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Visit Tampa Bay supports Go Hillsborough efforts

In letter to commissioners: "the status quo is no longer acceptable."

TAMPA (Dec. 22, 2015) – In a strongly worded letter to Hillsborough County commissioners, the leadership of Visit Tampa Bay has put its support behind Go Hillsborough, the county's proposal to improve the local transportation infrastructure.

"Hillsborough County has reached a crucial moment in its growth as a tourist destination: We are gaining important national and international attention for our high quality of life, fantastic food and abundant attractions just as our transportation system is stretched to its limits," the Visit Tampa Bay board of directors and President & CEO Santiago Corrada wrote this week. "If we are to continue to benefit from billions of dollars in annual tourism revenue – in terms of wages, bed taxes, and property taxes -- we must invest heavily in our transportation network. The status quo is no longer acceptable."

The letter (attached) is signed by Corrada and Ed Fandel, chairman of the Visit Tampa Bay board of directors.

"Tourism contributes more than \$3 billion to Hillsborough County's economy each year. An effective transportation network is vital to ensuring our continued success," Corrada said. "That's especially true as we attract hundreds of thousands of international visitors, many of whom arrive expecting to get around using mass transit only to find that's nearly impossible."

Hillsborough County drew nearly 21 million visitors in 2014, according to research conducted by Longwoods International for Visit Tampa Bay. Half a million of those visitors were from Europe, Canada or Latin America.

"We are fortunate to have one of the top airports in the entire world right here in Tampa Bay," Corrada said. "We also have a compact, walkable downtown and a Riverwalk that is pedestrian- and cycle-friendly. But if a visitor plans to spend the day at Busch Gardens Tampa or go manatee-watching in Apollo Beach, their most practical option is to drive. We do our community a disservice by limiting visitors' transportation options."

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About Visit Tampa Bay

Visit Tampa Bay encourages adventurous travelers to unlock our destination's trove of unique treasures. We are a not-for-profit corporation that works with more than 750 partners to tell the world the story of our home – the hip, urban heart of the Gulf Coast of Florida.

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