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Florida's Great Northwest
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FLORIDA'S GREAT NORTHWEST ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR PANAMA CITY TO MONTGOMERY TOLL WAY

Dothan, Ala. (May 5, 2008) – Al Wenstrand, President of Florida's Great Northwest, Inc., during a press conference at the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce Monday morning, provided Florida's Great Northwest's endorsement of the proposed Panama City, Florida, to Montgomery, Alabama, toll way.

Wenstrand stated, "The proposed toll way is important to Northwest Florida for a number of reasons. The first two are obvious. It will provide an Interstate-quality link between Northwest Florida and Interstates 65 and 85 facilitating passenger traffic to Interstate 10, the beaches, and to the new Panama City-Bay County International Airport, as well as providing a significant, unimpeded hurricane evacuation route should that ever be needed. More importantly, from an economic development perspective, the toll way will be a major piece of infrastructure that complements the new airport, the expanded seaport in Panama City, and the Bay Line Railroad as the missing link to intermodal distribution. The built-to-Interstate-standards toll way will provide the missing piece of the infrastructure puzzle that is necessary for the central part of the Northwest Florida Region to emerge as Florida's next major international commerce center. Goods imported or exported through the seaport or the airport move north-south. Northwest Florida's competitive advantage over the nation's more established international trade centers resides with its proximity to Midwest markets from Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, St. Louis, to as far north as Chicago. The proposed toll way completes the region's missing mode for freight transportation into those markets."

Wenstrand further stated, "International commerce is a growth industry for Northwest Florida, as is obvious through the recent growth in cargo through the Panama City seaport and through the City of Chipley's recent application for a foreign trade zone designation. The proposed toll way will expand that growth potential off of the coast and through rural counties in Northwest Florida as well as offer economic development opportunities for those Alabama counties along the route. The

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toll way represents the final transportation component necessary to make Northwest Florida nationally competitive as a hub for international commerce and will allow the region to be active in an industry that has truly been a Florida economic engine, but one in which Northwest Florida has not effectively participated.”

About Florida’s Great Northwest, Inc.

Florida’s Great Northwest is a regional economic development organization serving 16 counties in Northwest Florida from Pensacola through Tallahassee. Florida’s Great Northwest provides regional leadership in workforce and economic development, including its primary mission of creating high-wage, high-skill jobs, branding and marketing, as well as supporting the local economic development organizations in the region.

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