

Federal bill provides money for 3 Brevard road projects

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President Bush opened the gates Wednesday for spending a whopping \$286.4 billion on roads and bridges, rail and bus facilities, bike paths and recreational trails, saying the projects from coast to coast would spur the economy and save lives.

Critics said the 1,000-page transportation bill was weighed down with pet projects to benefit nearly every member of Congress. There's funding for three Brevard County projects.

--- \$10.4 million to build an exchange at Interstate 95 and the Pineda Causeway for the extension project that will connect beachside and the Suntree area to I-95

--- \$800,000 for a study for Palm Bay Parkway. The project -- Emerson Drive to U.S. 192 -- would link Melbourne, West Melbourne and Palm Bay

--- \$8 million to repair the Max Brewer Bridge in Titusville.

The bill's price tag over six years was \$30 billion more than Bush had recommended, but he said he was proud to sign it. The bill signing was the second ceremony this week that has taken Bush from his Texas ranch.

Two years in the making, the highway bill contains more than 6,371 special projects valued at more than \$24 billion, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense.

Alaska, the third-least populated state, for instance, got the fourth most money for special projects -- \$941 million -- thanks largely to the work of its lone representative, House Transportation Committee Chairman Don Young.

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