DATE	EVENT	SOURCE
2004	Florida Gulf Coast University (President Bill Merwin) commissioned a study of road improvements that would increase the University's ability to cope with a hurricane or other disaster. One of the recommendations in the report was the construction of an I-75 on-ramp at Coconut Road and I-75	Estero Development Report, Volume 5, Number 4 (found at http://www.esterofire.org/EDR/edr8-05.htm#interchange)
November 2004	As part of a $388 billion spending bill, the House Highways Bill (SAFETEA-LU), I-75 received $2.5 million, including $1.5 million to expand six bridge overpasses and another $1 million to expand I-75 in Lee and Collier counties. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had actually asked for $12 million for the six bridges and $220 million for the Lee and Collier counties expansion.	"Mack: I-75 expansion to dominate meeting," 2/1/05, Naples Daily News
February 2005	City of Bonita Springs, through the City Manager Gary Price, hired a consultant (Carter & Burgess, of Tampa) to conduct a traffic study to determine if an interchange at Coconut Road and I-75 would improve traffic congestion on Bonita Beach Road, Corkscrew Road, Old 41, I-75 and Coconut Road. Cost of study was $15,000. Study suggested that the Coconut interchange would take 9000 cars off Bonita Beach and Corkscrew roads daily but add 6000 per day to Coconut Road. August 2005 editorial states that this was the first time the idea of an interchange at Coconut Road was made public.	"Mack urges second look at Coconut," 2/2/06, Myers News-Press; "Editorial: Interstate 75," 8/28/05, Naples Daily News
February 9, 2005	H.R. 3, the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, is Introduced in the House by Rep. Don Young. Original cosponsors include Rep. Connie Mack Section 1702 (Project Authorization), which later contains earmarks, at his time states, "to be supplied."	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary of all actions for H.R.3; H.R. 3. IH
February 9, 2005	H.R. 3 is referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Committee members include Rep. Don Young and Rep. Connie Mack	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary for all actions for H.R. 3
February 17, 2005	Rep. Don Young flew to Florida, Rep. Young and Rep. Connie Mack traveled together by car from the airport in Florida to Naples, Florida. Jeff Cohen, Rep. Mack's Chief of Staff, said: "When they "Rep. Mack and Chairman Young) left the airport, it	"Campaign Funds for Alaskan; Road Aid to Florida," 6/7/07, The New York Times; "Florida will get $8.6 billion over five years for transportation," 7/30/05, Naples

	took them over an hour to just get onto the onramp of I-75. The Chairman asked Connie whether or not he had staged this and Connie responded, "This is the one piece of the day I didn't have to plan."	Daily News; April 15, 2005 Quarterly Report
February 19, 2005	Rep. Young attended a town hall meeting at Florida Gulf Coast University re: widening I-75. Rep. Connie Mack "organized" and "hosted" the meeting, and invited Rep. Young to attend. According to the invitations, the hosts include Rep. Mack and a business group called the Southwest Florida Transportation Initiative. Approximately 200 people attended, including Rep. Mack and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart. FGCU President Bill Merwin made a pitch to creat a research center that focuses on transportation improvements using technology, and presented a study showing the need to an interchange at Coconut road to help hurricane evacuees reach the two main shelters in south Lee County.	"Mack I-75 expansion to dominate meeting," 2/1/p05, Naples Daily News; "Mack joins leader at FGCU for I-75 brainstorming," 2/20/05, Naples Daily News; ITS National Model for Traffic a& Emergency Management, 2/19/05; "MPO to make decision on $10M for interchange," 9/23/05, Bonita News; Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees, April 18, 2006 Meeting Minutes; Invitation for event
February 19, 2005	Fundraiser for Rep. Young at Hyatt Regency Coconut Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa in Bonita Springs, Fla. Hosted by Rep. Connie Mack, Tom Conrecode, David Hart and members of the Southwest Florida Transportation Initiative. Congressman Putnam and Congressman Ginny Brown-Waite and others attended	"Our very own road to perdition," 6/10/07, Miami Herald
February 21, 2005	Chairman and Mrs. Young travel from Naples to Tampa	
March 2, 2005	Transportation Committee consideration and mark-up session held	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary of all actions for H.R. 3
March 2, 2005	Transportation Committee orders the bill reported (amended) to the House by a *voice vote*	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary of all actions for H.R. 3
May 7, 2005	Bill reported (amended) by the Transportation Committee Section 1702 (Project Authorization) previously blank, is amended by the Transportation Committee to include the following earmarks: No. 781: $45,000,000 – I-75 Wide ning and Improvements in Collier and Lee Counties, Florida	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary of all actions for H.R. 3; H. Rept, 109-12

	No. 931: $27,000,000 – Widening and Improvements for I-75 in Collier and Lee Counties	
March 10, 2005	Floor debate on the bill. Rep. Young offers Amendment 1 (the manager's amendment) adding additional earmarks to Section 1702 and adjusting the amounts of existing earmarks in Section 1702. Amendment agreed to by *voice vote.*	151 Cong. Rec. H1276 – 1325
March 10, 2005	House passes the bill 417 to 9. Rep. Mack votes in favor. Section 1702 (Project Authorizations) is passed by the House and includes the following earmarks: No. 781: $45,000,000 – I-75 Widening and Improvements in Collier and Lee County, Florida No. 931: $27,000,000 – Widening and Improvements for I-75 in Collier and Lee County	151 Cong. Rec. H1324-5; H.R. 3. EH
May 17, 2005	Senate passes the bill (amended) 89-11. Section 1702 (Project Authorization) is not in the Senate's amendment.	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary of all actions for H.R. 3
May 26, 2005	House and Senate request a conference on the bill and appoint conferees	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary for all actions for H.R. 3
July 28, 2005	Conference report filed amending the bill Section 1702 (Project Authorizations) is amended by conference to include the following earmarks: No. 781: $36,000,000 – I-75 Widening and Improvements in Collier and Lee County, Florida No. 931: $21,600,000 – Widening and Improvements for I-75 in Collier and Lee County	H. Rept. 109-203

	No. 3898: $15,000,000 – I-75 Widening and Improvements in Collier and Lee County, Florida No. 3920: $8,500,000 – I-75 improvements, Widen to six lanes I-75 from Golden Gate Parkway in Collier County to Daniels Parkway in Lee Conty *Section 1934 (Transportation Improvements)* is added by conference to include the following additional earmark: ***No. 461: $10,000,000 – Widening and Improvements for I-75 in Collier and Lee County** *Earmark for the I-75/Coconut Road Interchange Project. Note that this earmark is hand-numbered as No. 461. This appears to be a typo. There are two earmarks hand numbered as No. 428. Thus, all earmarks from No. 429 to at least No. 461 are off by one number. Accordingly, the earmark hand-numbered as No, 461 should have actually been hand-numbered as No. 462.*	
July 29, 2005	House agrees to the conference report 412-8. Rep. Mack votes in favor.	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary of all actions for H.R. 3; Final Vote Results for Roll Call 453
July 29, 2005	Senate agrees to the conference report 91 to 4.	THOMAS (Library of Congress) summary of all actions for H.R. 3
July 29, 2005	U.S. House and Senate approve $286.4 billion highway transportation bill, including $81.1 million for expansion of I-75. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart and Connie Mack release a joint statement re: same. Legislation passed 412-8 in the House and 91-4 in the Senate.	"U.S. House, Senate agree to authorize $81.1 million for I-75 expansion," 7/29/05, Naples Daily News; "Officials hope I-75 funds accelerate improvements," 7/30/05, Naples Daily News
Aug 10, 2005	President George W. Bush signs the bill into law, Public Law 109-59. Total cost of the project is $146 million; the Highway Bill authorizes $81 million for the project, plus $10 million for the Coconut Road Interchange study. Section 1702 (Project Authorizations) includes:	Public Law 109-59; "I-75 project gets additional $10 million," 8/10/05, Naples Daily News; "Lee rejects federal funds for I-75 interchange plan," 9/24/05 , News-Press; "Mack joins leader at FGCU for I-75 brainstorming," 2/20/05, Naples Daily News; "Brent Batten: I-75 may be

	No. 781: $36,000,000 – I-75 widening and Improvements in Collier and Lee County, Florida No. 931: $21,600,000 – Widening and Improvements for I-75 in Colllier and Lee County No. 3898: $15,000,000 – I-75 Widening and improvements in Collier and Lee County, Florida No. 3920: $8,500,000 – I-75 improvements, widen to six lanes I-75 from Golden Gate Parkway in Collier County to Daniels Parkway in Lee County Section 1934 (Transportation Improvements) includes: **No. 462: $10,000,000 – Coconut Rd. interchange I-75/Lee County**	sacrificed for Katrina recovery," 9/20/05, Naples Daily News
August 10, 2005	Reps. Connie Mack and Mario Diaz-Balart announced that $10 million included in the House Highways Bill (SAFETEA-LU) for a study re: widening I-75 and adding an intersection at Coconut Road. Press reports sat that funding was added "very late" in a separate section of the bill. Jeff Cohen, Chief of Staff for Rep. Mack, was quoted as saying the additional funding "is dynamite."	"I-75 project gets additional $10 million," 8/10/05, Naples Daily News; "New I-75 exit part of road funding," 8/20/05, News-Press; "Funding for I-75 widening now over $91 million," 8/11/05, Naples Daily News.
August 20, 2005	Concerning the Coconut Road Interchange funding, Jeff Cohen, Rep, Mack's Chief of Staff, said "We just wanted to tell everyone that it was there and thank the senators for their hard work."	"New I-75 exit part of road funding," 8/20/05, Ft. Myers News-Press
August 24, 2005	Bonita Springs City Manager Gary Price quoted as saying "we didn't really ask for it," with respect to funding for the Coconut Road interchange project. "But I think it's a good idea for us. The report said that it would help Bonita Beach Road quite a bit."	"Bonita will benefit from Coconut Road I-75 exit," 8/24/05, Naples Daily News
August 25, 2005	Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) directed staff to have their Technical Advisory Committee review inclusion of an I-75/Coconut Road intersection into the long range 2030 plan so that federal funding could be appropriated.	Estero Development Report, Volume 5, Number 4 (found at: http://www.esterofire.org/EDR/edr8-05.htm#interchange)

	If MPO amend its long range plan to include the intersection and Congress approves the money, the MPO and Florida Department of Transportation could initiated a Planning, Development and Environmental (PDE) study to determine what type of facility can be constructed at the intersection. FHA also would have to change the designation of the area around the intersection from "rural" to "urban" in addition to other approvals and funding.	
August 29, 2005	Hurricane Katrina	
Fall 2005	Estero community activists, led by Don Eslick, Chairman of the Estero Council of Community Leaders, and Phil Douglas, complained to MPO that the $10 million could be better spent elsewhere. They had the backing of Commissioner Ray Judah. MPO subsequently voted 9-5 to keep the interchange out of the 2030 plan.	"Mack urges second look at Coconut," 2/2/06, Myers News-Press
September 20, 2005	Jeff Cohen, aide to Rep. Mack's Chief of Staff, said that Mack will oppose efforts to reopen the transportation bill to cuts. "We must find the nation's priorities in parallel with Katrina's recovery, and our infrastructure is a significant priority in South west Florida and across the country."	"Brent Batton: I-75 may be sacrificed for Katrina recovery," 9/20/05 Naples Daily News
September 20, 2005	Thomas Bean, aide to Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, said there's a line of reasoning that should trump any effort to cut the I-75 project in favor of hurricane relief: "The easiest argument being that this (widening I-75) would help hurricane evacuation."	"Brent Batton: I-75 may be sacrificed for Katrina recovery," 9/20/05 Naples Daily News
September 23, 2005	Meeting of MPO at which MPO's Technical Advisory Committee, supported by testimony from Southwest Florida Transportation Initiative ("SWFTI") (private sector transportation lobby group), and City of Bonita Springs, sought to amend 20/20 Transportation Plan to include the Coconut Road/I-75 interchange to satisfy federal requirements necessary for the $10 million to be appropriated by Congress. Motion was defeated by MPO on the reasoning that another $80 million would be required to complete the interchange. MPO staff was also directed to delete the interchange from the 2030 Transportation Plan to be reviewed and approved by the	"The View from Here: Coconut Road interchange is really a development proposal," 2/22/06, Bonita News: "Lee rejects federal funds for I-75 interchange plan," 9/24/05, News-Press.

	MPO in December. Finally, MPO voted to direct its staff to write a letter to the Congressional delegation asking for the $10 million to be redirected to the widening of I-75. (Dec 21, 2005 letter from John Albion to Rep. Young). The vote re: a feasibility study for the interchange and putting the project in the Lee County 20/20 plan: For: Lee County Commissioner John Albion, Cape Coral Councilwoman Dolores Bertolini, Bonita Springs Councilman Ben Nelson, Lee County Commissioner Doug St. Cerny and Fort Myers Beach Mayor Bill Van Duzer. Opposed: Fort Meyers Councilman Mike Flanders, Fort Meyers Councilman Randy Henderson, Fort Meyers Mayor Jim Humphrey, Lee County Commissioner Bob Janes, Lee County Commisssioner Ray Judah, Cape Coral Councilwoman Alex LePera, Sanibel Councilman Tom Rothman, Cape Coral Councilman Richard Stevens.	
September 23, 2005	According to county cost estimates, with the $10 million, the interchange would cost an additional $17 - $45 million to complete. If the MPO had decided to include the interchange in its 20-year plan, the interchange would still need the approval of the Florida Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.	"Lee rejects $10 million for I-75 interchange in Estero," 9/23/05, Bonita News.
October 11, 2005	Mayor of Bonita Springs made a request to Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council that they place the matter of Coconut Road interchange on the agenda for reconsideration.	Letter from J. Arend, Mayor of Bonita Springs, to D. Burr, Executive Director of Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, 10/11/05.
October 20, 2005	MPO meeting.	Letter from J. Arend, Mayor of Bonita Springs, to D. Burr, Executive Director of Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, 10/11/05.
November 18, 2005	Meeting of MPO's Technical Advisory Committee. City of Bonita Springs urged communities to add Coconut Road interchange project and other projects to the proposed 2030	"The View from Here: Coconut Road interchange is really a development proposal," 2/22/06, Bonita News.

	Transportation Plan. Committee agreed and projects were added.	
December 7, 2005	Lee County MPO meeting at which MPO updated its Long Range Transportation Plan through 2030 and excluded the Coconut Road/I-75 Interchange as part of the plan. Requested "reprogramming" of the funds for general improvements to I-75.	Letter from J. Albion, Chairman of Lee County MPO, to Rep. Young, cc'ing Reps. Mack, Foley, Diaz-Balart, Katherine Harris, 12/21/05.
December 21, 2005	Letter from John Albion, Chairman of Lee County MPO, to Rep. Young, requesting money to be "reprogrammed."	Letter from J. Albion, Chairman of Lee County MPO, to Rep. Young, cc'ing Reps. Mack, Foley, Diaz-Balart, Katherine Harris, 12/21/05.
January 23, 2006	Rep. Young sends letter to John Albion, Chairman of the Lee County MPO in response to Albion's Dec. 21, 2005 letter. Explains that "reprogramming" is not available and that finds are available only for designated projects. Letter says that this issue can be addressed in the technical corrections bill to make improvements, rectify errors and modify aspects of SAFETEA-LU.	Letter from D. Young to J. Albion. 1/23/06.
January 28, 2006	Editorial by Commission John Albion published in The News-Press supportive of funding for Coconut Road interchange.	"The View from Here: Coconut Road interchange is really a development proposal," 2/22/06, Bonita News.
January 31, 2006	Letter from Rep. Connie Mack to Commissioner John Albion, Chairman, MPO: "Nearly one year ago the Chairman . . . accepted my offer to come to Southwest Florida to see first hand the extent of the transportation infrastructure challenges facing our region . . . As a result of the Chairman's visit, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart and I were able to secure $81.1 million for the expansion of I-75 in Lee and Collier Counties. <u>An additional $10 million was provided by Congress for the Coconut Road Interchange project. This money would fund a study to determine the need of expanding the interchange at Coconut Road, a project which is strongly supported by many Southwest Florida leaders."</u> The letter goes on to urge MPO to reconsider its decision not to include the Coconut Road Interchange project is its 2030 transportation needs plan, thereby preventing the MPO from using the $10 million funding.	Jan 31, 2006 letter from Rep. Mack to J. Albion.

	Letter also notes that it is unlikely the money can be used for another purpose. Money also may be rescinded by Congress if not used for intended purpose.	
February 6, 2006	Jeff Cohen, Rep. Mack's Chief of Staff, says the following re: MPO's decision not to use the $10 million funding for the Coconut Road Interchange: "The local officials there fight so hard for federal money, and then they decide not to use it? There's a disconnect."	"Mack urges a second look at Coconut," 2/2/06. Myers News-Press.
February 7, 2006	Editorial by William Merwin, President of FGCU, discussing town hall meeting and urging MPO to include the Coconut Road I-75 Interchange study in its 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan for the following reasons: (1) access to FGCU campus; (2) hurricane evacuation; (3) benefits of transportation management center to Southwest Florida.	W. Merwin (President, FGCU), "Guest column: Coconut Road interchange vital to FGCU, public," 2/7/06, Bonita News.
February 8, 2006	Letter to editor by John Spear of Bonita Springs in response to opinion piece from Arnie Rosenthal, Vice Chairman of the Estero Council of Community Leaders. States that interchange did not appear out of thin air, but has been planned for and relied on as a critical long-range part of the South Lee County road network for at least two decades.	Letter to editor, "Stop demonizing the Bonitans," J. Spear, 2/8/06, Bonita News.
February 17, 2006	Estero Council of Community Leaders monthly meeting at which Coconut Road interchange discussed.	"Mysterious $10 million fuels debate," 2/18/06, Bonita News.
February 22, 2006	Article/editorial published by Don Eslick, Chairman of Estero Council of Community Leaders, in Bonita News. Claims that Feb. 7, 2006 editorial by FGCU President William Merwin was the first time that plan for FGCU Transportation Management Center was made public. Eslick complains of deceptive use of $10 million "carrot" and the interchange proposal to open up environmentally-sensitive land for intensive development.	"The View from Here: Coconut Road interchange is really a development proposal," 2/22/06, Bonita News.
March 14, 2006	Rep. Mack sends letter to President of FGCU: "The Coconut Road ITS interchange, built in conjunction with the FGCU Transportation Management Center, stands to be the cutting edge demonstration project in America to study and improve hurricane and crisis evacuation transportation safety programs. In addition, given Southwest Florida's phenomenal growth, coupled with the critical role I-75 plays as an evacuation	Letter from Rep. Mack to W. Merwin, FGCU, 3/14/06; S. Crabtree, "Mack letter supported Coconut Road," The Hill, 10/17/07.

	route and in the region's daily economy and quality of life, I believe there is not a more appropriate place in the country to locate this demonstration program."	
Late March 2006	MPO reversed itself and put the Coconut Road Interchange project in Lee County's 2030 Transportation Plan.	"Our very own road to perdition," 6/10/07, Miami Herald.
April 16, 2006	Quote from Rep. Mack in press reports: "Southwest Florida has many transportation needs. The chairman put $81 million in the transportation bill to help with the I-75 expansion and also recognized that the area needs more east-west corridors."	"Money's a motivator in I-75 earmark?," 4/16/06, Bonita News.
February 21, 2007	FGCU Interim President Richard Pegnetter sent letter to Rep. Connie Mack, copying the House Transportation Committee. Letter notes that Mack has "traditionally supported" the Transportation Management Center and the I-75 widening and Coconut Road Interchange. Says that in letter from Mack to FGCU (3/14/06 letter), Mack said that additional funding could be sought once the MPO placed the interchange on its Financially Feasible Long Range Transportation Plan. Reports that the MPO placed the Coconut Road Interchange on its plan, and FGCU wants to take the next step in the realization of the demonstration program. Requests Mack's assistance in securing additional funding. Lists benefits of the Transportation Management Center: (1) will provide research, technology and simulation of emergency events to create more effective emergency transportation systems; (2) training program for the future; (3) the latest technologies can be incorporated and studied in real world application settings.	Letter from R. Pegnetter to Rep. Mack, dated 2/21/07.
June 11, 2007	Report issued that summarized two dozen studies completed on Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource area including land east of proposed Coconut Road interchange.	"Development report could play big role in Coconut Road interchange decision," 6/11/07, Naples News.
June 15, 2007	MPO votes to move forward with the Coconut Road interchange study but with a broader focus that looks at other interchange options between Bonita Beach Road and Corkscrew Road.	"Development report could play big role in Coconut Road interchange decision," 6/11/07, Naples News; "Our very own road to perdition," 6/10/07, Miami Herald; "MPO votes to move forward on Coconut Road," 6/15/07, Bonita News.
August 17, 2007	Press reports that the MPO in a 10-3 vote decided to send the	"Improper voted on $10 million earmark

	money back to Congress and ask for $10 million back toward widening Interstate 75. The press reports that U.S. Rep. Connie Mack R-Fla., U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., and U.S. Sen. Mel Martinez, R-Fla., have all pledged support in getting the money back.	could have far-reaching implications," 8/27/07, Naples Daily News.