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## Our views: Weekend wrap-up

### Uniting to build St. Johns Parkway, preparing for massive development in North Brevard

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It's a pleasure in an ugly political season to see two officials from Melbourne and Palm Bay put parochialism aside and work together to benefit the entire Space Coast.

Palm Bay Councilman Milo Zonka and Melbourne Councilman John Thomas are trying to get their cities, plus the county, on the same page to secure federal support for the long-awaited St. Johns Heritage Parkway, an \$84.5 million project, and two new Interstate 95 interchanges.

The parkway has been on the drawing board for 15 years and is urgently needed to ease gridlock on clogged arteries in South Brevard.

But county commissioners have so far put off finding a plan to pay for it, even as traffic nightmares have worsened.

The I-95 links — one at Ellis Road in Melbourne and one in Micco — are also key to improving access for industry and emergency services in those areas.

The timing of the push is critical because Congress will reauthorize funds for the U.S. Department of Transportation's highway programs in 2009 — an opportunity that comes once every five years.

Palm Bay and Melbourne councils have agreed to discuss the issue in November, and it's a no-brainer they should jump on the partnering idea.

County commissioners should get on board too, so Brevard can present a strong united front to bring home the maximum federal money for the parkway project, then make the tough choices the public expects of them on ways to raise the rest of the dollars.

The funding shuffle has gone on far too long.

- A few years ago, the hot political issue in Brevard was rapid growth and its costly, sprawling implications.

The economy has made that a dim memory, but plans for new developments are continuing, including a massive project that would forever change the face of North Brevard.

And potentially leave Space Coast taxpayers stuck with big bills.

The Miami Corp. wants to eventually turn 60,000 acres of timberland across Volusia and Brevard counties into a city three times the size of Viera, and Brevard County commissioners Tuesday may approve a long-term strategy pact with Volusia officials and the company to map things out.

The issues that would be addressed include providing water, roads and utilities to the area.

A coordinated Brevard-Volusia approach makes excellent sense and should be approved. But county officials must move slowly and with extreme care because the development's Godzilla-like scope ensures problems down the road.

And they must make certain Miami Corp. pays for major infrastructure needs the same way The Viera Company is writing checks to cover its West Viera development.

It could be 50 years before the project comes to fruition, but if Florida's history has taught taxpayers anything, it's that good times follow bad, and boom follows bust.

That makes this the time to get a firm handle on the Miami Corp.'s plans and start scrutinizing every move.

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