

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2015



CAN'T SEE YOUR DOCTOR  
[LEARN MORE](#)  
 PAID FOR BY AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY

TOP HEADLINES   2016   THE BAY AND THE 'BURG   STATEWIDE   APO  
 SPORTS

# Transportation procurement inconsistencies taking a toll on Florida taxpayers

By **Peter Schorsch** - Apr 20, 2015

SHARE



You might not know it from reading the *Tampa Tribune* lately, but at this moment a handful of major companies are locked in a heated campaign to secure a major state contract to provide an oft-overlooked but essential service: the administration of tolls that help fund Florida's more than 80,000 miles of roads.

After 16 years since the **introduction** of the Sunpass in 1999, our state's tolling infrastructure is due for an update. The Florida Department of Transportation is currently conducting a procurement process designed to evaluate the claims of the

STAY CONN

f | 8,705

t | 11,266



SIGN UP

The morning Florida politic

Email

competing vendors vying to do just that.

But inconsistencies in the rankings produced by this process are raising questions about whether and how a legitimate outcome can be reached by it.

According to public records a panel of experts — called the Technical Committee — convened by FDOT last year gave their most favorable scores to **Accenture**, an international technology firm with a specialty in this kind of project. Accenture was rated the No. 1 choice among five competing vendors by four of the eight assembled panelists, easily earning the best score overall.

But afterwards, additional rankings from a smaller pool of four assessors gave the nod to document management giant **Xerox**, countermanding the committee's earlier decision on account of an allegedly "lower risk" to liability for the state and its taxpayers associated with them.

But while Accenture has quietly earned a **reputation for competence** and reliability — "the technology Accenture proposes is considered to be among best in class and we are confident that the firm's experience and creativity will enable the Illinois Tollway to remain at the forefront of this rapidly changing industry," glows Tollway chair **Paula Wolff** — Xerox faces internal probes and public challenges in other states where it recently wrangled lucrative state contracts.

For instance, complaints from consumer-protection and state governmental quarters in Austin have arisen just a year after Xerox won a five-year, \$100 million contract to do the same work they seek to do in Florida.

"Amid complaints from drivers about confusing bills and shoddy customer service, the Texas Department of Transportation said Thursday it is working to address concerns with its new toll billing system," wrote **Aman Batheja** of the *Texas Tribune*, to take just one example.

There are others: in California, a Xerox-steered project has created **nightmare scenarios** wherein many drivers have been hit with false or inflated violation notices — including motorists thousands of miles away who haven't driven in years on the bridges and roads the firm is charged with monitoring.

So it's no surprise that a protest to the procurement process in Florida emerged.

**Cubic Transportation Systems**, a San Diego company that also bid for the contract,

Enter Captcl

F M5

Follow SPB



**Peter Sch**  
@SaintPe

Cory Booker end  
wp.me/pShRp-Y:

entered an appeal on the basis that the self-same process was flawed. An administrative judge found that the procurement strayed from state statute regarding “Invitations to Negotiate” or ITNs — the formal process of inviting bids to compete for a public project — and awarded Cubic a \$3.6 million settlement from the state, a clear admission that something is amiss here.

Despite the somewhat muddled state of affairs in this massive ITN process, SaintPetersBlog is hearing reports that FDOT will announce it has decided to award the contract in its entirety to Xerox.

Given the scope of the work that will be performed by the contractor who prevails, it’s worth more serious consideration than the unclear, highly irregular vetting period that FDOT has so far accorded it.

The sprawling state contract would comprise the maintenance and operation of all highway tolls across four massive Florida infrastructural systems — the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority, the former Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority (now Central Florida Expressway Authority) and Florida Turnpike Enterprise. Official details have not yet been released, but the worth of the project would likely lie in the hundreds of millions of dollars over the length of the term.

That’s a lot of Florida taxpayers’ treasure to commit for likely five to 10 years without thoroughly scrutinizing all options, something this process seems to have fallen short of.

The aforementioned case of Illinois, which just recently retooled its statewide tolling system, could be instructive going forward. The state divides its tolling into systems and customer services aspects, and just awarded its systems contract to Accenture, citing a desire to expand “customer-focused solutions like mobile access” and other improvements.

With Cubic agreeing to drop its third-place bid in exchange for its earlier settlement and ambiguity about the process persisting, why not allow the top two firms, Xerox and Accenture, to similarly divvy up the work, or at least have open negotiations?

Whether this or something like it is done by way of an internal tapping of the brakes by FDOT; whether a court finds that a new ITN is in order after the fact; or whether an interested Legislature intercedes to make a corrective action, whatever form such a move would best assume, one thing is for sure amid these murky seas — all stakeholders involved, most importantly the taxpayers who will fund this work, ought to

Expand



**Peter Sch**

@SaintPe

.@CL\_TampaBay  
wp.me/pShRp-Y



**Peter Sch**

@SaintPe

Early winner of tl  
for #EGS15, but  
fishing wknds in

Expand



**Peter Sch**

@SaintPe

Rick @Kriseman  
ahead of Stanley  
#GoBolts



**Peter Sch**

@SaintPe

DSCC blasts Carl  
Bush model in cr  
wp.me/pShRp-Y



take a step back and reexamine this procurement and the process that governs it.

## Comments

0 comments

0 Comments

Sort by Top ▼



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

TAGS [ACCENTURE](#) [CUBIC TRANSPORTATION](#) [FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION](#) [FLORIDA TURNPIKE](#)  
[ITNS](#) [MIAMI-DADE EXPRESSWAY](#) [ORLAND-ORANGE COUNTY EXPRESSWAY](#) [PAULA WOLFF](#) [RFPS](#)  
[TECHNICAL COMMITTEE](#) [XEROX](#)

SHARE



Previous article

Scientists gather at USF St. Pete, to address questions that still remain about BP oil spill

Next article

Florida Senate panel postpones vote on gay adoption ban

RELATED ARTICLES

MORE FROM AUTHOR



Cory Booker endorses Patrick Murphy for U.S. Senate



Creative Loafing noshes on Rick Scott's "word salad"



DSCC blasts Carlos Lopez-Cantera for following Jeb Bush model in creating a

super PAC

Profile

 Sign in with Twitter

 Sign in with Facebook

or

Name

Email

*Not published*

Website

nine + 8 =

Comment



I'm not a robot



reCAPTCHA  
Privacy - Terms

Notify me of follow-up comments by email.

Notify me of new posts by email.

About SPB

In Florida, when activists, donors, elected officials lobbyists, operatives, reporters, supporters, volunteers -- and most important -- voters talk about a story they read "in the blogs" they are likely talking about SaintPetersBlog, one of Florida's most

Popular Tags

4th Floor Files

2015 legislative session

Aaron Bean

Andy Gardiner

Barack Obama

Bob Buckhorn

Charlie Crist

Charlotte's Web

Chris Christie

cuba

David Jolly

#FlaPol Insta

influential political websites with more than 25,000 unique visitors per day.

SaintPetersBlog is recognized by the Washington Post as one of the best blogs in the country and is edited and published by Extensive Enterprises Media.

Executive Editor: Peter Schorsch.  
Contact Peter at Peter@Extensive-Enterprises.com or 727.642.3162.

Contributors and reporters: Phil Ammann, Mitch Perry, James Call, Janelle Irwin, Ryan Ray, Bruce Ritchie, Christine Sexton, and Florence Snyder.

Edited by Rich Bard and Bill Prescott.

Destination St. Pete Pier Don Gaetz

Guido Maniscalco

## headline

Hillary Clinton Jack Latvala

Jeb Bush Jeff Brandes

Kathy Castor Legislative

Low Income Pool

Marco Rubio Matt Gaetz

Medicaid Mike Huckabee Obamacare

Pam Bondi Patrick Murphy Pier

Pier Park President Obama Rand Paul

Richard Corcoran Rick Kriseman

Rick Scott Rob Bradley

Scott Walker scroll

St. Pete City Council

steve crisafulli Tampa Bay Times

Ted Cruz The Bay and the 'Burg

Tom Lee

by fla\_pol

Putnam draw  
Luther King ir

