie mosaic, pine flatwoods, and the associated wildlife that once commonly surrounded the Loxahatchee Slough;

WHEREAS, Grassy Waters Preserve contains 12,800 acres of pristine wetlands and is a state-designated natural preserve providing significant regional ecological and environmental benefits including water recharge, water quality and wetland habitat for numerous federally listed species including the critically endangered Everglade Snail Kite and the Wood Stork while providing water supply for the City of West Palm Beach, the Town of Palm Beach and the Town of South Palm Beach;

WHEREAS, the project proposes to directly impact more than 57 acres of freshwater wetlands including 25 acres of hydric pine flatwoods and more than 17 acres of freshwater sawgrass marsh and other freshwater wetlands that have been designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as Aquatic Resources of National Importance;

WHEREAS, the project will indirectly impact the entire Grassy Waters Preserve and Pond Cypress Natural Area through light, noise, and contaminant pollution, roadkill and other disturbance to animal populations, and impacts to regional hydrology and ecosystem functions;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined the project will likely result in significant adverse effects to public conservation lands and fish and wildlife, including the critically imperiled Snail Kite within Grassy Waters Preserve and the Pond Cypress Natural Area;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have all urged FDOT and Palm Beach County to select an alternative alignment for the roadway with less impacts to fish and wildlife or to select the “no build” alternative;

Committed to full protection and restoration of America’s Everglades
WHEREAS, the project could negatively impact the water supply of the City of West Palm Beach, the Town of Palm Beach, and the Town of South Palm Beach by roadway pollution or a toxic spill along the roadway extension;

WHEREAS, the City of West Palm Beach issued a notice of intent to sue FDOT over Endangered Species Act (ESA) issues on April 29, 2015; and

WHEREAS, alternatives to the proposed roadway extension with fewer impacts to wetlands, wildlife, natural areas, and water supply exist but have not been adequately evaluated or selected;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Everglades Coalition opposes the expansion and extension of State Road 7 into the Pond Cypress Natural Area and Grassy Waters Preserve and urges the Florida Department of Transportation and Palm Beach County to eliminate the selected alignment from consideration and to select the “no build” alternative or an alignment that eliminates impacts to the Pond Cypress Natural Area and Grassy Waters Preserve.

Adopted December 7th, 2015

Cara Capp
National Co-Chair

Jason Totoiu
State Co-Chair