

Experts talk infrastructure, strategy at trade conference

‘Hope is not a strategy’

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JAMES CRICHLOW

Alex Sink, chair of the Florida Next Foundation and senior adviser at Hyde Park Capital, moderates a panel discussion on strategies for launching a global business at the sixth annual Global Trade and Transportation Symposium Oct. 18



Sarah Mueller, Reporter - *Jacksonville Business Journal*

JACKSONVILLE —Top business leaders, state and federal officials and politicians gathered Oct. 18 for the 2011 Global Trade and Transportation Symposium at the Jacksonville Marriott Southpoint. Speakers included Jacksonville Port Authority CEO Paul Anderson; Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown; Rep. Ander Crenshaw, R-Jacksonville; and Ananth Prasad, secretary for the **Florida Department of Transportation**. The event included a panel discussion on international trade and a panel on infrastructure solutions, along with a keynote address and remarks from various representatives and officials.

Paul Anderson gave the keynote address and talked about the many projects the port authority is working to complete so the port can expand and also attract larger ships from Asia and Africa. The authority is investing millions in port-related projects, but the port will need \$1 billion in infrastructure improvements in the next 10 years, Anderson said.

“The port generates growth in the private sector, not the government,” he said.

He also announced he will skip the upcoming Brazil Trade Mission to testify in a hearing in the House of Representatives on infrastructure issues.

Anderson also praised the approval of three new free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama by Congress last week. The agreements are expected to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and add billions to the U.S economy.

He also encouraged the attendees to “think bigger than the Panama Canal.” Anderson said the Suez Canal is another opportunity for new trade overseas.

Brown echoed Anderson’s remarks about letting the private sector create jobs. He said he’s making tough decisions as he makes budget cuts and reorganizes the city government.

“Let business do what it does best: create jobs,” Brown said.

Panelists on the global trade panel included Michael Schiffhauer, vice president of field operations and European development for Enterprise Florida; John Wood, Sally Corp. chairman and CEO; Ivan Colao, partner at the law firm Holland & Knight LLP; and Susana Melendez-Valencia, senior vice president and regional manager for BBVA Compass. Alex Sink, chair of the Florida Next Foundation and former chief financial officer for the state of Florida, moderated the panel.

Schiffhauer said a company wanting to start trading overseas must have a plan and must test its product in that market before committing large sums of money.

“It’s a wild world out there,” Wood said. The CEO, whose animatronics company already operates worldwide, said the best way for companies to promote themselves is by going to international trade shows.

Colao said many business owners don’t think about lawyers when contemplating exporting goods to other countries. However, many issues including export licensing, dispute resolution and contract negotiation can be handled by a law firm.

“The resources are there,” Colao said.

Sink said it’s time for U.S. businesses to stop selling to each other. Increasing exports and strengthening manufacturing will create more jobs with higher wages.

The final panel of the day discussed infrastructure; the big issues were partisan politics and declining revenues. Panelists Maureen McAvey, executive vice president of the initiative group for the Urban Land Institute and Prasad. Each discussed infrastructure from their vantage point, whether on a national or state level.

Prasad noticed the congestion and traffic as he drove from Orlando to Jacksonville. Federal and state gas tax money is dwindling and the state needs to find another way to pay for road projects.

“Hope is not strategy,” he said.

Miami has managed lanes, or toll and free roads, and the speed of vehicles on the highway have increased from 25 miles per hour to 45, he said.

Both panelists agreed that the legislative raiding of Highway Trust Funds should stop. Transportation shouldn't be a partisan issue, McAvey said. Infrastructure is about a network or system for moving cargo containers as fast as possible.

The last mile is crucial, she said. Over 70 percent of communities approved bonds to pay for road projects when they know how much it will cost, who will control the money and what the benefits are.

“We know how to build cities,” she said.