

Orchard Pond Parkway and a Different Concept for Tolling

Orchard Pond Parkway is different in so many respects. It is a small stretch (5.2 miles) of lonely road in a rural/suburban section of Leon County Florida – and it is the *only* toll road in the county in a region of the state not known for managed lanes and traffic congestion.

But it works.

Why?

Orchard Pond Parkway (OPP) was built with a specific purpose in mind. The landowner was in no hurry to develop his vast acreage and wanted to remove many of the financial pressures that come with owning large tracts of land in a growing county. He also knew the community needed an east-west facility to handle the growing transportation needs.

He and his team conceived of a way to protect the land for future generations while to providing the community with an important asset all while reducing the financial and tax pressures to develop the incredible landscape.

After much consulting and a traffic study, the team secured a loan from the State of Florida's "State Infrastructure Bank" (SIB). That loan, along with a down payment from the owner, Mr. Jeff Phipps, covered most of the construction and engineering costs. They were also able to pay fire-sale pricing for a tolling gantry with the cooperation of the good folks at the Florida Department of Transportation. The final steps were to have an agreement with the County that involved all the typical legal nuances that come with building a large infrastructure project. In the end, the road was built with the inspiration of Mr. Phipps and the cooperation of both the State of Florida and Leon County. It was truly a 3-way partnership in innovation.

Today, there is a beautiful stretch of parkway in northern Leon County where the toll revenues are used to largely pay back the SIB loan and cover most of the costs of operation. If one were looking for a way to reap profits by building such a road, this is not the way to do it. The finances simply don't work. In fact, the landowner, Mr. Jeff Phipps, put a great deal of both sweat equity and actual equity to have his



vision completed. The beauty of this model, however, is that for the next 40-50 years, the pressure to build out and develop the land is dramatically reduced and perhaps speaking to Mr. Phipps' heart, an important community need was met.

As Leon County grows, the long-range economics of the road make it a better and better financial investment, one that meets the generational needs of

the landowner and his heirs. There are plans for a parallel bike trail and other amenities but for now the community is being served, the land remains pristine, and those interested in seeing tolling through a new lense have a model worth examining.