

2024 Legislative Session
Columbia County Legislative Delegation



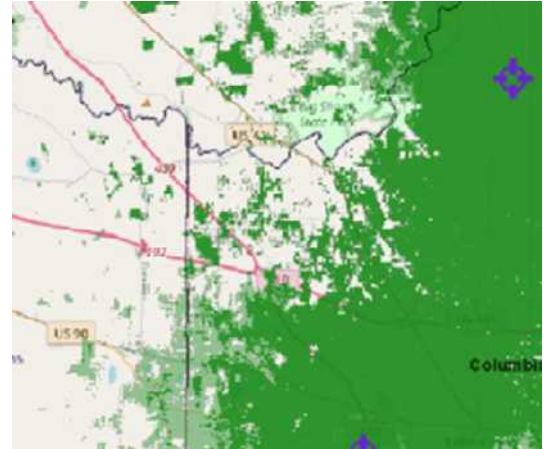
Senator Jennifer Bradley
Representative Chuck Brannan

October 23, 2023

Appropriations and State Funding Requests

Suwannee Valley Communications Tower-\$1,600,000

Columbia County requests \$1,600,000 to construct a new communications tower in the northwest area of Columbia County. The Suwannee Valley area, along US 41 towards the Hamilton County line has the largest communications gap for first responders. The intersection of I-75 and I-10 is in this area. The county currently owns the property in which the tower will be constructed on and we respectfully request these funds.



Bell Street Extension- \$2,000,000

As part of ongoing investment in Columbia County for Economic Development, Columbia County requests \$2,000,000 to extend Bell St (part of the Bell Road Distribution Corridor) from CR 25A to US 41. This extension will not only support truck traffic from the distribution corridor, but will also ease traffic conditions from the Florida Power & Light storm response center. The funding will include related utility work as well as closing up the rail road crossing at CR 25A.



Columbia County Flat Fields Phase I-A- \$3,000,000

Part of an ongoing investment in regional sports, the County requests \$3,000,000 for a new regional flat field sports complex. The full 500 acres will be used for multiple purposes including soccer, football, walking trails, and conservation areas. This \$3 million request will be part of a larger local funding initiative that consists of \$3 million in tourism development reserves to complete phase IA of a multi sports complex that will increase tourism and economic output in North Central Florida. Phase IA will consist of roads, utilities, construction of the flat fields.

Ellisville Well #2-

\$1,300,000

In the 2021 Legislative Session, the town of Fort White received \$1 million to connect the town to the Ellisville water system. Once that connection is complete, the unincorporated area of Ellisville will need to have another water well for future demand and redundancy. This \$1.3 million request will provide funding for the expansion and redundancy of the Ellisville/Fort White water system.

Additional Appropriations

Small County Issues

Columbia County, along with our fellow small counties, continue to support small county grant programs such as, but not limited too; Aid for Local Libraries; Rural Transportation funding; Small County Solid Waste Grants; Housing funds; County Health Department Funding and Rural Health Initiatives; Aerial Photography; Small County Water Projects; Payment In Lieu of Taxes; Courthouse and infrastructure projects.

Springs Funding and water

Columbia County is in the heart of spring country. Columbia County supports continued funding for water projects and springs restoration funding through DEP and the Suwannee River Water Management District.

Fort White Septic to Sewer

Currently the town of Fort White has a master plan in place for sewer construction. The town is in the process of acquiring funds for phase I and phase II. Columbia County continues to support any assistance for future Fort White septic to sewer conversions.

Policy Requests

Florida Workforce Consolidation: Columbia County understands that the Florida CareerSource Boards have been required to eliminate and consolidate, however, Columbia County respectfully requests that there be fair voting between the counties of any new board that is established (1 county/1 vote).

911 Service Fees: Currently there is a 911 fee that can only cover equipment bringing the call into dispatch and not covering the call that is going out. This makes accounting difficult while procuring equipment for 911 dispatch. Columbia County REQUESTS the legislature to simplify what the 911 service fees can cover.

Broadband- SUPPORT legislation and funding that increases broadband infrastructure in Florida. This past year, Columbia County have supported multiple broadband grant applications through DEO and SUPPORTS further broadband investment. We believe that localities should dictate where funding should be allocated work with providers to identify underserved areas.

SCRAP & SCOP Designation- the Small County Road Assistance Program & the Small County Operations Program are vital for infrastructure in small counties. Columbia County requests that the population designation be increased for SCRAP and that road capacity expansion be added to the list of approved uses for SCRAP and SCOP.

Rural Economic Development Funding- Columbia County along with other Small counties, SUPPORTS increase funding for rural infrastructure projects. Columbia County SUPPORTS changes that were outlined in HB 685 from last year's legislative session.

Electric Vehicle Registration Fees & Revenue Sharing- Columbia County foresees decreased revenue sharing of fuel taxes due to the increase of electric vehicles. Columbia County request that the legislature address this issue so that road funding for fiscally constrained counties are not negatively impacted. SUPPORT SB 28/HB 107.

Medicaid Direct Service Providers- It is requested that the Legislature appropriate retroactively recurring funding to fully fund the mandated \$15 minimum hourly wage included in the General Appropriations Act for FY 22-23.