

January 19, 2021



RETREAT AGENDA ITEM

SUNCOAST PARKWAY EXTENSION DISCUSSION

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

A discussion of the Suncoast Parkway Extension associated with the Florida Department of Transportation Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) initiative will be provided. **Attachment 1** provides the Suncoast Parkway Connector Task Force Final Report, dated November 15, 2020.



**SUNCOAST CONNECTOR
TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT
NOVEMBER 15, 2020**





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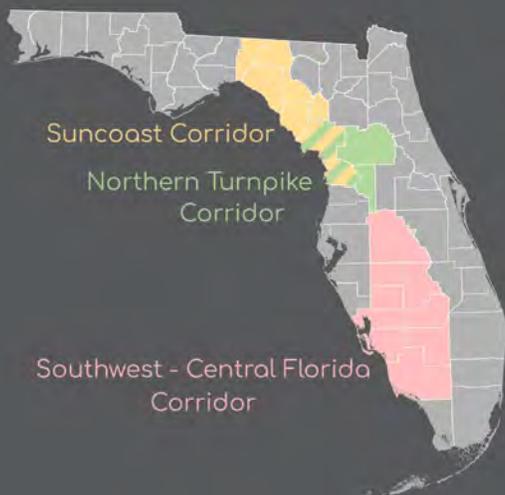
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INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Section 338.2278, F.S. created the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) Program. The purpose of the program is to revitalize rural communities, encourage job creation, and provide regional connectivity while leveraging technology, enhancing the quality of life and public safety, and protecting the environment and natural resources.



The statute directs the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to advance the construction of regional corridors intended accommodate multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure in three defined study areas:

- Suncoast Connector, extending from Citrus County to Jefferson County;
- Northern Turnpike Connector, extending from the northern terminus of the Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway; and
- Southwest-Central Florida Connector, extending from Collier County to Polk County

Preliminary corridor planning and development limits of the Suncoast Corridor will focus on corridor analysis south of Interstate 10 (I-10). Alternatives to connect to I-10 will include all counties in the study area. As part of the M-CORES Program, a separate Task Force is evaluating the Northern Turnpike Corridor. Coordination between the two studies is critical for regional connectivity. Specific activities relating to corridor analysis and engagement with the public and local municipalities will be coordinated. Consideration will be given to both Task Force reports for connecting projects.

The statute specifies these corridors as part of a broader program to address the complete statutory purpose of M-CORES, including revitalizing rural communities and enhancing economic development. The statute also provides FDOT with direction and tools to help advance other regional goals related to the statutory purpose, including enhancing quality of life and protecting the environment. The breadth of the program's purpose, the scale of the identified corridors, and the additional tools provided to FDOT all point to the need for a thoughtful, collaborative approach to implementing the M-CORES Program, analyzing corridor needs and alternatives, and building consensus around future actions among FDOT and a wide range of partners. A transportation corridor may help address the full set of statutory purposes, but some of these regional needs are broader than what can or should be addressed solely by FDOT and transportation investments. There may be a need for additional funding sources, formal partnerships with other agencies, and capacity building for local governments and regional planning councils (RPCs) to develop long-term plans and coordinate investments for land use, infrastructure, economic development, environmental stewardship and related topics to address the full range of statutory purposes for the M-CORES Program.

The statute directed FDOT to convene a Task Force for each corridor as an inclusive, consensus-building mechanism comprised of representatives from state agencies, RPCs, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), water management districts, local governments, environmental groups, business and economic development groups and the community. Members of each Task Force were appointed by the FDOT Secretary.

The statute charged each Task Force with:



Coordinating with FDOT on pertinent aspects of corridor analysis, including accommodation or co-location of multiple types of infrastructure;



Evaluating the need for, and the economic, environmental, hurricane evacuation, and land use impacts of, the specific corridor;



Considering and recommending innovative concepts to combine right-of-way acquisition with the acquisition of lands or easements to facilitate environmental mitigation or ecosystem, wildlife habitat, or water quality protection or restoration;



Addressing specific issues related to specific environmental resources and land uses identified in each study area;



Holding public meetings in each local government jurisdiction in which a project in the identified corridor is being considered;



And issuing its evaluations in a final report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

This report summarizes the activities and recommendations of the Suncoast Corridor Task Force.

Due to the early stage of planning for this corridor and the limited data and analysis on potential needs for and impacts available at this time, the Task Force was not able to fully address its charge of evaluating the needs for and impacts of the Suncoast Corridor. The Task Force identified a series of potential high-level needs for future evaluation by FDOT and developed recommendations for how FDOT should assess the need for a corridor of the scale specified in the statute. The Task Force did not reach a conclusion, based on the information available at this time, that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modifications of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose. Project-level needs will be evaluated consistent with the Task Force's recommendations. If specific needs are identified, the Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or expansion of existing major highway corridors. The Task Force acknowledged the process for FDOT to consider a "no build" alternative in future project development activities until a final recommendation about each specific project is made. The Task Force also recommended guiding principles, instructions and an action plan as a set of directions to FDOT and other partners for future planning, project development and implementation activities related to the M-CORES Program.

In completing this report, the Task Force's charge was to provide consensus recommendations for how FDOT can work with local governments and other agencies and partners to carry out the M-CORES Program as specified in s. 338.2278, F.S. These consensus recommendations address how needs and feasibility should be evaluated and how corridor development and related activities should move forward to implement the statute and support the environment, quality of life and prosperity of the study area and the state. Future activities related to project-specific needs and environmental and economic feasibility will be fully developed by FDOT consistent with the Task Force's recommendations.

The statute charges FDOT, to the maximum extent feasible, to adhere to the recommendations of each Task Force in the design of the multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure associated with the corridor. The Task Force recommended, and FDOT committed to, an action plan for future activities in this study area consistent with the guiding principles and instructions.

TASK FORCE

Issues for Consideration by All M-CORES Task Forces s. 338.2278 (1), Florida Statute

- Hurricane evacuation
- Congestion mitigation
- Trade and logistics
- Broadband, water, and sewer connectivity
- Energy distribution
- Autonomous, connected, shared, and electric vehicle technology
- Other transportation modes, such as shared-use nonmotorized trails, freight and passenger rail, and public transit
- Mobility as a service
- Availability of a trained workforce skilled in traditional and emerging technologies
- Protection or enhancement of wildlife corridors or environmentally sensitive areas
- Protection or enhancement of primary springs protection zones and farmland preservation areas designated within local comprehensive plans adopted under Chapter 163.

Issues for Consideration by Suncoast Corridor Task Force s. 338.2278 (3) (c) 8, Florida Statute

Evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction within the respective corridors on:

- The water quality and quantity of springs, rivers and aquifer recharge areas;
- Agricultural land uses; and
- Wildlife habitat.



MEMBERSHIP

In August 2019, FDOT convened the Suncoast Corridor Task Force with 41 members representing state agencies, water management districts, local governments, MPOs, RPCs, environmental groups, business and economic development groups and community organizations (see Appendix A for Membership List).

MEETINGS

The Task Force met 12 times and had one online meeting between August 2019 and October 2020 through eight Task Force meetings and four webinars or virtual meetings. Over the course of 15 months, the Task Force reviewed data, trends and issues; discussed key considerations for planning potential transportation corridors, including specific issues as identified in Florida Statute (see previous page); and received and reviewed public input. Subject-matter experts joined the Task Force meetings to provide information related to specific aspects of the Task Force's charge, including community planning, economic and workforce development, agriculture, environmental resources, broadband and utilities, emerging technology and emergency management. The Task Force developed specific recommendations for identifying and evaluating high-level needs related to the statutory purpose, as well as guiding principles and instructions for potential corridor development and related activities to help accomplish these needs, as documented in subsequent sections of this report. The Task Force also recommended an action plan for moving forward.

In March 2020, some unique challenges arose resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Force adapted meeting formats to comply with the Governor's Executive Order Number 20-122. The later Task Force meetings were conducted with a combination of virtual and in-person locations for both Task Force members and the public to participate (see Appendix B for the Work Plan and Appendix C for Meeting Locations).

A facilitator and staff supported the Task Force meetings to assist with discussions, provide technical support, and document the Task Force's deliberations and recommendations. Additional documentation of the Task Force activities, including meeting agendas, materials and summaries, can be found on the project website: www.FloridaMCORES.com.

DATA AND MAPPING

FDOT staff developed and maintained a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool to provide the Task Force and general public with access to a wide variety of data on existing demographic, economic, land use, environmental, infrastructure and other resources in the study area. This tool was specifically used to help identify areas where direct impacts from corridors should be avoided, as well as areas where a connection to a corridor may be appropriate for future evaluation. FDOT staff conducted one-on-one technical briefings to provide Task Force members with a tutorial of the GIS tool and to discuss data-related questions. The Task Force used the tool to help understand the linkage between draft guiding principles and potential corridor location decisions. Task Force members suggested other data sources related to topics such as conservation lands, water resources and wildlife habitat that were included in the tool as GIS layers for Task Force discussion to support development of guiding principles and instructions.

The GIS tool served as a living tool and was updated based on feedback and suggestions from the Task Force members. The GIS tool remains accessible to the public at all times on the project website, including through a mobile-friendly format.



The Task Force used the GIS tool to help understand the linkage between draft guiding principles and potential corridor location decisions.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement was a critical component of the Task Force process. The public engagement process was designed to allow residents and visitors to comment on all Task Force deliberations, products and the report. This process was made available 24/7 through the 15-month process using a variety of media options.

Opportunities for public engagement were included at each Task Force meeting through a dedicated public comment period. At in-person meetings, comment stations were made available to receive written comments. The Task Force meetings that were held in person included Tampa (Hillsborough County), Lecanto (Citrus County), Perry (Taylor County), and Madison (Madison County). Virtual webinars and hybrid Task Force meetings were held following the COVID-19 outbreak between April 2020 and October 2020. Several Task Force meetings were broadcast live on The Florida Channel, and all recordings were posted on the project website for members of the public who could not attend in person. The public could also attend the webinars and hybrid meetings virtually through the GoToWebinar platform and public viewing locations. Overall, a total of 2,414 people attended the Task Force meetings (568 people attended the in-person meetings and 1,846 people attended the webinars and hybrid virtual meetings). See Table 1 for a summary of the Suncoast Corridor Task Force Meetings.

To further public engagement, eight Community Open Houses were held, covering each county within the study area. The Community Open House meetings were held in Old Town, Mayo, Perry, Chiefland, Crystal River, Monticello, Trenton, and Madison to share information about the process and receive public input. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last three Community Open Houses were held as a combination of hybrid in-person and virtual meetings. At the meetings, members of the public were able to directly ask questions of FDOT staff, view informational material and experience hands-on use of the GIS tool.

Table 1. Suncoast Corridor Task Force Meetings

Date	Type	Location (Town/County)	Total Attendees (Signed In)	Total Number of Speakers	Written Comments Received
Aug. 27, 2019	Task Force Meeting #1	Tampa/ Hillsborough	302	89	19
Oct. 23, 2019	Task Force Meeting #2	Lecanto/ Citrus	80	14	13
Dec. 17, 2019	Task Force Meeting #3	Perry/ Taylor	87	22	7
Feb. 11, 2020	Task Force Meeting #4	Madison/ Madison	99	31	18
Apr. 17, 2020	Task Force Meeting #5	Canceled due to Covid-19*			
Apr. 30, 2020	Webinar #1	GoToWebinar	397	40	n/a
May 12, 2020	Webinar #2	GoToWebinar	255	15	n/a
Jun. 9, 2020	Webinar #3	GoToWebinar	223	12	n/a
Jun. 23, 2020	Virtual Meeting #4	GoToWebinar	201	13	n/a
Jul. 21, 2020	Task Force Meeting #6	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Trenton and Monticello)	215	10	3
Aug. 27, 2020	Task Force Meeting #7	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Crystal River and Old Town)	180	15	3
Sep. 24, 2020	Task Force Meeting #8	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Mayo and Madison)	157	14	2
Oct. 20, 2020	Task Force Meeting #9	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Morriston and Old Town)	218	19	1
Total			2,414	294	66

*Note: Meeting materials were posted on the project website

A total of 634 people participated in the eight open houses. See Table 2 for a summary of the Suncoast Corridor Community Open House Meetings.

Additionally, FDOT received communication 24/7 through the project website, FDOT Listens email address, phone, social media, letters, newsletters and more. In total, FDOT received 14,243 comments (3,050 unique comments and 11,193 form-letter comments) through these communication methods, which were shared with the Task Force. (Note: these comments applied to all three M-CORES corridors.)

The comments varied from significant concerns over the development of these corridors due to their potential environmental, community, rural lifestyle, and financial impacts to strong support for the corridors due to their potential mobility, economic development, infrastructure, and hurricane evacuation benefits. In addition, there was concern about the timing of this process and the project cost given the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2. Suncoast Corridor Community Open House Meetings

Date	Location (Town/County)	Total Attendees (Signed In)	Written Comments Received
Oct. 24, 2019	Old Town/Dixie	126	39
Dec. 19, 2019	Mayo/Lafayette	45	8
Jan. 27, 2020	Perry/Taylor	27	15
Jan. 28, 2020*	Chiefland/Levy	173	59
Jan. 30, 2020*	Crystal River/Citrus	126	25
Sept. 1, 2020	Monticello/Jefferson	91	49
Sept. 29, 2020	Trenton/Gilchrist	37	10
Oct. 22, 2020	Madison/Madison	9	2
Total		634	207

*Note: Joint meetings held with the Northern Turnpike Corridor

The majority of the comments submitted through the various forms expressed opposition or concern about the corridors. The Task Force was provided with periodic summaries of the comments received as well as copies of all comments, so this public input could be considered in the development and refinement of the Task Force’s recommendations. A detailed summary of the public comments can be found on the project website. The most common comments/themes received from the public are summarized below:

Number of Comments	Theme
1,484	Concern for impacts to wildlife habitat
1,114	Concern for impacts to property and rural quality of life
714	Concern over project cost
655	Need to improve and protect water resources and the aquifer
623	Support to expand, improve and maintain existing roads
520	Need for protection and enhancement of conservation lands
419	Support the need for jobs, economic development and business enhancements; but concern over potential negative economic impacts
286	Concern for impacts to wetlands
282	Concern over the cost of tolls
251	Concern for increased water, ground and air pollution
248	Need for hurricane evacuation
217	Need for broadband
186	Support for multi-modal/mass transit
176	Concern over location/project alignment, route or new greenfield corridor
134	Concern over impacts to tourism
124	Concern for impacts to native plants
81	Need for expansion of water, sewer and other utilities
6	Concern over eminent domain process

The draft Task Force report was posted for a 15-day public comment period from September 29, 2020, to October 14, 2020. A total of 567 members of the public submitted comments during that period. A summary of the general comments and the key themes were provided to the Task Force at its final meeting.

In addition to engaging the public, FDOT conducted active engagement with partners. FDOT provided 45 presentations to interested agencies and organizations at their workshops, meetings and conferences. FDOT staff also attended MPO, RPC and local government council and commission board meetings to share updates on the Task Force’s process and answer any questions. The Task Force also considered a total of 12 letters and resolutions from local governments and one metropolitan planning organization. These letters and resolutions are included in *Appendix D*.



STUDY AREA

The Suncoast Corridor study area is located along Florida's Nature Coast through Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison and Taylor Counties and is home to more than 280,000 residents.

ENVIRONMENT

The predominantly rural counties located within the Suncoast Corridor study area contain natural resources, landscapes and public lands that have been highly attractive to residents and year-round visitors for decades. This area has many unique features and natural resources, including rivers, springs, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, coastal areas, conservation areas, state parks and agricultural lands. Some notable resources include:

- Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve
- Flint Rock and Aucilla Wildlife Management Areas
- Suwannee and Santa Fe Rivers
- Blue, Fanning and Wacissa Springs
- Crystal River
- Cedar Keys, Chassahowitzka, Crystal River, Lower Suwannee and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuges
- Goethe State Forest

The study area also contains numerous large-acreage conservation easements. These areas support significant fish, wildlife, and plant populations, including threatened and endangered species such as the West Indian manatee, the Florida scrub-jay and the gopher tortoise. The study area also includes an abundance of prime farmlands and agricultural properties that serve both economic and environmental functions in addition to Spring Protection and Recharge Areas, prospective Florida Forever Lands on the current priority lists for acquisition and Florida Ecological Greenways Network critical linkages.



COMMUNITY

The population of the eight-county study area is projected to increase approximately 15 percent by 2045, adding more than 40,000 new residents to the area (Table 3).

Citrus County currently contributes almost half the population of the study area and will account for most of the population growth in the future. Citrus, Gilchrist and Lafayette Counties are projected to have the highest growth by 2045 (approximately 20 percent), with Dixie and Madison Counties projected to have the lowest population growth (approximately 3 percent) during the same period. The state's projected population increase is approximately 29 percent during this same time period, nearly twice the growth rate of the overall study area. Population within the study area is mostly driven by domestic migration from other parts of the state. All the counties in the study area, except Gilchrist, experienced more deaths than births during the last decade, reflecting an older population.¹

1. U.S. Census. 2013-2017 American Community Survey - 5 Year Estimates.

Table 3. Existing and Projected Population²

County	2019	2045*	Percentage Change
Citrus	147,744	177,346	20%
Dixie	16,610	17,135	3%
Gilchrist	17,766	21,382	20%
Jefferson	14,776	15,686	6%
Lafayette	8,482	10,109	19%
Levy	41,330	45,460	10%
Madison	19,570	20,124	3%
Taylor	22,458	24,675	10%
Study Area	288,736	331,917	15%
Florida	21,208,589	27,266,909	29%

**Note: Population forecasts were developed prior to COVID-19*

The study area is a blend of coastal and inland areas that are mostly rural and agricultural with conservation areas, small towns and scattered suburban communities. Approximately 88 percent of the land is in agricultural or recreation/park use, while residential use accounts for approximately 8 percent of the overall land use.³ The remaining 4 percent of land uses are comprised of primarily industrial, institutional and commercial development. While mostly rural in nature, there are 21 towns and cities within the study area with an abundance of community resources, including schools, parks, places of worship and downtown main streets. There are also several historic resources within the study area, including the Monticello Historic District, the Crystal River Archaeological Site and the Letchworth-Love Mounds Archaeological State Park.

As one of the more rural areas of the state, the study area has limited infrastructure and lower levels of adequate broadband Internet access, sewer and water service and transit than the rest of the state. In addition, all the counties have limited access to fresh food (within half a mile) and significantly lower access to healthcare (hospitals and physicians) than the rest of the state. Dixie, Gilchrist, Jefferson, and Lafayette Counties do not have any hospital facilities, and all of the counties (except for Citrus) have fewer than 10 licensed physicians.⁴ These deficiencies affect the quality of life for residents in the study area and limit the ability to attract new residents and businesses. Future vision and land use plans for the counties in the study area generally focus on the need to protect and enhance the environment and quality of life for residents while providing economic opportunity and growth in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner.

2. Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research. 2020. Population Demographics 2019 Medium Projections.

3. FDOT Generalized Land Use, Florida Dept. of Revenue (2015), and University of Florida (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Science Florida Agriculture Fast Facts (2018).

4. Florida Department of Health. 2018. County Health Profiles and Resource Availability.

ECONOMY

The local economy within the study area is primarily based on the trade, education, healthcare and construction industries. In addition, all the counties list government services as one of their top employers with many residents working in the county government (administration and schools) and state correctional institutions. Several counties also list agricultural businesses as some of their largest employers. The presence of various natural resources also provides local economic benefits as the study area has successful and growing mining, silviculture and ecotourism industries.

All eight counties have a median household income below the 2017 state median income (\$50,883) and all counties (except Jefferson County) have a poverty rate that exceeds the 2017 state poverty rate (15.5 percent). In addition, educational attainment levels are lower in all eight study area counties than the state average and the unemployment rates for counties within the study area have historically been near or above the state unemployment average.⁵ All of the counties, except for Citrus, have been designated by the Governor as Rural Areas of Opportunity in need of expansion of economic development projects.⁶ Specific areas targeted for economic development include the City of Monticello, the City of Madison, the Town of Greenville, the Town of Cross City, northern Gilchrist County, northern Lafayette County, the City of Perry and northeast Citrus County.

5. Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research. 2020. *Statistics and County Profiles 2019*.

6. Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. *North Central Rural Areas of Opportunity*.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Much of the study area is served by state highways and county roads with varying speed limits and partial or full access. Many of these facilities are older and were not developed with the benefit of environmentally sensitive design features and modern stormwater facilities. U.S. Highway 19/27/98 (US 19/27/98) is the primary north-south route through the study area and runs approximately 250 miles from Tampa to just south of the Georgia border. There are no high-speed, high-capacity transportation facilities in the central portion of the study area. There are two high-speed, high-capacity facilities within the study area at the northern- and southern-most boundaries. The Suncoast Parkway (State Road [SR] 589) is a toll road that runs north out of the Tampa Bay region in the southern portion of the study area and terminates in Citrus County. I-10 runs east-west across the state at the northern portion of the study area through Jefferson and Madison Counties. Interstate 75 (I-75), located east of the study area, is the only north-south high-speed, high-capacity transportation facility serving this area. There is also freight rail located in the northern and southern ends of the study area; however, there is no rail within the central portion of the study area. The CSX “S” line, a major north-south freight line in the state, is located east of the study area and I-75.

While detailed traffic analysis for the corridor has not been conducted at this stage, there is some transportation data for the general area that provides some framework for traffic conditions. Preliminary traffic data shows that approximately 60 percent of vehicle trips stay within the study area, 30 percent of the trips are to and from the study area, and only 10 percent of the trips pass through the study area.⁷ In addition, future traffic conditions modeling, based on growth projections developed prior to COVID-19, indicate that while some roadways within the study area are underutilized, portions of I-75 (east of and outside the study area) and several roadways within the study area could operate at a poor Level of Service (LOS) E or F with high to excessive levels of delay at peak times by the year 2050. FDOT analyzed future traffic in the study area based on population growth projections from local government comprehensive plans. Based on improvements currently in the FDOT Work Program and existing cost-feasible plans for the Strategic Intermodal System and MPOs in the study area, this traffic growth could produce significant congestion along much of I-75 and portions of US 41, SR 44, SR 200 and SR 121 by the year 2050.⁸

Approximately 3,800 vehicle crashes resulting in nearly 90 deaths occurred along the state highway system within the study area in 2018. In addition, there was a 44 percent increase in total traffic fatalities from 2010 to 2018 in the study area, compared to 28 percent statewide over the same period.⁹ In addition, I-75, the contiguous north-south high-speed, high-capacity transportation corridor, also experiences crashes at a rate above the state average. Mobility options are limited within the study area as most existing roadways do not provide transit or safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In addition, five counties within the study area (Citrus, Dixie, Jefferson, Levy and Taylor Counties) are coastal counties susceptible to hurricanes and storm surge with designated emergency evacuation zones.

As previously noted, the study area has lower levels of adequate broadband Internet access than the rest of the state. According to the Federal Communications Commission, all eight counties in the study area are below the Florida average (96.2 percent) for access to fixed-speed broadband Internet. Only 1 percent of residents in Dixie County and fewer than 20 percent of residents in Levy County have access to the common standard of broadband speed of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download.¹⁰ In addition, some portions of the study area have no broadband service, and many residents are unable to afford what service is available.

⁷ AirSage, Inc. 2016. *Study Area Daily Trips Summary*.

⁸ FDOT. *Traffic Forecast Input. 2018 Existing Conditions and 2050 Traffic Conditions*.

⁹ Florida Dept. of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. *Traffic Crash 2018 Annual Report*.

¹⁰ Federal Communications Commission. *Access to Fixed 25Mbps/3Mbps Broadband by County*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

APPROACH AND FRAMEWORK

The Task Force recognized the scope of the M-CORES purpose and program, as well as the scale of the corridors authorized in statute, and called for thoughtful decision making supported by the best-available data, analysis and subject-matter expertise and extensive public input. The Task Force recognized that decisions about where these corridors should be located and how they should be developed, particularly in relation to environmental resources and existing communities, could have transformational impacts on the study area and the overall state.

Since the Task Force process was designed to occur prior to the corridor planning process, the Task Force was not able to review data on nor discuss every potential impact of the corridor in detail. The Task Force focused on developing recommendations in three areas for how FDOT and other agencies should implement the M-CORES Program in this study area:

High-Level Needs

The Task Force identified key opportunities and challenges related to the six statutory purposes for M-CORES that should be priorities for the M-CORES Program in the study area. The Task Force also developed guidance for how FDOT should work with partners to evaluate these potential needs and form more specific purpose and need statements for corridor improvements moving forward. The high-level needs, along with the purpose, answer the question “why?”.

Guiding Principles

The Task Force recommended a set of core values to guide decision-making related to the M-CORES Program in the study area throughout the planning, development and implementation process. These answer the question “how?”.

Instructions for Project Development and Beyond

The Task Force recommended specific instructions for future project development and implementation activities to ensure the Task Force’s guiding principles are applied to subsequent activities as intended. These answer the question “what’s next?”.

In completing this report, the Task Force’s charge was to provide consensus recommendations for how FDOT can work with local governments and other agencies and partners to carry out the M-CORES Program as specified in s. 338.2278, F.S. These consensus recommendations address how needs and feasibility should be evaluated and how corridor development and related activities should move forward to implement the statute and support the environment, quality of life and prosperity of the study area and the state. Future activities related to project-specific needs, environmental and economic feasibility will be fully developed by FDOT consistent with the Task Force’s recommendations.

Section 338.2278 (3)(c) 6, F.S. states: “To the maximum extent feasible, the department shall adhere to the recommendations of the task force created for each corridor in the design of the multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure associated with the corridor.” The Task Force viewed this statement as inclusive of all the recommendations contained in this report and applicable to all activities associated with the M-CORES Program. The Task Force also recognized that, as future work continues in the study area, additional information or changing conditions may provide insight about the feasibility and value of specific implementation steps that could warrant refinements to specific recommendations. In these situations, the guiding principles and intent of the Task Force will guide any such refinements.

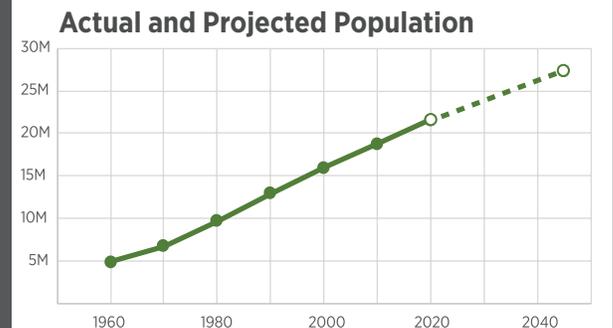
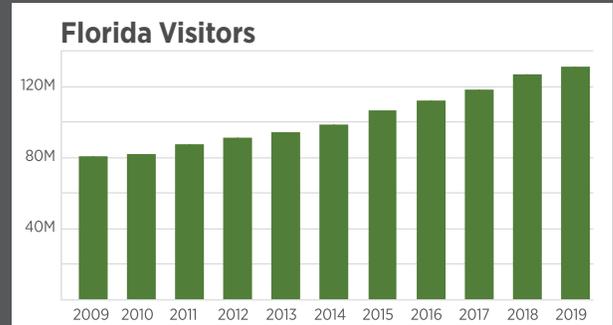
HIGH-LEVEL NEEDS

Development of major transportation projects typically begins with a definition of purpose and need for the project. The purpose identifies the primary goals of the project, and the need establishes the reason for the project based on deficiencies, issues and/or concerns that currently exist or are expected to occur within the study area. A need typically is a factual, objective description of the specific transportation problem supported by data and analysis.

Section 338.2278 (3) (c) 4, F.S., charged the Task Force to, "... evaluate the need for, and the economic and environmental impacts of, hurricane evacuation impacts of and land use impacts of ..." the corridor on which the Task Force is focusing. The Task Force reviewed partner and public input, existing plans and studies, and available data and forecasts on trends and conditions in the study area. FDOT provided preliminary baseline forecasts for future population, employment and traffic; however, the amount and precision of the information provided was not sufficient to define specific corridor needs prior to the initiation of project development. Based on the information provided, the Task Force identified potential high-level needs for the corridor and developed recommendations for how FDOT should assess the needs for a corridor of the scale specified in statute as part of future planning and project development.

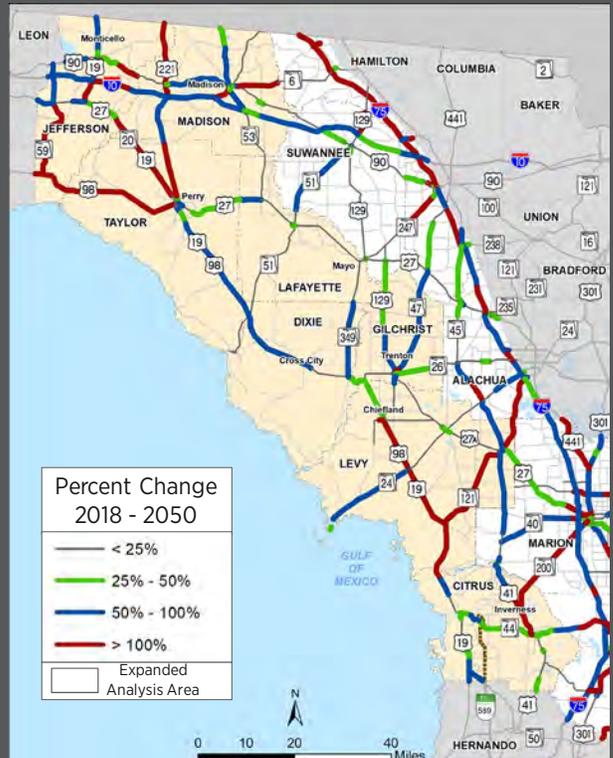
High-level needs are key opportunities and challenges that the M-CORES Program, including corridor investments and related actions, are intended to address. The high-level needs build on the six purposes and 13 potential benefits in s. 338.2278 (1), F.S. The potential high-level needs include conventional transportation needs such as safety, mobility and connectivity, as well as broader needs that could be supported through a transportation corridor, such as economic development, environmental stewardship and quality of life.

In general, the Task Force found significant high-level needs in the study area related to the six statutory purposes, including revitalizing rural communities, supporting economic development, enhancing quality of life and protecting the environment. The Task Force did not reach a conclusion, based on the information available at this time, that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modifications of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose. It is important to note that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) defines a greenfield corridor as designed from the beginning with no constraints from the existence of prior facilities that need to be modified or removed. Project-level needs will be evaluated consistent with the Task Force's recommendations. If specific needs are identified, the Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or expansion of existing major highway corridors. The Task Force identified a series of potential high-level needs for future evaluation by FDOT:



900+ People Net Migration/Day

2050 Traffic Condition



SUPPORT PROJECTED STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL POPULATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

FDOT preliminary traffic analysis indicates that projected state and regional population and economic growth (based on forecasts developed prior to COVID-19) could produce congestion along portions of I-75, US 41, SR 44, SR 200, and SR 121 by the year 2050. The Task Force recommended further refinement of these traffic projections, including evaluation of whether potential improvements to or development of a new or enhanced inland corridor would relieve future traffic on I-75, as well as whether traffic on the Suncoast Corridor would be impacted by completion of the Northern Turnpike Corridor. The Task Force recommended that the traffic analysis consider future demand for moving both people and freight, including local/regional travel originating and terminating within the study area and statewide/interregional travel to, from and through the study area. The traffic analysis also should consider potential changes in travel demand related to recovery from COVID-19 and potential long-term changes in travel behavior, such as a greater propensity for working from home and increased home delivery of goods and services. The analysis also should consider potential changes in travel demand and transportation system capacity related to increased use of emerging technologies such as automated and connected vehicles and the next generation of mobility. Finally, the analysis should consider potential shifts in economic activity that could be related to a significant industry expansion or recession during the analysis period.

The Task Force also recommended that FDOT use population and economic growth projected in local government comprehensive plans and/or the metropolitan planning organization long-range transportation plans and the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) as the baseline for estimating future travel demand. These projections generally are consistent with the mid-range projections developed annually by the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), which could serve as a proxy for those counties that have not updated their comprehensive plans in recent years.

IMPROVE SAFETY, MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY THROUGH ACCESS TO A HIGH-SPEED, HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR FOR PEOPLE AND COMMERCIAL GOODS

The Task Force discussed and received subject-matter expert and public input on how access to high-capacity transportation corridors that provide interregional connectivity is a key factor for business recruitment and retention, particularly for underserved rural areas in need of economic enhancement. They also emphasized the need to have a better understanding of the potential impacts and how the Suncoast Corridor and Northern Turnpike Corridor would affect the existing transportation network, including whether development of these corridors would relieve traffic on existing roadways (such as I-75) and divert traffic to/from northwest Florida and the study area. The Task Force recommended additional refinement of traffic analysis (as noted in the previous section) in addition to working with local governments on potential operational improvements, existing facility enhancements and interchange locations.

PROTECT, RESTORE, ENHANCE AND CONNECT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS AND ECOSYSTEMS

The Task Force reviewed multiple data sources and maps and discussed the unique characteristics of the region's environment and natural resources, including aquifer recharge areas, major watersheds, springs, rivers, farmlands, wildlife habitats, native plants and ecosystems within the study area. They discussed how these resources need protection and enhancement and that many have already been identified for conservation and acquisition. The Task Force recommended guiding principles and instructions for how the M-CORES Program could help achieve environmental goals, including proactive opportunities to restore, connect and enhance resources. The Task Force recommended that FDOT give particular attention to these resources through application of these guiding principles in addition to standard project development and environmental review processes.

ENHANCE TRAVEL OPTIONS AND SAFETY FOR ALL TRANSPORTATION USERS

FDOT presented recent crash data within the study area indicating that traffic fatalities during the last decade are higher than the state average for the same period. The Task Force also heard how mobility options are limited within the study area as most existing roadways do not provide transit or safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Task Force received subject-matter expert and public input on the need for transportation facilities that use innovative design and technology to improve automobile safety, reduce the number of incidents, and accommodate multi-modal transportation, including multi-use trails separated from the roadway. They also discussed the need to have a better understanding of whether a new or enhanced corridor would improve safety and whether other modes of transportation could be developed independent of a roadway. The Task Force recommended guiding principles and instructions that the corridor safely accommodate and enhance multiple modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, transit and rail) and that strategies and technology be explored to reduce incidents and improve response.

ENHANCE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AT THE LOCAL, REGIONAL AND STATE LEVELS

The Task Force heard from an industry expert on emergency response planning and discussed evacuation and sheltering needs as five counties within the study area are coastal counties with emergency evacuation zones. In addition, they discussed how I-75 serves as the primary evacuation/response route for the study area in addition to large portions of central and southwest Florida, including the heavily populated Tampa Bay region. The Task Force discussed the need for the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, local emergency management and response plans, and the Statewide Regional Evacuation Studies to inform and support the needs within and through the study area. The Task Force discussed the ongoing updates to the Statewide Regional Evacuation Studies under way by the Florida Division of Emergency Management and asked FDOT to consider those studies as they will provide updated information including evacuation zones, travel behavior and sheltering needs. They also suggested that FDOT conduct analysis that documents mobility and connectivity needs related to both routine daily traffic and special events, such as evacuation and response to major emergencies and disasters.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO ECOTOURISM AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS

The Task Force discussed the multitude of natural resources that are vital to the ecotourism and nature-based recreation industry in the study area. They also received subject-matter expert and public input on how many of the outdoor activities and resources in the study area not only create economic development opportunities for local businesses, but also provide unique opportunities for recreation, wildlife viewing and the ability to develop an appreciation of the natural environment and conservation. The Task Force recognized the importance of access to the resources in addition to the need to protect and enhance the very resources that serve as the basis for the industry and draw many residents to live in the area.

ENHANCE ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND JOB CREATION

The Task Force reviewed socio-economic data for the study area and heard from subject-matter experts, local governments and the public on the challenges in the study area with regards to employment and educational opportunities. They discussed how key demographic statistics indicate the need for increased opportunities for educational attainment, job training, workforce development and overall economic development within the study area. The Task Force also discussed the potential for infrastructure improvements (roadway, multi-modal and communications) to create a competitive environment to attract businesses, investment and talent to the region. They also discussed the need for FDOT to consider the positive and negative mobility, economic and fiscal impacts of potential shifts in economic activity from existing communities and corridors to enhanced or new corridors, as well as potential net economic benefits to the region and state. They also suggested working with businesses and economic development organizations to fully evaluate and understand these economic development needs as the corridor moves forward and consider ways that FDOT and the M-CORES Program can support and build on their existing economic development plans.

IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY TO AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES, MANUFACTURING, WAREHOUSING, FREIGHT TERMINALS AND INTERMODAL LOGISTICS CENTERS

The Task Force reviewed GIS data of available transportation facilities and received subject-matter expert and public input on the importance of centrally located high-speed, high-capacity corridors for logistics and movement of commercial goods and agricultural, forestry and mining products. They recognized that while transportation is often a vital component to ensure economic competitiveness of these business, agricultural and rural land also need protection and enhancement to be productive. They also discussed the fact that several counties have already identified areas for farmland preservation and those areas should be taken into consideration. The Task Force recommended additional analysis be conducted in addition to working with local governments and stakeholders (businesses, farmers, organizations, etc.) to fully evaluate and understand emerging trends and connectivity needs as the corridor moves forward.

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EXPAND RURAL BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS TO BROADBAND SERVICE

The Task Force reviewed data on the limited availability of broadband Internet access within the study area. They heard from experts on a utility panel and the public on how broadband is crucial for education, employment, business operations and access to healthcare and has become part of a community's critical infrastructure. They discussed how the lack of access to healthcare (physicians and hospitals) and college/technical schools within the rural study area increases the need for improved broadband service for virtual healthcare and learning opportunities. The Task Force recommended additional analysis be conducted to see if there are ways to accommodate increased broadband independent of a transportation facility and consider programs that make the service more affordable. There was also discussion on the need to consider expansion of other utility needs at a regional scale.

PRESERVE AND IMPROVE THE RURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF COMMUNITIES

The Task Force discussed and heard from the public on the importance of preserving the character of the area and protecting the variety of community resources in the study area, including downtowns, parks, schools, places of worship and various cultural (historic and archaeological) resources. While a key purpose of M-CORES is to revitalize rural communities with additional infrastructure and economic development opportunities, input from the Task Force members and the public emphasized the importance of preserving the quality of life in these communities. The Task Force stressed the importance of working with local communities, listening to their concerns and preferences and understanding their goals and visions throughout the corridor development process. They also discussed the need for minimization of negative impacts to the human environment to ensure the corridor does not negatively impact the very communities it was designed to improve.

NEEDS EVALUATION PROCESS

As input to project development, FDOT will work with partners to conduct a robust evaluation of the potential high-level needs in the study area, building on the recommendations of the Task Force. This process will evaluate and distinguish between conventional safety, mobility and connectivity needs, and broader regional needs related to transportation that also are included in the statutory purpose in s. 338.2278, F.S. Additional details on the needs evaluation process as well as the steps involved in identifying and evaluating alternatives are specified in the Action Plan section of this report.

The Task Force did not reach a conclusion, based on the information available at this time, that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modifications of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose. Project-level needs will be evaluated consistent with the Task Force's recommendations. If specific needs are identified, the Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or expansion of existing major highway corridors. Preliminary corridor planning and development limits of the Suncoast Corridor will focus on corridor analysis south of I-10. Alternatives to connect to I-10 will include all counties in the study area.

The Task Force believed that the formal determination of need pursuant to statutory requirements and consistent with accepted statewide processes is an important milestone in corridor planning and development. The Task Force developed a series of guiding principles and instructions for future planning and development of corridors for which high-level needs have been identified, including analysis of the "no-build" option. While these determinations will be made after the Task Force has completed its deliberations, the guidance provided by the Task Force will instruct the evaluation process and FDOT will create ongoing opportunities for partners and the public to be engaged during the process.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND INSTRUCTIONS

The Task Force recommended guiding principles and instructions that are intended to function as a set of directions to FDOT and other partners as they carry out future planning, project development and implementation activities related to the M-CORES Program in s. 338.2278, F.S. These guiding principles and instructions are intended to supplement the requirements of current FDOT processes during planning, project development, design and other implementation phases.

The Task Force developed a series of 13 guiding principles and associated instructions. The text below lists the specific guiding principles and instructions with supporting text to document the intent of the Task Force. The guiding principles function as an integrated set and are not presented in a specific priority order.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATEWIDE, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS

The Task Force recognized that there are plans specifically called out in statute, where consistency is the standard by law or policy; these include the local government comprehensive plans, metropolitan long-range transportation plans, strategic regional policy plans and the statewide FTP. The Task Force stressed the importance of preventing growth from occurring in areas that have not planned for and do not wish to plan for that growth. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the consistency issue. It is important to note that this is considered a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #1: BE CONSISTENT WITH STATUTORILY REQUIRED STATEWIDE, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS, INCLUDING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS, LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANS, STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLANS AND THE FTP.

Instructions

- Be consistent with goals, objectives, policies and resources identified in local government comprehensive plans (s. 163.3177, F.S. and s. 163.3178, F.S.), metropolitan long-range transportation plans (s. 339.175, F.S.) and strategic regional policy plans (s. 186.507, F.S.), placing emphasis on future land use maps and growth projections, as well as regional and community visions as adopted into strategic regional policy plans and/or local government comprehensive plans.
- Be consistent with the vision, goals and strategies of the FTP (s. 339.155, F.S.).
- Coordinate among agencies and local governments to assist with identifying and implementing possible changes to statutorily required state, regional and local plans related to transportation corridors and future growth and development projections, including differences related to the timing and horizon years of plan updates as well as the geographical areas covered by regional plans.
- Identify needs to update statutorily required plans to address Task Force recommendations, such as designation and management of transportation corridors (s. 337.273, F.S.) and consideration of whether areas around potential interchange locations contain appropriate land use and environmental resource protections (s. 338.2278, F.S.).
- Coordinate among local governments, RPCs, MPOs, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and FDOT on plan updates.
- Provide technical and financial support to coordinate with local governments for best practices to implement as part of plan updates.

MAXIMIZE USE OF EXISTING FACILITIES

The Task Force emphasized the importance of examining the potential to upgrade or use existing transportation facilities or utility corridors to meet the purpose and need of the corridor before planning a new greenfield corridor. They emphasized the importance of exploring opportunities to upgrade existing roadways or construct the corridor with or within existing facilities or right of way (major roadway or utility) to minimize the project footprint and impacts, in addition to using the upgrades or redesign to improve the environmental design of existing roadways. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the use of existing facilities. This is considered a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #2: EVALUATE POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES FOR ADDRESSING THE M-CORES PURPOSES AND INTERREGIONAL STATEWIDE CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY NEEDS IN THIS PRIORITY ORDER:

- 1. MAKE SAFETY AND OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES.***
- 2. ADD CAPACITY TO EXISTING TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES OR OTHER PUBLICLY OWNED RIGHT OF WAY IN OR NEAR THE STUDY AREA, INCLUDING CO-LOCATION OF FACILITIES WITHIN EXISTING DISTURBED RIGHT OF WAY AND OTHER APPROACHES TO TRANSFORMING EXISTING FACILITIES AND RIGHT OF WAY TO ACCOMMODATE ADDITIONAL MODES, USES AND FUNCTIONS.***
- 3. IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE PURPOSE AND NEED AND/OR GUIDING PRINCIPLES CANNOT BE ADDRESSED BY OPERATIONAL OR EXISTING FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS, THEN EVALUATE NEW ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVES.***

Instructions

- Identify and advance safety and operational improvements to existing transportation facilities, particularly those that would be adjacent to a new or improved north-south corridor.
- Evaluate potential capacity improvements to a broad range of existing transportation facilities (rail and roadway) in or near the study area, including their impact on surrounding environmental resources, land uses and communities.
- Evaluate opportunities for co-location within or adjacent to existing disturbed rail, utility, and roadway right of way in or near the study area, including the impact on surrounding environmental resources, land uses and communities.
- Give priority to exploring opportunities for co-location along existing major roadways and major utility easements.
- Assess connectivity gaps between existing transportation facilities and areas identified as priorities for attraction, and potential opportunities to close those gaps.
- Advance specific improvements that support a system meeting the long-term needs of statewide and interregional flows of people and freight.
- Collaborate with local governments, RPCs, MPOs and the DEO on operational improvements, existing facility enhancements and, if needed, interchange locations to ensure consistency with local government comprehensive plans. This collaboration should consider how proposed improvements can help enhance the vitality of the residential and business communities and provide access to vital resources (police, fire, shelters, etc.).

TECHNOLOGY

The Task Force encouraged FDOT to explore ways for new and emerging technology to meet the needs of the corridor and potentially reduce impacts to the natural and human environment. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address technology. This is considered a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #3: INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY INTO CORRIDOR PLANNING, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE. ACCOMMODATE EMERGING VEHICLE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, SUCH AS AUTONOMOUS, CONNECTED, ELECTRIC AND SHARED VEHICLES (ACES) AND MOBILITY AS A SERVICE (MAAS).

Instructions

- Leverage existing technology to help avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts from the corridor.
- Consider how future and emerging technologies, such as electric and automated vehicles, may be accommodated.
- Apply innovative planning and design strategies such as using state-of-the-art and/or energy-efficient methodologies, technologies and materials to develop the corridor.
- Plan and design the corridor to accommodate technologies/applications, considering their ability to evolve/adapt over time.
- Plan for and provide infrastructure for electric vehicle charging stations.
- Evaluate advanced electronic tolling and transponder systems that differentiate between locally generated traffic and long-distance through traffic to avoid or reduce the necessity to construct duplicate toll-free lanes if an M-CORES facility is co-located with an existing highway. Consider implementing the use of such systems if legally and technologically practical.

RESILIENCE

The Task Force stressed the importance of ensuring that new or improved infrastructure is designed to address existing vulnerability to flooding, storm surge, sea-level rise and other risks and adapt to significant changes or unexpected impacts to make the state's transportation system more resilient. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address infrastructure resilience. This is considered a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #4: PLAN AND DEVELOP A CORRIDOR THAT CONSIDERS VULNERABILITY TO RISKS SUCH AS INLAND FLOODING, STORM SURGE ZONES AND CHANGING COASTLINES/SEA-LEVEL RISE. DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT INFRASTRUCTURE TO WITHSTAND AND RECOVER FROM POTENTIAL RISKS SUCH AS EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS AND CLIMATE TRENDS.

Instructions

- Identify sea-level-rise projections appropriate to the planning horizon of road and bridge infrastructure.
- When developing and evaluating corridors, place a high priority on the ability of co-located or new infrastructure to withstand and recover from storm surge (tropical storm through Category 5 hurricane), inland flooding, extreme weather events and climate trends.
- When developing improvements along co-located roadways, identify opportunities to enhance those roads to address deficiencies in design standards or elevation related to water quality, water quantity, inland flooding, sea-level rise and storm surge.

TRANSPORTATION MODES

The Task Force emphasized the importance of examining opportunities to include other transportation modes in the corridor, such as shared-use trails, freight and passenger rail, and public transit. They encouraged FDOT to think beyond personal automobile travel to meet a variety of mobility needs and travel options and to look for ways that this corridor can improve existing gaps in greenways and trails. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address multi-modal transportation. It is important to note that this is considered a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #5: PLAN, DESIGN, CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A CORRIDOR THAT ACCOMMODATES MULTIPLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION.

Instructions

- Consult with local communities and the public on needs and preferences for multi-modal forms of transportation that could be included with the corridor.
- Consider innovative planning and design strategies to accommodate multiple modes of transportation.
- Enhance mobility and accessibility in areas with high concentrations of transportation-disadvantaged populations.
- Review applicable metropolitan planning organization long-range transportation plans, local government comprehensive plans and transit development plans. Use these plans to help inform and refine the corridor's purpose and need for evaluating modal solutions and identifying potential alternatives.
- Prioritize closing gaps on high-priority segments in the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan that are nearby future M-CORES project development.

COMMUNITY AND CHARACTER

Enhancing communities was an area of focus for Task Force members. While they recognized the need to enhance the quality of life for residents, they also emphasized the importance of preserving many of the rural qualities of this area. They stressed the importance of allowing flexibility so that each community can determine its preferences for corridor location and access (including bypasses and interchanges) and aesthetics based on individual community needs and visions. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to preserve and improve the rural character and quality of communities in the study area.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #6: SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE RURAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN COMMUNITIES, AND ENSURE THE CORRIDOR PROVIDES FOR THEIR FUTURE VITALITY.

Instructions

- Work with communities on preferences to enhance and maintain the safety, quality of life and character of communities. Community preferences for incorporation into corridor planning, interchange locations, additional infrastructure needs, and project development may include:
 - Access and proximity (toll vs. limited access and access locations),
 - Aesthetics (including signs, billboards, etc.) and
 - Native landscaping, branding, and signage.
- Explore opportunities to view, understand and access the environmental uniqueness of the Big Bend Ecosystem.
- Plan, design, construct, operate and maintain a corridor that recognizes and incorporates the surrounding community character (including downtown areas and social and cultural centers) while accommodating potential growth and development. Balance the need to move vehicles safely and efficiently while preserving and enhancing scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources.

- Based on coordination for local preferences and needs, if construction of a new highway in the study area creates a bypass around an existing urban area such that an existing state highway through that urban area is no longer the only route for regional traffic, then FDOT must coordinate with the local government to determine the correct context classification based on the community's desired character. The program could support a downtown master plan with a priority list of improvements and benefits. If the local community prioritizes individual context-sensitive improvement projects for funding, FDOT will design and implement improvements to those existing state highways to support the community's vision for its downtown, business district and overall community character.
- Work with local communities to help identify funding sources for branding/signage and broadband.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Task Force discussed many of the important cultural resources in the study area, including historic districts and archaeological sites that contribute to the community and enhance the quality of life in the study area. They encouraged the preservation, protection and enhancement of existing resources as well as any new resources that are discovered throughout the planning and project development process. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to preserve and improve the rural character and quality of communities in the study area with regards to historic and cultural resources.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #7: AVOID ADVERSE IMPACTS TO THESE IDENTIFIED RESOURCES:

- 1. KNOWN CULTURAL SITES WITH HUMAN REMAINS*
- 2. KNOWN CEMETERIES*
- 3. LANDS OWNED BY NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES*
- 4. HISTORIC AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES OR SIMILAR MINORITY COMMUNITIES*
- 5. HISTORIC RESOURCES LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NRHP)*

IF NEW RESOURCES ARE DISCOVERED, THEY WILL BE ADDRESSED CONSISTENT WITH STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES AND REGULATIONS.

Instructions

- Work with communities and their stakeholders to identify needs for enhancement or protection of historic and cultural resources.
- Follow FDOT Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Manual; Part 2, Chapter 8, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 as amended; 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 800; and the Florida Historical Resources Act (FHRA), Chapter 267, F.S., for coordination of involvement with historic and cultural resources, including lands owned by Native American Tribes.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Among the six statutory purposes for M-CORES, protecting the environment and natural resources was the focus of the greatest portion of the Task Force's discussion time. The Task Force acknowledged its statutory direction to evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction on the water quality and quantity of springs, rivers and aquifer recharge areas and on wildlife habitat. The Task Force also recognized the potential impacts of corridor development on significant environmental resources in the study area from both direct impacts from corridor development as well as indirect impacts from future population and economic growth and land development that could occur in areas with greater transportation connectivity, particularly around interchanges.

The Task Force developed an integrated approach for addressing environmental resources, including conservation lands, wildlife and plant habitat and water resources. This approach reflects a priority order of first, avoiding negative impacts to resources; second, minimizing and mitigating negative impacts; and third, enhancing, restoring and connecting resources while continuing to avoid, minimize and mitigate negative impacts.

To help implement this approach, FDOT identified and committed to specific environmental resources that will not be impacted by a corridor or where no new corridor will be placed through the resource, such as existing conservation lands or habitat already fragmented by existing transportation facilities. In these cases, the existing facilities or right of way could be improved, but steps should be taken to enhance or restore the environmental resource at the same time. In addition, the Task Force identified other important resources where avoidance is not explicitly defined at this time, but where great care should be taken to evaluate potential corridors and their impacts moving forward.

In addition, the Task Force recognized the opportunities to contribute toward broader regional and statewide environmental goals through the decisions made about corridor development as well as the abilities the statute provides to FDOT regarding right-of-way acquisition and other mitigation activities. The Task Force also recommended that FDOT commit to working closely with other local, regional, state and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations to advance key priorities such as high-priority land conservation, water quality and quantity (flow) improvements, habitat and water resource protection and ecosystem connectivity initiatives developed by other partners.

The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the purpose and need to protect the environment and natural resources and to restore, enhance and connect public and private environmentally sensitive areas and ecosystems.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #8: AVOID ADVERSE IMPACTS TO THESE IDENTIFIED RESOURCES:

DO NOT IMPACT

*SPRINGHEADS
NAMED LAKES
HIGH-RISK COASTAL AREAS*

DO NOT DEVELOP A NEW CORRIDOR THROUGH

*COASTAL AREAS
AQUATIC PRESERVES
MITIGATION BANKS
FLORIDA FOREVER ACQUIRED LANDS
MANAGED CONSERVATION AREAS
STATE FORESTS
STATE PARKS*

APPLY THE FOLLOWING PRIORITY ORDER FOR ALL THE BELOW-LISTED RESOURCES IDENTIFIED AS PRIORITIES BY TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

- 1. AVOID NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO THESE RESOURCES.*
- 2. MINIMIZE AND MITIGATE NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO THESE RESOURCES.*
- 3. ENHANCE, RESTORE AND CONNECT THESE RESOURCES WHILE CONTINUING TO AVOID, MINIMIZE AND MITIGATE NEGATIVE IMPACTS.*

FDOT WILL CONSIDER THESE RESOURCES DURING THE DEVELOPMENT, ANALYSIS AND COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF PROJECT ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE NO-BUILD OPTION. RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- WACCASASSA FLATS
- FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) FLOODWAYS
- SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SWFWMD) SURFACE WATER SITES
- SWFWMD GROUNDWATER SITES
- SWFWMD ATMOSPHERIC SITES
- SWFWMD PROPOSED WELL SITES
- WATER MANAGEMENT LANDS (INCLUDING FEE AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS)
- STATE-OWNED LANDS
- OTHER PARK BOUNDARIES
- WILDLIFE REFUGES
- FLORIDA FOREVER TARGETED PROPERTY
- PRIME FARMLAND
- SPRINGS PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS
- TRI-COLORED BATS, CRITICAL WILDLIFE AREAS
- FLORIDA ECOLOGICAL GREENWAY NETWORK—PRIORITY 1 & 2
- AQUIFER RECHARGE PRIORITIES
- SURFACE WATER RESOURCE PRIORITIES
- RARE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PRIORITIES
- PRESERVATION 2000 LANDS
- BASIN MANAGEMENT ACTION PLANS (BMAPS)
- NATURAL RESOURCES OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE
- CONSERVATION EASEMENTS HELD BY LAND TRUSTS

Instructions

General

- Place a high priority on avoiding impacts to:
 - Florida Ecological Greenway Network—Priority 1 and 2 lands
 - High-Priority Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) lands

Conservation Lands

- Continue to identify and prioritize private and public conservation lands for avoidance or enhancement.
- Coordinate with agencies and partners early in the project development process to identify land acquisition plans and identify strategic opportunities to advance acquisition and funding priorities [including s. 338.2278 (3)(c)(6) & (8), F.S.] with the intent to acquire lands prior to or in parallel with corridor development.
- Coordinate with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and other agencies for Florida Forever Program projects that are in the highest priority for acquisition (including consideration for Florida Ecological Greenway Network Priority 1 & 2), potential Water Management District lands, conservation easements by land trusts, and lands within the optimal boundaries of the adopted management plans for regional, state and national parks, forests, refuges and water management areas.
- Minimize impacts of transportation lighting on nearby agricultural, environmental and conservation lands.
- Consider impacts to Florida Forever targeted lands when developing alternatives. If these lands are impacted, provide enhancements to these lands and give strong consideration to potential special design features.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Instructions

Wildlife Habitats

- Continue to identify and prioritize wildlife areas for avoidance or enhancement.
- Ensure the corridor minimizes impacts to wildlife corridors and that high priority is given to design features that establish functional wildlife crossings that maintain connectivity of critical linkages to provide for adequate wildlife/water passage.
- Coordinate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine optimal wildlife crossing locations and maximize effectiveness of wildlife crossing design elements based on the best available data concerning wildlife movement patterns and adjacent land uses. Wildlife crossing designs developed during the PD&E and final design phase of the process should assure that publicly owned conservation lands sufficient to allow the passage of wildlife at both ends of a proposed crossing structure, if required by reviewing agencies. If determined by design, the wildlife crossings intended for use by large mammals or the design of crossings that include both upland and wetland habitats should incorporate bridges.
- Incorporate emerging and available technology to limit impacts to wildlife, including road kills. Prioritize locations to utilize technology such as smoke sensors that activate warning signs and alert law enforcement and FDOT offices of smoke situations to better facilitate prescribed fire management of conservation lands and provide notifications of other hazards such as smoke from wildfires.
- Coordinate with the Florida Forest Service to identify lands managed with prescribed or controlled burns and their associated smokesheds and minimize impacts associated with corridor location and operations.
- Consult with state and federal agencies to identify and protect threatened and endangered species (wildlife and plants) and their habitats.

Water Resources

- Work with local governments and the water management districts to ensure best management practices (BMPs), local/known data (including historic flooding areas) and emerging technologies are utilized to maintain, restore and enhance water quality and mitigate inland flooding issues within the corridor.
- Continue to identify and prioritize water resources for avoidance or enhancement.
- Look for opportunities to improve water quality and quantity (flow) and reduce water quality/quantity deficiencies as part of new corridor construction, as well as upgrades to existing facilities that do not have the benefit of environmentally friendly design and modern stormwater improvements.
- Ecosystem Connectivity
- Continue to identify and prioritize ecosystems for avoidance or enhancement while considering wildlife-crossing linkages and overall ecosystem connectivity.
- Work with local organizations and businesses to understand, assess and work toward implementation of ecotourism improvements and protections.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development was another major focus area for the Task Force as it serves several purposes, including revitalization of rural communities, job creation and enhancing the quality of life. They discussed the importance of agricultural businesses in the study area and their contribution to the local, regional and state economies. They also stressed the importance of economic diversification. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to enhance economic and workforce development, access to education and job creation in the study area.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #9: MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON RURAL AREAS. AVOID AND MINIMIZE ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPACTS TO INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES AND RESOURCES.

Instructions

- Be consistent with economic development elements of local government comprehensive plans (s. 163.3177, F.S. and s. 163.3178, F.S.) and comprehensive economic development strategies developed by RPCs in their capacity as federal economic development districts.
- Conduct early outreach to communities and the public and private sectors to fully understand economic development needs, including job training, education and workforce development.
- Give priority to and enhance potential economic development opportunities and employment benefits in the study area by providing, improving, or maintaining accessibility to activity centers, employment centers, learning institutions and agricultural lands, and locating interchanges in a manner that is consistent with the local government existing and future land uses.
- Build on existing economic development priorities and plans by state and local organizations, including economic development organizations, partnerships, chambers of commerce and RPCs. Work with the community and organizations to look for opportunities for the corridor to help them reach their economic development goals.
- Review analysis done by local, state and federal agencies to further support opportunities for recreational tourism.



AGRICULTURAL LAND USES

The Task Force acknowledged its statutory direction to evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction on agricultural land uses. The Task Force emphasized the importance of protecting and enhancing the abundance of productive agricultural lands (including mining and silviculture) in the study area as they serve both environmental and economic purposes and contribute to revitalization of rural communities through job creation and protection of the environment. They encouraged FDOT to work with local government, state/federal agencies and private agricultural/farmland organizations on protection and enhancement of these resources. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to improve connectivity to agricultural businesses, manufacturing, warehousing, freight terminals and intermodal logistics centers.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #10: PLAN AND DEVELOP A TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR IN A MANNER THAT PROTECTS THE REGION'S MOST PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND OTHER RURAL LANDS WITH ECONOMIC OR ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE. IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIVITY TO, FROM AND BETWEEN WORKING FARMS AND OTHER ECONOMICALLY VALUABLE RURAL LANDS.

Instructions

- Work with landowners/operators of agriculture, silviculture, mining, equine, aquaculture, horticulture and nursery lands to understand their needs and plans.
- Emphasize protection and enhancement of farmland preservation areas designated within local government comprehensive plans and lands in the Florida Rural and Family Lands Program, and other farmland conservation programs.
- Minimize the fragmentation of agriculture, forestry tracts and facilities, and consider how the project could affect mobilization of equipment and prescribed burning activities.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Enhancing public safety was also an area of focus for Task Force members. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to enhance travel options and safety for all transportation users.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #11: PLAN, DESIGN, CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A CORRIDOR THAT SAFELY ACCOMMODATES MULTIPLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION AND TYPES OF USERS.

Instructions

- Reduce transportation incidents and improve response by using advanced safety strategies, including innovative technology, design and operations.
- Consult with the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) and counties to determine current bottlenecks/safety hazards and mitigate or correct these issues during the design phase.
- Provide for additional truck parking and supporting facilities.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Task Force emphasized the importance of ensuring the corridor supports existing emergency management plans. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to enhance emergency management at the local, regional and state levels.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #12: SUPPORT AND ENHANCE LOCAL, REGIONAL AND STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS AND STUDIES IN ALL PHASES: MITIGATION, PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY.

Instructions

- Evaluate the immediate and long-term needs and demand for emergency evacuation and sheltering at the local, regional and state levels for natural and man-made disasters (including but not limited to flooding, hurricanes, wildfires, terrorist threats/attacks, industrial accidents/chemical spills, etc.).
- Consider both existing state and local emergency response plans and ongoing updates to the Statewide Regional Evacuation Studies underway by the Florida Division of Emergency Management and the RPCs, including updated data being developed on travel behavior during emergencies.
- Support emergency evacuation needs by enhancing emergency evacuation and response time, including providing, maintaining or expediting roadway access to emergency shelters and other emergency facilities.
- Conduct additional emergency management needs analysis as part of the project-related traffic studies.
- Identify opportunities for fueling facilities and charging stations.

BROADBAND AND OTHER UTILITIES

The Task Force emphasized the importance of ensuring the corridor supports the need to expand broadband Internet and utility service (water, sewer, electric, gas, etc.) to the area for the purposes of revitalizing rural communities, encouraging job creation and leveraging technology. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to expand rural broadband infrastructure and access to broadband service in the study area.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE #13: PLAN AND DESIGN THE CORRIDOR TO ENABLE CO-LOCATION OF BROADBAND AND OTHER UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN RIGHT OF WAY. PLAN FOR BROADBAND AND OTHER UTILITY NEEDS AT A REGIONAL SCALE, INDEPENDENT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION FACILITY; ADDRESS THESE NEEDS THROUGH THE CORRIDOR, WHERE FEASIBLE.

Instructions

- Ensure broadband provider access to FDOT right of way is non-discriminatory and competitively neutral.
- Coordinate with private Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to determine how construction of the corridor could provide opportunities for reducing rural broadband deployment costs.
- Support local governments and utility providers regarding existing and planned utility projects, including identifying opportunities within the study area to co-locate and/or extend utilities within and adjacent to transportation corridors.
- Explore opportunities to coordinate with local governments and utilities for septic to sewer conversions to improve quality of life and water quality, with an emphasis on higher-density communities and areas targeted in BMAPs.
- Coordinate with local governments, the Department of Economic Opportunity and utility and broadband service providers when developing and designing corridors to address space and provisions for utility accommodations.

ACTION PLAN

In addition to the high-level needs, guiding principles and instructions, FDOT commits to the following actions to move forward with implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force’s report in developing the M-CORES Program in this study area, consistent with s. 338.2278, F.S.:

1. EVALUATE POTENTIAL NEEDS

The Task Force believes that the determination of the transportation need, an initial financial feasibility assessment and an initial environmental assessment are essential prerequisites to the PD&E process. FDOT will work with partners to conduct a robust evaluation of potential corridor needs, building on the Task Force’s recommendations on high-level needs. This process will evaluate and distinguish between conventional safety, mobility and connectivity needs and broader needs or co-benefits related to transportation, such as economic development or environmental stewardship benefits. The needs evaluation will include a detailed technical analysis of current and future traffic conditions in the study area building on the guidance provided by the Task Force in this report. The needs evaluation will include the best-available data and most recent projections on travel demand and underlying population and economic growth. This needs analysis will support development of a Purpose and Need statement for potential corridor improvements.

2. IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES

FDOT will conduct additional corridor planning activities, including the Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process, and initiate the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) process to identify and evaluate a range of potential alternatives for corridor improvements in or near the study area that could accomplish the Purpose and Need.

These alternatives will consider operational and capacity improvements, existing and new facilities including co-location options and a “no build” option. Consideration will be given to multiple transportation modes and to application of emerging technologies. The alternatives will be consistent with the guiding principles and instructions developed by the Task Force.

The alternatives evaluation will include the specific economic, environmental, land use and emergency management impacts required in s. 338.2278(3)(c)4, F.S., and the standard processes outlined in FDOT’s PD&E manual. The evaluation will be consistent with the guiding principles and instructions recommended by the Task Force. The evaluation will consider the best-available data on the full range of potential impacts.

The Task Force discussed the importance of considering a “no build” option during all stages of planning and PD&E. FDOT confirmed that, according to both state and federal law and established procedures, a “no build” is always an option in the planning and PD&E processes. In this context, “no build” would mean no major capacity investments beyond those already committed in FDOT’s Five Year Work Program, as well as no associated investments related to land acquisition, broadband and other utilities, and other statutory capabilities specific to M-CORES. FDOT would continue to maintain the safety and operation of the existing transportation system in this study area. As this early stage of planning and corridor development focused on the full study area, “no build” may refer to no major corridor capacity investments in the entire study area. During later phases, as specific projects and segments are identified, “no build” would mean no capacity investments for that specific project area. The “no build” would remain an option throughout the PD&E process and be analyzed at the same level of detail as all “build” options, including consideration of economic, environmental, land use and emergency management impacts and consistency with the guiding principles and instructions. The analysis of the “no build” also must include impacts on the study area such as the potential for increased traffic on existing facilities, impacts to multi-modal facilities and impacts on emergency response times.

The planning process also will include initial, high-level consideration of potential costs and funding approaches based on reasonable assumptions at this early stage. It is not likely that any alternatives would be sufficiently defined at this stage to conduct detailed analysis of economic feasibility, but early identification of the order of magnitude of potential costs and funding sources can be used to support decision making on the range of alternatives, including the “no build” option.

The planning and PD&E processes combined will narrow the range of alternatives and identify opportunities to segment corridor development into multiple projects. These processes also will produce more specific information about potential alignments, interchange locations and other project features.

After the PD&E study is completed, the FDEP will review the environmental feasibility of any projects proposed as part of Florida’s Turnpike system and submit a statement of environmental feasibility to FDOT, consistent with s. 338.223, F.S.

3. SUPPORT CONSISTENCY REVIEW AND UPDATE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANS

FDOT will coordinate early and often with local governments, MPOs and RPCs to ensure consistency with applicable local and regional plans throughout all activities. Consistent with s. 338.223 (1)(a), F.S., and with the Task Force’s guiding principles, proposed corridor projects must be consistent, to the maximum extent feasible, with applicable approved local government comprehensive plans, included in the transportation improvement plan (TIP) of any affected MPOs, and developed in accordance with the Florida Transportation Plan and FDOT’s Five Year Work Program.

As required by s. 338.2278(3)(c)10, F.S., FDOT will provide affected local governments with a copy of the Task Force report and project alignments identified through the PD&E process so each local government with one or more planned interchanges within its jurisdiction can meet the statutory requirement to review the Task Force report and local government comprehensive plan no later than December 31, 2023. Each local government will consider whether the area in and around the interchange contains appropriate land uses and environmental protections and whether its comprehensive plan should be amended to provide appropriate uses and protections. FDOT will coordinate with the local governments, RPCs and DEO to assist with plan updates, including consideration of technical and financial support needs.

The Task Force urges FDOT to work with and assist local governments to prioritize protecting environmental resources through the interchange management process. FDOT will provide best practices to the local governments for interchange management plans. FDOT shall give a high priority to interchange locations that limit impact to important wildlife habitat and commit to working with local government and other partners with a goal of maximizing conservation lands around the interchanges. Before an interchange location is finalized, public engagement will take place and FDOT will review local government interchange management plans that include consideration of appropriate land uses and natural resource protections.

4. ASSESS ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY AND IDENTIFY POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Following PD&E, FDOT will evaluate the economic feasibility of the corridor at the 30 percent design phase, when sufficient information is available to assess the ability to meet statutory requirements for projects as part of Florida's Turnpike system, consistent with s. 338.223, F.S. The economic feasibility will account for required costs to develop and implement the corridor, such as engineering, right of way, construction, mitigation, enhancement and utility costs. These would include typical corridor costs plus FDOT's contribution toward the additional corridor elements related to environmental enhancements or multi-use opportunities as envisioned in statute. This economic feasibility test will focus on specific corridor projects; additional analyses may be needed to examine the cost and funding of all M-CORES Program initiatives.

FDOT also will identify potential funding sources for preferred corridor alternatives identified during PD&E, including a combination of the specific sources allocated to the M-CORES Program in s. 338.2278, F.S.; toll revenues and associated Turnpike revenue bonds; right of way and bridge construction bonds or financing by the FDOT Financing Corporation; advances from the State Transportation Trust Fund; funds obtained through the creation of public-private partnerships; and other applicable state, local and private revenue sources.

FDOT has committed that projects currently in its Five-Year Work Program for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 will not be impacted by M-CORES funding needs. M-CORES Program costs that are not covered through the dedicated funding sources identified in statute or through toll revenues and associated Turnpike revenue bonds and other financing and partnerships would need to be prioritized along with other needs for future Five-Year Work Programs, working through the standard process including the applicable MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and rural transportation planning processes. All M-CORES projects, regardless of funding source, will be included in applicable MPO TIPs and long-range transportation plans, consistent with federal guidance for projects of regional significance.

5. ADVANCE INNOVATIVE LAND ACQUISITION CONCEPTS

FDOT, in consultation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs and relevant federal agencies, will advance the Task Force's recommendations for combining right-of-way acquisition with the acquisition of lands or conservation easements to facilitate environmental mitigation or ecosystem, wildlife habitat or water quality protection or restoration. A key focus will be on how M-CORES Program decisions can support directly relatable regional or statewide conservation and environmental stewardship goals, such as priorities in the Florida Ecological Greenway Network.

This process will include early identification of potential conservation land acquisition and protection opportunities during corridor planning; development of a corridor conservation land acquisition and easement plan as part of PD&E; and a process to complete or commit to specific acquisition and easements prior to or in parallel with corridor construction. FDOT shall prioritize planned conservation lands on agency priority lists within 10 miles of any transportation corridor development and areas needed to functionally close gaps in P1, P2, P3, and P4 priority wildlife corridors within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and Rural and Family Land Protection Projects, as part of the plan. The plan shall involve experts in various fields to evaluate the most environmentally positive resources to be protected, restored or expanded.

FDOT will determine how to provide funding, in whole or in part, for land acquisition projects consistent with its statutory authority in s. 338.2278(3)(c) 6, F.S., with the expectation that FDOT funding supplements and leverages other state, federal, local, private and nonprofit sources. The land acquisition and easement plan will include indicators for tracking progress toward plan implementation.

6. ADVANCE MULTI-USE OPPORTUNITIES

FDOT will coordinate with local governments, RPCs, other state agencies and industry organizations to advance multi-use opportunities for the corridor as provided for in statute. An early emphasis will be on broadband and other utility co-location opportunities, including coordination with DEO on the development of the statewide broadband strategic plan. FDOT will determine how to provide funding, in whole or in part, for broadband consistent with its statutory authority in s. 339.0801, F.S., with the expectation that FDOT funding supplements and leverages other state, federal, local, private and nonprofit funding sources.

7. CONTINUE ROBUST PARTNER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

FDOT will continue robust coordination with local governments; regional, state and federal agencies; and environmental, community, economic development and other interest groups, with an intent of exceeding the requirements of the PD&E process. FDOT will use the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process to facilitate early and ongoing coordination with resource agencies. FDOT also will create ongoing opportunities for the range of organizations involved in the Task Force process to be informed about and provide input to subsequent planning and project development activities, such as periodic meetings to reconvene Task Force member organizations in an advisory role. FDOT also will create multiple ongoing opportunities for members of the public to be aware of and provide input to this process, with emphasis on direct engagement of the public in local communities.

8. COMMIT TO TRANSPARENCY AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Because of the scale and scope of the M-CORES Program, FDOT will continue to place public engagement as a priority and will continue to engage all stakeholders during M-CORES planning, project development and implementation, including key decision points. FDOT also will report on how decisions are made, including a periodic report on the status of the specific guiding principles and instructions committed to in this document. An annual M-CORES budget update will be made publicly available as part of FDOT's annual work program presentation to the Legislature and the Florida Transportation Commission.

FDOT also recognizes the need for continued improvements to its planning, project development and related processes to fully implement the M-CORES purpose and objective as identified in statute and the guiding principles and instructions as recommended by the Task Force. This may include the need for additional technical and financial support for the activities identified in this report for enhanced planning, collaboration and public engagement.

The specific commitments in this Action Plan indicate how FDOT will work with local governments and other agencies and partners to carry out the Task Force's recommendations for the M-CORES Program in the full study area, augmenting established statutory requirements and FDOT procedures. Specific corridor projects identified through this process will advance based on determination of need, environmental feasibility, economic feasibility and consistency with applicable local government comprehensive plans and MPO TIPS.

The Task Force recognizes that the vision of M-CORES established by the Governor and Legislature in s. 338.2278, F.S., is ambitious and its implementation will require continued strong coordination among state agencies, local governments, MPOs, RPCs, water management districts and other agencies. The Task Force also recognizes that the economic and fiscal outlook facing Florida has changed significantly since the legislation authorizing the M-CORES Program was signed in May 2019. Given the potential transformational impact of the M-CORES Program on the future of Florida, the Task Force respectfully requests the Governor and Legislature to consider adjusting or removing the deadlines for corridor construction and other milestones in statute to permit thorough analysis and additional thoughtful collaboration on all key decisions.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

Date	Type	Location (Town/County)	Objectives (Work Plan)	Total Attendees (Signed In)	Total Number of Speakers	Written Comments Received
Aug. 27, 2019	Task Force Meeting #1 Plenary Session with breakouts for each Task Force	Tampa (Hillsborough) Tampa Convention Center 333 S Franklin Street, Tampa, FL 33602	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide overview of legislation and M-CORES program Review Task Force role and responsibilities Provide briefing on Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law and Public Records laws Share background information on corridor planning and Task Force products Identify potential considerations for future discussion at Task Force meetings Develop Task Force consensus on work plan, meeting schedule, and overall outcomes 	302	89	19
Oct. 23, 2019	Task Force Meeting #2	Lecanto (Citrus) College of Central Florida - Citrus Conference Center 3800 S Lecanto Highway, Lecanto, FL 34461	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce approach for identifying Avoidance, Minimization, Mitigation, and Enhancement (AMME) considerations Discuss avoidance and minimization considerations for developing corridor opportunities Discuss potential guiding principles for avoidance and minimization Receive public comment 	80	14	13
Oct. 24, 2019	Community Open House	Old Town (Dixie) Old Town Education Center 823 SE 349 Highway, Old Town, FL 32680	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information about the process and gather public input 	126	n/a	39
Dec. 17, 2019	Task Force Meeting #3	Perry (Taylor) IFAS Auditorium 203 Forest Park Drive, Perry, FL 32348	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review M-CORES vision and Task Force goals Highlight the data/fact sheets by various public agencies and organizational partners Review corridor planning and project development process Discuss purpose of the corridor Discuss regional and local needs Discuss the AMME considerations for community and economic resources Receive public comment 	87	22	7
Dec. 19, 2019	Community Open House	Mayo (Lafayette) Day Community Center 4673 North County Road 53, Mayo, FL 32066	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information about the process and gather public input 	45	n/a	8
Jan. 27, 28, and 29, 2020	Community Open Houses	Jan. 27 th – Perry (Taylor) Taylor County IFAS Auditorium 203 Forest Park Drive, Perry, FL 32348	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community open houses in each study area to share information about the process and gather public input about AMME considerations 	27	n/a	15
		Jan. 28 th – Chiefland (Levy)* College of Central Florida 15390 NW Hwy 19, Chiefland, FL 32626		173		59
		Jan. 29 th – Crystal River, (Citrus) Crystal River Armory* 8551 W. Venable Street, Crystal River, FL 34429 *joint meeting with Northern Turnpike Connector		126		25
Feb. 11, 2020	Task Force Meeting #4	Madison (Madison) Madison Church of God Life Center 771 NE Colin Kelly Hwy, Madison, FL 32340	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive public comment summary to date Review economic and workforce development opportunities Review regional and local plans and visions to identify considerations for corridor planning Review corridor planning process Discuss draft AMME guiding principles and identify avoidance areas Receive public comment 	99	31	18
March 2020	Community Open House (Rescheduled due to COVID-19)	Monticello (Jefferson County)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rescheduled (September 2020) 	n/a	n/a	n/a
Apr. 17, 2020	Task Force Meeting #5 (In-person meeting canceled due to COVID-19)	Online Modules/Materials distributed to Task Force and posted on website <i>Note: Task Force Meeting #5 conducted in person for Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Task Force and as a "virtual task force meeting" (distribution of presentations and materials) for Suncoast Corridor and Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Forces</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss corridor utility needs and opportunities Discuss draft high-level needs summary Review public engagement activities and public input received to date Review additional data requested by Task Force and proposed Task Force avoidance comments Discuss existing corridor enhancement opportunities Refine draft AMME guiding principles Receive public comment 			
Apr. 30, 2020	Webinar #1	GoToWebinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive update on Task Force activities Receive briefing on process for identifying avoidance and attraction areas as input to Task Force recommendations Describe "homework" process for receiving Task Force member input prior to next in-person meeting Receive public comment 	397	40	n/a

Date	Type	Location (Town/County)	Objectives (Work Plan)	Total Attendees (Signed In)	Total Number of Speakers	Written Comments Received
May 12, 2020	Webinar #2	GoToWebinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive briefing on emerging technology trends and opportunities Discuss implications of emerging technologies for corridor development Receive public comment 	255	15	n/a
Jun. 9, 2020	Webinar #3	GoToWebinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive briefing on opportunities for coordination of broadband deployment with corridor development Obtain Task Force member input on implications for high-level needs and guiding principles Receive public comment 	223	12	n/a
Jun. 23, 2020	Virtual Meeting #4	GoToWebinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive update on Task Force work plan and recommendations framework Receive update on avoidance and attraction layers Refine high-level needs and guiding principles and identify potential instructions for project development and beyond Receive public comment 	201	13	n/a
By June 30, 2020	Construction Workforce Development Program	State Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FDOT submits report on Construction Workforce Development Program to Governor and Legislature 			
Jul. 21, 2020	Task Force Meeting #6	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Trenton and Monticello)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review public engagement activities Establish initial consensus on high-level needs Discuss and refine draft guiding principles Discuss draft instructions for project development and beyond Review draft report outline and report drafting process Review corridor planning activities Receive public comment 	215	10	3
July 2020	Fl. Transportation Commission	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Florida Transportation Commission presentation 			
Aug. 27, 2020	Task Force Meeting #7	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Crystal River and Old Town)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how Task Force recommendations will be used to identify and narrow paths/courses Provide update on recommendations framework and work plan Establish initial consensus on guiding principles Discuss draft instructions for project development and beyond Review draft Task Force report sections with focus on high-level needs Receive public comment 	180	15	3
Sept. 1, 2020	Community Open House	Monticello (Jefferson) Monticello Opera House 185 W. Washington St., Monticello, FL 32344	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information about the Guiding Principles and gather public input 	91	n/a	49
Sep. 24, 2020	Task Force Meeting #8	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Mayo and Madison)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide update on public comments received to date Discuss how Task Force recommendations will carry forward into planning and project development Review draft Task Force recommendations and draft final report Discuss draft plan for future FDOT activities Discuss plans for Task Force and public comment on draft report Receive public comment 	157	14	2
Sept. 29, 2020	Community Open House	Trenton (Gilchrist) Gilchrist County Woman's Club 2107 S. Bronson Memorial Hwy., Trenton, FL 32693	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information about the draft Task Force report and gather public input 	37	n/a	10
Sept. 29 – Oct 14, 2020	Public Comment Period on Draft Task Force Recommendations	Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft report posted on website for review and comment 			567
Oct. 20, 2020	Task Force Meeting #9	GoToWebinar (Public viewing locations in Morriston and Old Town)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive public comments Review summary of public comments on draft report Discuss revisions to final draft Task Force report Finalize Task Force report 	218	19	1
Oct. 22, 2020	Community Open House	Madison (Madison County) Madison Church of God Life Center 771 NE Colin Kelly Hwy, Madison, FL 32340	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information about the process and gather public input 	9	n/a	2
Nov. 15, 2020	Final Task Force Report		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Task Force report to Governor and Legislature 			

Key Information

Total Attendees at All Meetings: **3,048**

Total Speakers at Task Force Meetings: **294**

Total Comments Received from Meetings and on Task Force Report: **840**

APPENDIX A

Suncoast Corridor Task Force Membership List

Organization	Member Name / Title
Florida Department of Transportation	Greg Evans, District Two Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation	Jason Peters, District Three Director of Operations
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	Chris Stahl, State Clearinghouse Coordinator
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity	Brian McManus, Chief of Staff
Florida Department of Education	Mary Cross, Assistant District Administrator, Division of Blind Services
Florida Department of Health	Paul D. Myers, Administrator, Alachua County
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Chris Wynn, North Central Regional Director
Florida Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services	Pegeen Hanrahan, Former Mayor, City of Gainesville
Florida Public Service Commission	Mark Futrell, Deputy Executive Director – Technical
Enterprise Florida	Eric Anderson, Director of Rural and Agriculture Development
Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation	Chris Lee, Field Office Manager – North Florida
CareerSource Florida	Diane Head, Executive Director of CareerSource North Florida
Volunteer Florida	Audrey Kidwell, Volunteer Generation Fund Program Manager
Northwest Florida Water Management District	Lyle Seigler, Regulatory Division Director
Suwannee River Water Management District	Ashley Stefanik, P.E., Office of Engineering
Southwest Florida Water Management District	Michelle Hopkins, Regulatory Division Director
Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Org.	The Hon. Jeff Kinnard, Chair <i>Chair, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners</i>
Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency	The Hon. Kristin Dozier, Board Member <i>Commissioner, Leon County Board of County Commissioners</i>
Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council	The Hon. Ronald E. Kitchen, Jr., Chair <i>Commissioner, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners</i>
Apalachee Regional Planning Council	Chris Rietow, Executive Director
North Central Florida Regional Planning Council	Scott Koons, Executive Director
Florida Chamber of Commerce	Christopher Emmanuel, Director of Infrastructure and Governance Policy
Florida Trucking Association	Ken Armstrong, President / CEO
Florida Rural Water Association	Randy Wilkerson, Public Works Director, City of Chiefland
Florida Internet & Television Association	Chris Bailey, State Government Affairs Director, Charter Communications
Florida Economic Development Council	Susan Ramsey, CEO, Integrity Professional Services
Florida Farm Bureau Federation	Charles Shinn, Director of Government & Community Affairs
Florida Gateway College	Dr. Lawrence Barrett, President

Organization	Member Name / Title
North Florida Community College	John Grosskopf, President
1000 Friends of Florida	Thomas Hawkins, Former Policy & Planning Director
Audubon Florida	Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy
Defenders of Wildlife	Kent Wimmer, Senior Northwest Florida Representative
The Nature Conservancy	Janet Bowman, Senior Policy Advisor
Local governments in Citrus County	The Hon. Scott Carnahan, 2nd Vice Chairman, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Levy County	The Hon. Matt Brooks, Commissioner, Levy County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Dixie County	The Hon. Mark Hatch, Chair, Dixie County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Taylor County	The Hon. Pam Feagle, Chair, Taylor County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Jefferson County	The Hon. Betsy Barfield, Chair, Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Gilchrist County	The Hon. Todd Gray, Chair, Gilchrist County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Lafayette County	The Hon. Anthony Adams, Chair, Lafayette County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Madison County	Sherilyn Pickels, Interim County Manager, Madison County

APPENDIX B

Suncoast Corridor Task Force Work Plan

Meeting	Objectives
<p>Task Force Meeting #1 August 27, 2019 Plenary session with breakouts for each Task Force</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide overview of legislation and M-CORES program • Review Task Force role and responsibilities • Provide briefing on Florida’s Government in the Sunshine Law and Public Records laws • Share background information on corridor planning and Task Force products • Identify potential considerations for future discussion at Task Force meetings • Develop Task Force consensus on work plan, meeting schedule, and overall outcomes
<p>Task Force Meeting #2 and Community Open House October 2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce approach for identifying Avoidance, Minimization, Mitigation, and Enhancement (AMME) considerations • Discuss avoidance and minimization considerations for developing corridor opportunities • Discuss potential guiding principles for avoidance and minimization • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Meeting #3 and Community Open House December 2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review M-CORES vision and Task Force goals • Highlight the data/fact sheets by various public agencies and organizational partners • Review corridor planning and project development process • Discuss purpose of the corridor • Discuss regional and local needs • Discuss the AMME considerations for community and economic resources • Receive public comment
<p>Community Open Houses January 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community open houses in each study area to share information about the process and gather public input about AMME considerations
<p>Task Force Meeting #4 February 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive public comment summary to date • Review economic and workforce development opportunities • Review regional and local plans and visions to identify considerations for corridor planning • Review corridor planning process • Discuss draft AMME guiding principles and identify avoidance areas • Receive public comment

Meeting	Objectives
<p>Task Force Meeting #5 March-April 2020 <i>Note: Task Force Meeting #5 conducted in person for Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Task Force and as a “virtual task force meeting” (distribution of presentations and materials) for Suncoast Corridor and Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Forces</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss corridor utility needs and opportunities • Discuss draft high-level needs summary • Review public engagement activities and public input received to date • Review additional data requested by Task Force and proposed Task Force avoidance comments • Discuss existing corridor enhancement opportunities • Refine draft AMME guiding principles • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Webinar #1 April 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive update on Task Force activities • Receive briefing on process for identifying avoidance and attraction areas as input to Task Force recommendations • Describe “homework” process for receiving Task Force member input prior to next in-person meeting • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Webinar #2 May 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive briefing on emerging technology trends and opportunities • Discuss implications of emerging technologies for corridor development • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Webinar #3 June 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive briefing on opportunities for coordination of broadband deployment with corridor development • Obtain Task Force member input on implications for high-level needs and guiding principles • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Virtual Meeting #4 June 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive update on Task Force work plan and recommendations framework • Receive update on avoidance and attraction layers • Refine high-level needs and guiding principles and identify potential instructions for project development and beyond • Receive public comment
<p>By June 30, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDOT submits report on Construction Workforce Development Program to Governor and Legislature
<p>Task Force Meeting #6 July 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review public engagement activities • Establish initial consensus on high-level needs • Discuss and refine draft guiding principles • Discuss draft instructions for project development and beyond • Review draft report outline and report drafting process • Review corridor planning activities • Receive public comment

Meeting	Objectives
July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida Transportation Commission presentation
Task Force Meeting #7 and Community Open House August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how Task Force recommendations will be used to identify and narrow paths/courses • Provide update on recommendations framework and work plan • Establish initial consensus on guiding principles • Discuss draft instructions for project development and beyond • Review draft Task Force report sections with focus on high-level needs • Receive public comment
Task Force Meeting #8 and Community Open House September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide update on public comments received to date • Discuss how Task Force recommendations will carry forward into planning and project development • Review draft Task Force recommendations and draft final report • Discuss draft plan for future FDOT activities • Discuss plans for Task Force and public comment on draft report • Receive public comment
September 29, 2020 - October 14, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment period on draft Task Force recommendations
Task Force Meeting #9 and Community Open House October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive public comments • Review summary of public comments on draft report • Discuss revisions to final draft Task Force report • Finalize Task Force report
By November 15, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Task Force report to Governor and Legislature

Rev. 10/7/2020

APPENDIX C

Meeting Locations

Meeting	Location
Task Force Meeting #1 Tuesday, August 27, 2019	<i>Tampa</i> <i>Tampa Convention Center</i> <i>333 S Franklin Street, Tampa, FL 33602</i>
Task Force Meeting #2 Wednesday, October 23, 2019	<i>Citrus County</i> <i>College of Central Florida - Citrus Conference Center</i> <i>3800 S Lecanto Highway, Lecanto, FL 34461</i>
Community Open House Thursday, October 24, 2019	<i>Dixie County</i> <i>Old Town Education Center</i> <i>823 SE 349 Highway, Old Town, FL 32680</i>
Task Force Meeting #3 Tuesday, December 17, 2019	<i>Taylor County</i> <i>IFAS Auditorium</i> <i>203 Forest Park Drive, Perry, FL 32348</i>
Community Open House Thursday, December 19, 2019	<i>Lafayette County</i> <i>Day Community Center</i> <i>4673 North County Road 53, Mayo, FL 32066</i>
Community Open Houses January 2020	<p>Monday, January 27, 2020 <i>Taylor County</i> <i>IFAS Auditorium</i> <i>203 Forest Park Drive, Perry, FL 32348</i></p> <p>Tuesday, January 28, 2020 – (with Northern Turnpike Corridor) <i>Levy County</i> <i>College of Central Florida</i> <i>15390 NW Hwy 19, Chiefland, FL 32626</i></p> <p>Thursday, January 30, 2020 – (with Northern Turnpike Corridor) <i>Citrus County</i> <i>Crystal River Armory</i> <i>8551 W. Venable Street, Crystal River, FL 34429</i></p>
Task Force Meeting #4 Tuesday, February 11, 2020	<i>Madison County</i> <i>Madison Church of God Life Center</i> <i>771 NE Colin Kelly Hwy, Madison, FL 32340</i>

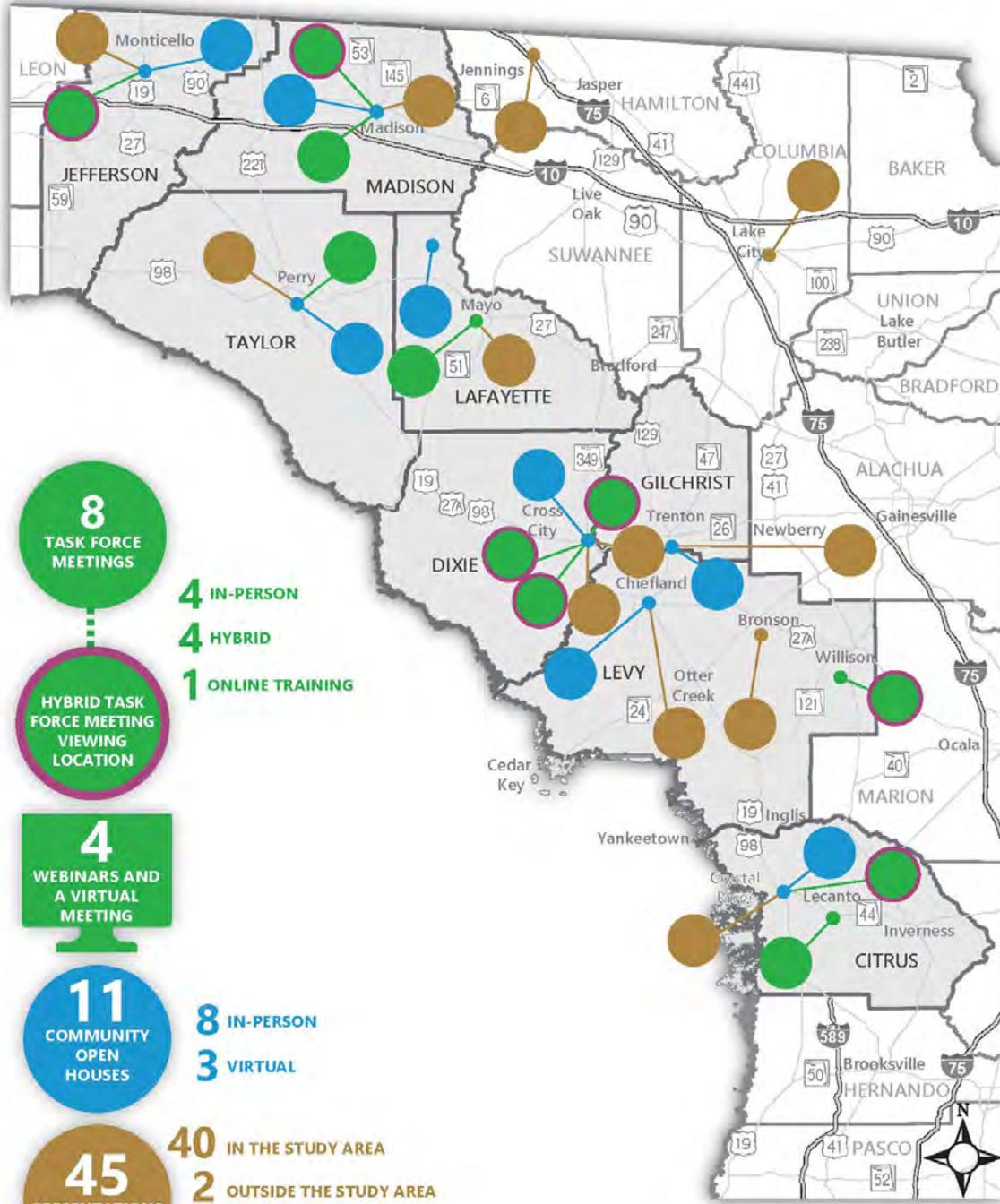
Meeting	Location
Community Open House Postponed	<i>Jefferson County First Baptist Church, Fellowship Hall 325 W Washington Street, Monticello, FL 32344</i>
Task Force Meeting #5 April 2020	<i>Online Modules</i>
Task Force Meeting #6 Tuesday, July 21	<i>Virtual - GoToMeeting Platform</i>
Community Open Houses April/May 2020	<i>Online Modules/Webinars</i>
Task Force Meeting #7 Thursday, August 27, 2020	<i>Virtual - GoToMeeting Platform</i>
Community Open House Tuesday, September 1, 2020	<i>Jefferson County Monticello Opera House 185 W. Washington St., Monticello, FL 32344</i>
Task Force Meeting #8 Thursday, September 24, 2020	<i>Virtual - GoToMeeting Platform</i>
Community Open House Tuesday, September 29, 2020*	<i>Gilchrist County Gilchrist County Woman's Club 2107 S. Bronson Memorial Hwy., Trenton, FL 32693</i>
Task Force Meeting #9 Tuesday, October 20, 2020	<i>Virtual - GoToMeeting Platform</i>
Community Open House Thursday, October 22, 2020	<i>Madison County Madison Church of God Life Center 771 NE Colin Kelly Hwy, Madison, FL 32340</i>

*Note: Public comment period on draft report recommendation (September 29, 2020 through October 14, 2020).

Submit Task Force reports to Governor and Legislature by November 15, 2020

PUBLIC MEETING LOCATIONS

 **m-cores** Suncoast Corridor Meeting Locations



FloridaMcores.com

Contact Information | Suncoast Corridor Production Lead:
Ryan Asmus at Ryan.Amus@dot.state.fl.us or (386) 961-7443

APPENDIX D

Local Municipality Letters and Resolutions

RESOLUTION Z-20-17

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS,
ALACHUA COUNTY FLORIDA WITH CONCERNS ABOUT THE M-CORES
PROCESS.

WHEREAS, on May 17, 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill (SB) 7068 into law to create the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) Program within the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), with the stated purpose of advancing construction of regional corridors that will accommodate multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure to accommodate population growth; and

WHEREAS, M-CORES Program proposes to extend certain transportation corridors within the State as tolled facilities and approved turnpike projects as part of the FDOT turnpike system in order to fulfill its stated purpose, which corridors include the Suncoast Connector; and

WHEREAS, the Suncoast Connector is a corridor serving purposes described during FDOT's I-75 Relief Planning Process; and

WHEREAS, ALACHUA COUNTY was an active member of the I-75 Relief Task Force that preceded M-CORES; and

WHEREAS, ALACHUA COUNTY abuts two of the counties included in the proposed extension area of the Suncoast Connector; and

WHEREAS, SB 7068 and section 338.223, Florida Statutes, lay out numerous requirements, such as need, economic feasibility and economic impacts, applicable to planning for and evaluating the M-CORES corridors; and

WHEREAS, SB 7068 and section 338.223, Florida Statutes, clearly state the requirement for the M-CORES process to address environmental impacts and feasibility; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES task forces will present a final recommendation report to the Governor, House and Senate by November 15, 2020 and construction is set to begin in 2022; and

WHEREAS, FDOT's mission is to provide a safe transportation system that ensures the mobility of people and goods, enhances economic prosperity, and preserves the quality of our environment and communities; and

WHEREAS, since the SB 7068 was signed, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed priorities for Florida; and

WHEREAS, ALACHUA COUNTY believes the priority for Florida should be responding to the public health needs of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, ALACHUA COUNTY believes the resources allocated for the M-CORES toll roads should be reallocated to directly serve the needs of the public brought on by COVID-19 and the maintenance of existing roads and bridges;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA:

Section 1. ALACHUA COUNTY hereby expresses concerns about the M-CORES process.

Section 2. The M-CORES process does not address need, economic feasibility and economic impacts of the three corridors as required by SB 7068 and s. 338.223(1)(a).

Section 3. Any transportation capacity, operational or safety deficiencies within the region's transportation system should first be met by improvements to existing transportation corridors. New transportation corridors should only be considered as alternatives once significant improvements have been planned and programmed to existing corridors.

Section 4. Any new significant transportation capacity needs between North Florida and Tampa should be met through the provision of passenger and freight rail transportation, with upgrades to the existing rail network to support additional capacity and speed.

Section 5. The funding allocated to M-CORES would be more appropriately reallocated to aid in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

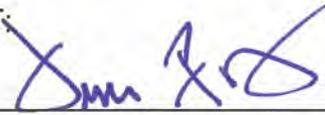
Section 6. In order to protect ALACHUA COUNTY environmental assets, preservation areas providing habitat for plants and wildlife, rural lands, agriculture industry, and the quality of life of our citizens, the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners hereby supports adoption and enactment of a "No Build" option by the Governor and the FDOT for the Suncoast Connector Corridor.

DULY ADOPTED in regular session this 11th day in August, A.D., 2020.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: 

Robert Hutchinson, Chair

ATTEST: 

Jesse K. Irby, II, Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM



Alachua County Attorney

(SEAL)

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-014

A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA SUPPORTING THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SUNCOAST PARKWAY PROPOSED EXTENSION TO GEORGIA

WHEREAS, the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners is in support of the creation of three new multi-use corridors; the proposed Suncoast Parkway extension to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County and the Northern Turnpike Connector (Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway),

WHEREAS, these extensions of our existing infrastructure have been under consideration by the Department of Transportation and advocated by leaders of business and industry for many years,

WHEREAS, the Suncoast Parkway construction is currently underway in Citrus County. Work on the \$134.6 million project began in April 2018 and is expected to wrap up in 2022 to State Road 44,

WHEREAS, the state is committing \$86.6 million to design, buy rights of way, and build the additional 3 miles between State Road 44 and C.R. 486. That work could start in 2024,

WHEREAS, the possible extension of the Florida Turnpike northwest from Interstate 75 to the Suncoast Parkway,

WHEREAS, recognizing that the State population is predicted to increase by 6 million residents in ten years,

WHEREAS, recognizing the need for infrastructure, access to historic rural communities for revitalization and prosperity, and strategic planning for future population growth,

WHEREAS, recognizing the need to protect significant natural resources of the County, have the least impact on real estate owners in Citrus County, and preserves quality of life,

WHEREAS, recognizing the need for safe and expanded Evacuation Routes, as part of a holistic view of hardening our existing infrastructure,

WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of a comprehensive plan, set time schedule, consensus and partnership is vital to this important multi-county project,

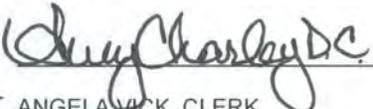
WHEREAS, to ensure this plan takes a much broader approach by identifying management actions and input from a wide variety of stakeholders;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED- by the Board of County Commissioners of Citrus County, Florida in regular session this 12th day of February,

2019, as follows:

1. It is the intent of the Board of County Commissioners to support the proposed extension of the Suncoast Parkway to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County and the Northern Turnpike Connector (Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway).
2. Coordinate their efforts and resources to minimize congestion and backups on U.S. 19 and U.S. 41 with the extension of the Suncoast Parkway to the northern terminus of Citrus County and beyond to Georgia.
3. The Board does hereby request the support of the Governor Ron DeSantis, President of the Senate Bill Galvano, Speaker of the House Jose' Oliva, Senator Wilton Simpson, Representative Ralph Massullo, Turnpike Authority and Transportation Secretary for the continuation of the Suncoast Parkway north through Citrus County, and beyond to Georgia.
4. The Clerk of the Board is hereby directed to forward a certified copy of this Resolution to Governor Ron DeSantis, President of the Senate Bill Galvano, Speaker of the House Jose' Oliva, Senator Wilton Simpson, Representative Ralph Massullo, Turnpike Authority and Transportation Secretary.

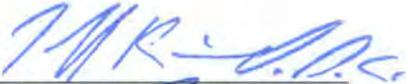
ATTEST:

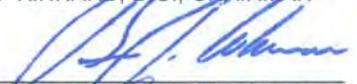

for ANGELA WICK, CLERK

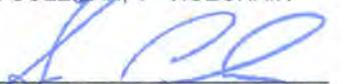


BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY:


JEFF KINNARD, D.C., CHAIRMAN


BRIAN COLEMAN, 1ST VICECHAIR


SCOTT CARNAHAN, 2ND VICECHAIR


JIMMIE T. SMITH


RONALD E. KITCHEN JR



APPROVED AS TO FORM FOR THE RELIANCE
OF CITRUS COUNTY


DENISE A. DYMOND LYN
COUNTY ATTORNEY

CITY OF CEDAR KEY
RESOLUTION NUMBER 436

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CEDAR KEY, FLORIDA, OPPOSING THE M-CORES PROPOSAL

WHEREAS, on May 17, 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill (SB) 7068 into law, redirecting nearly \$100 million each year from the General Purpose Fund, and borrowing billions of dollars more in creating the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) Program within the FDOT, with the stated purpose of advancing construction of regional corridors that will accommodate multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure to accommodate population growth; and

WHEREAS, one component of the M-CORES proposal is the Suncoast Connector constructing an additional tollroad connecting the Suncoast Parkway in Citrus County to the Georgia border in Jefferson County while bisecting Levy County.

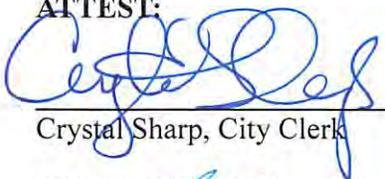
WHEREAS, the City of Cedar Key recognizes the resultant negative impact on the important rural agricultural and natural lands which are essential to a long-term sustainable employment economy and preservation of the unique sociological culture along the Nature Coast.

WHEREAS, the City of Cedar Key recognizes the resultant negative impacts this unwarranted development would inflict on the aquifer recharge areas and coastal water quality crucial to our aquaculture industry.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission of the City of Cedar Key, Florida does formally oppose the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance proposal, by a vote of 4 in favor and 1 against.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 21 day of JANUARY, 2020.

ATTEST:



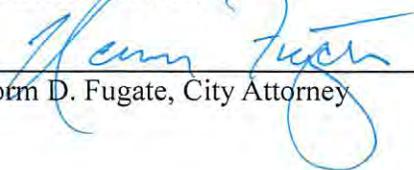
Crystal Sharp, City Clerk

CITY OF CEDAR KEY, FLORIDA,



Heath Davis, Mayor

LEGAL REVIEW:



Norm D. Fugate, City Attorney



City of Chiefland

~ The Gem of the Suwannee Valley ~

Chris Jones
Mayor

Tim West
Vice Mayor

Rollin Hudson
Commissioner

Lewrissa Mainwaring
Commissioner

Norman Weaver
Commissioner

April 28, 2020

Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS 54
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Suncoast Connector

To Whom It May Concern;

If the final route for the Suncoast Connector toll road is located in or near Chiefland it will greatly affect the City and it is for this reason the City Commission voted unanimously on the following economic development projects for consideration.

- Construct access and exit ramps to provide travelers access to Chiefland's Commercial and Industrial business district.
- Acquisition of land for the development of an Industrial/Business Park with direct access to US 19/SR 55.
- Acquisition of 100+ acres of land for expansion of the City wastewater infrastructure system in North Chiefland.
- Enhance existing roadways in the City.

On behalf of the entire City Commission, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to voice our future needs as this Suncoast Connector project moves forward.

Please contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Chris Jones
Mayor-Commissioner



CITY OF
WILLISTON
FLORIDA

50 N.W. Main St. P.O. Drawer 160 Williston, Florida 32696-0160
Phone (352) 528-3060 Fax (352) 528-2877

May 21, 2020

Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS 54
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Suncoast Connector

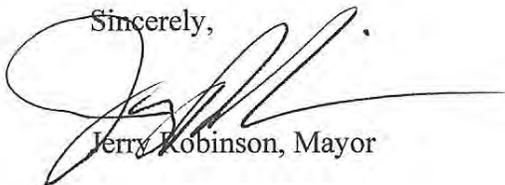
To Whom It May Concern,

If the final route for the Suncoast Connector toll road is in Levy County, it will greatly affect Williston with an increase of traffic flow. The City Council has agreed the need for assistance for the following economic development projects for your consideration. The City Council hereby requests further discussion should the following economic development projects be considered.

1. A traffic bypass, especially for the larger trucks, around the City that would allow for safe pedestrian traffic within the City.
2. The need for new infrastructure under Noble Ave., Hwy 27/41, due to probable increased deterioration because of increased traffic under the existing road.
3. Re-design of the intersection at Noble Ave. and Main Street which would also allow for safer pedestrian traffic within the City.

On behalf of the Williston City Council, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to voice our concerns regarding the increased traffic probability within the City.

Sincerely,



Jerry Robinson, Mayor

The mission of the City of Williston is to offer an efficient affordable and safe place to live, work and play.

Mayor – JERRY ROBINSON / President – CHARLES GOODMAN
Vice President – JUSTIN HEAD
Council members / DEBRA F JONES – MARGUERITE ROBINSON – ELIHU ROSS
City Manager – SCOTT L. LIPPMANN / City Clerk - LATRICIA WIRGHT



LEVY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Government Serving Citizens

COMMISSIONERS

John Meeks
Rock Meeks
Mike Joyner, Vice-Chair
Lilly Rooks
Matt Brooks, Chair

March 27, 2020

Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Suncoast Connector Corridor

The Honorable Governor DeSantis,

The Levy County Board of County Commissioners (“the Board”) on March 17, 2020, took formal action to request a Will Not Impact designation for Goethe State Forest. The Board is requesting that the Avoidance Features Map for the Suncoast Connector Corridor be amended to “Will Not Impact” rather than “No New Corridors” through Goethe State Forest.

As part of this, we are requesting that the Avoidance Features Map include the existing corridor throughout the Goethe Forest that consist of State Road 121, County Roads 336, 337, 326, Cow Creek Road, and Black Prong Road.

If any further information is needed you may contact the Board of County Commissioner’s Office at (352) 486-5218.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt Brooks", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Brooks, Chairman
Levy County Board of County Commissioners
District 5

Cc: The President of the Senate
The Speaker of the House
Torey Alson, Chief of Staff, FDOT (sent electronically)
Will Watts, Chief Engineer, FDOT (sent electronically)

Deputy Clerk UWILLIAMS

**RESOLUTION
2020-022**

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA, REQUESTING THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR RON DeSANTIS AND THE SECRETARY OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT TO ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT A “NO BUILD” OPTION FOR THE PORTIONS OF THE MULTI-USE CORRIDORS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE KNOWN AS THE SUNCOAST CONNECTOR AND THE NORTHERN TURNPIKE CONNECTOR THAT MAY BE PROPOSED THROUGH LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA.

WHEREAS, in its 2019 session, the Florida legislature passed Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 7068, which was signed into law by Governor DeSantis on May 17, 2019, the text of which is reflected in several sections of the Florida Statutes, primarily Section 338.2278, Fla. Stat., and which created the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (“M-CORES”) Program within the Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”); and

WHEREAS, the stated purpose of the M-CORES Program “is to revitalize rural communities, encourage job creation, and provide regional connectivity while leveraging technology, enhancing quality of life and public safety, and protecting the environment and natural resources”; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES Program proposes to extend certain transportation corridors within the State as tolled facilities and approved turnpike projects as part of the FDOT turnpike system in order to fulfill its stated purpose, which corridors include the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector; and

WHEREAS, Levy County is among the counties included in the proposed extension areas of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES Program requires the use of a Task Force for each corridor as part of an inclusive, consensus-building mechanism for design of the corridors, and for each Task Force to conduct public meetings and prepare a report to present to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives with its evaluations on environmental and economic

impacts, hurricane evacuation impacts and land use impacts of the Task Force's respective corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Suncoast Connector and Northern Turnpike Connector Task Forces, each of which contain a Levy County Commissioner as a member, are also tasked with evaluating design features of their respective corridors and the need for acquiring state lands for mitigation related to water quality/quantity of certain water bodies, agricultural land uses and wildlife habitat, and to include those evaluations in their respective reports; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES Program contains deadlines for start of construction and for opening of the M-CORES corridors, which deadlines do not require FDOT to complete design of corridor routes or construction design for the corridors in sufficient time for those designs to be considered by the Task Forces in their respective reports; and

WHEREAS, the process and timelines for design and construction for the proposed M-CORES corridor extensions do not follow or take into account established and publicly transparent processes normally used for design and construction of FDOT projects of this magnitude, and do not provide adequate opportunity for public input through the Task Force public meetings on precise routes or construction design for the corridor extensions, since those routes and designs will not be established in time to be considered in the Task Force public meetings and reports; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Levy County and the Board of County Commissioners (the "Board") value the environmental assets in the County, including Manatee Springs, Fanning Springs, the Suwannee River and other water bodies, and the Goethe Forest, the Lower Suwannee Wildlife Refuge, the Cedar Key State Preserve and Waccasassa Bay State Preserve, all of which provide valuable habitat to plants and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Levy County and the Board also value the agricultural assets in the County, including the expanses of rural land put to work in the agriculture industry, which land is worked hard by farmers and ranchers in the timber, peanut, watermelon, cattle and other agricultural commodities industries, without which Levy County would lose a valuable part of its culture and heritage; and

WHEREAS, without provision for adequate public input in the M-CORES Program process, and without adequate timing of deadlines for design of routes and construction for the corridors, the Board is not able to fully consider the wishes of the citizens of Levy County or to effectively provide recommendations or review of the proposed extensions of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector through Levy County, either as an independent body or through its members that sit on those corridors' Task Forces; and

WHEREAS, since the M-CORES Program process does not provide design of precise routes or construction design for the Suncoast Connector or the Northern Turnpike Connector in sufficient time to include evaluation of those designs in the Task Force reports, those corridors' Task Forces are unable to meet their duties set out in Section 338.2278, Fla. Stat., to evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state lands to mitigate impacts on the environmental and agricultural assets contained within Levy County, which assets are held so dear by Levy County citizens and the Board; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that the growing population of Florida will require additions to critical transportation infrastructure within the State; and

WHEREAS, the established routes of U.S. Highway 19/98 and U.S. Highway 41 which traverse Levy County meet and exceed current traffic flow needs and are well within acceptable levels of service to provide anticipated future needs for many years to come; and

WHEREAS, the Board has received considerable citizen input expressing the desire of a "No Build" option for the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector, due in part to the lack of precise routes and corridor design with which to evaluate the impacts on Levy County, its environmental assets, its agricultural assets, and its way of life; and

WHEREAS, since the Board values Levy County's environmental and agricultural assets, since the M-CORES Program does not provide for design for the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector to be provided in sufficient time for those corridors' respective Task Force reports to include evaluation of the proposed corridors' impacts to Levy County environmental and agricultural assets, since current and anticipated traffic needs are met by existing roads in Levy County, and since Levy County citizens have expressed the desire for a "No Build" option for these corridors through Levy County, the Board finds it is in the best interests of Levy County and the public to recommend that a "No Build" option for the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector be adopted and implemented; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Levy County, Florida, that:

1. In order to protect Levy County's environmental assets, preservation areas providing habitat for plants and wildlife, rural lands, agriculture industry, and the quality of life of our citizens, the Board hereby supports adoption and enactment of a "No Build" option by the Governor and the FDOT for portions of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector that may otherwise be proposed to traverse any part of Levy County.

2. The Board respectfully requests Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida legislature, and the FDOT to avoid proposing any new turnpikes within Levy County without consideration of the public's wishes gathered through adequate public input processes and without using accepted processes for design and construction of public projects.

3. The Board respectfully requests that any impacts that major new State roadways and existing State roadways have on Levy County be provided with identified definitive alignment corridors early in the process, which cooperation will preserve transparency and will save time and overall expense in the planning process.

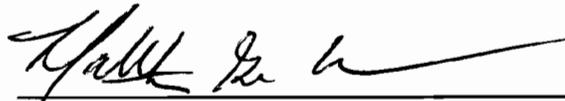
4. The County Coordinator will provide a copy of this Resolution to the Governor, the Secretary of FDOT, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives.

5. The Resolution shall take effect upon adoption by the Board.

DULY ADOPTED this 7th day of April, 2020.

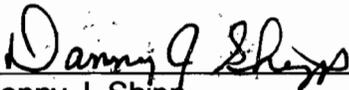
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA

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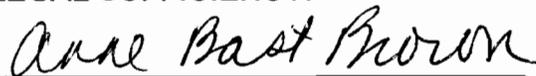
Matt Brooks, Chairman

ATTEST: Clerk of the Circuit Court
and Ex Officio to the Board



Danny J. Shipp

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:



Anne Bast Brown, County Attorney

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LR2015-103

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-07-10

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MADISON COUNTY, FLORIDA DECLARING ITS SUPPORT FOR THE MULTI-USE CORRIDORS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE (“M-CORES”) PROGRAM IN GENERAL AND THE SUNCOAST CONNECTOR IN PARTICULAR; WELCOMING THE SUNCOAST CONNECTOR TO MADISON COUNTY; PLEDGING ITS FULL COOPERATION TO THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, STATE AGENCIES AND REGIONAL PARTNERS TO MAKE THE SUNCOAST CORRIDOR TASK FORCE A SUCCESS; EXPRESSING ITS DESIRE THAT THE SUNCOAST CORRIDOR BE CONSTRUCTED AND OPENED AS QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF ALL CONCERNED; AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE CLERK TO TRANSMIT A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, THE PRESIDENT OF THE FLORIDA SENATE, THE SPEAKER OF THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SECRETARY OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

RECITALS

WHEREAS, Madison County (hereinafter “Madison County”) is a political subdivision of the State of Florida and a non-charter county as that term is used in Article VIII, Section 1(f), Florida Constitution; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Madison County, (hereinafter the “Board”) is the governing body of Madison County; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is aware that the Florida Legislature has enacted, and the Governor of the State of Florida has approved, Ch. 2019-43, Laws of Fla. (2019) which created Section 338.2278, Florida Statutes establishing the, “Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance Program” (hereinafter the “M-CORES Program”); and,

WHEREAS the Board is aware that Section 338.2278(1), Florida Statutes provides that the purpose of the M-CORES Program is to, “revitalize rural communities, encourage job creation, and provide regional connectivity while leveraging technology, enhancing quality of life and public safety, and protecting the environment and natural resources.”; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is aware that Section 338.2278(2), Florida Statutes provides that the M-CORES Program will be comprised of several corridors including the “Suncoast Corridor” which extends from central Florida to northern Florida and includes Madison County; and,

WHEREAS, Madison County is a rural county and definitely in need of revitalization, job creation, regional connectivity and the enhancement of quality of life and public safety, while

protecting the environment and natural resources; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is aware that Section 338.2278(3)(c), Florida Statutes requires the Florida Department of Transportation to convene a corridor task force comprised of representatives from the local governments, state agencies and other regional partners within the corridor as an inclusive, consensus-building mechanism for each proposed multi-use corridor; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is aware that Ch. 2019-43, Laws of Fla. (2019) also creates Section 334.044(35), Florida Statutes which provides for a workforce development program which is, “intended to provide direct economic benefits to communities in which the department is constructing infrastructure projects and to promote employment opportunities, including within areas of low income and high unemployment” and which will then be funded as provided in Section 338.2278(8), Florida Statutes in the amount of \$2.5 million per year for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 fiscal years; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is grateful to the Legislature and the Governor of the State of Florida for taking bold steps to establish the M-CORES Program to provide the revitalization so needed in rural communities, like Madison County, and giving such rural communities a voice in this process through the corridor task forces.

Now therefore, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MADISON COUNTY, FLORIDA that the Board supports the M-CORES Program in general and the Suncoast Connector in particular.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board welcomes the Suncoast Connector to Madison County along with the economic benefits and progress it represents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board pledges its full cooperation to the Florida Department of Transportation and all other state agencies, local governments and regional partners to make the Suncoast Corridor Task Force a success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board desires that the Suncoast Corridor be constructed and opened as quickly and efficiently as possible in the best interest of all concerned.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the clerk is hereby authorized and directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Florida, the President of the Florida Senate, the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, and the Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation to give them notice of this action by the Board.

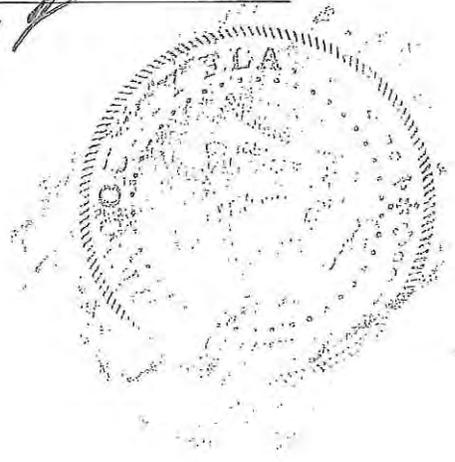
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PASSED AND ADOPTED upon due motion, second, after discussion, by majority vote
this 10 day of July, 2019.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MADISON COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY: 
H. Alston Kelley
Chair

ATTEST: 
William Washington,
Clerk



RESOLUTION 2019-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE HERNANDO/CITRUS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING THE CREATION OF THREE NEW MULTI-USE CORRIDORS TO SERVE RURAL AREAS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA

WHEREAS, the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has consistently expressed the importance of extending the Suncoast Parkway to the north beyond Citrus County; and,

WHEREAS, On December 12, 2018, the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) reiterated to the Florida Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) the importance of a future continuation of the Suncoast Parkway to the north; and,

WHEREAS, terminating the Suncoast Parkway at the planned extension to CR 486 would create significant traffic increases in Citrus County; and,

WHEREAS, the Federally required safety and travel time reliability performance measures are key to accomplishing economic development and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of Hernando and Citrus Counties; and,

WHEREAS, on January 30, 2019, Senator Bill Galvano, President of the Florida Senate, issued a memorandum advocating for critical infrastructure enhancements to assist in revitalizing rural communities, and enhancing public safety; and,

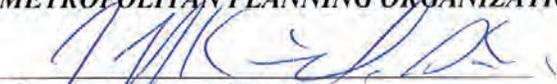
WHEREAS, Senator Galvano identified the need to create three new multi-use corridors in rural areas of regional economic significance to include the extension of the Suncoast Parkway to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County, and the Northern Turnpike Connector.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization Board, duly assembled in regular session on this 19th day of February 2019, as follows:

1. The MPO Board supports the proposed extension of the Suncoast Parkway to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County, and the Northern Turnpike Connector (Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway).
2. The Clerk of the MPO Board is hereby directed to forward an executed copy of this Resolution to Governor Ron DeSantis and President of the Senate Bill Galvano.

HERNANDO/CITRUS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Attest:



Hernando/Citrus MPO Chairman

(SEAL)

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY
BY 
MPO Attorney

Attachment: Rrsolution 2019-02 Suncoast Ext - Executed (15346 : Resolution Supporting Extension of the Suncoast Parkway)

STEVEN WARM
Attorney and Counselor at Law
3867 SW 93rd Terrace
Gainesville, Florida 32608-8601

TELEPHONE: (352) 373-8279
E-mail: SW@stevenwarm.com

BOCA RATON OFFICE:
By appointment only:
Call: (561) 995-7877

July 7, 2020

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
605 SUWANNEE STREET, MS5
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, 32399

RE: SUNCOAST CONNECTOR INQUIRY

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Town of Bronson is in receipt of your notification regarding possible state road routes and invitation to provide local perspective relating thereto. They have directed me, as Town Attorney, to forward this response.

In general, Bronson is hopeful and optimistic about potential improved access. We are a small municipality, but the seat of Levy County, strategically located and interested in orderly, measured, constructive and controlled growth. It is Bronson's feeling that upgraded road service, properly located and designed with appropriate exit and entry points, could be a boon.

If this should come to pass, here are the things that would be factors in maximizing the value, convenience and public advantage to be achieved and where State assistance would be a critical factor:

A configuration that would allow the road to serve its connecting function without significantly impeding or obstructing local vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The acquisition of land and any related infrastructure for the creation of a regional industrial park facility to spur local activity and employment prospects.

Assistance with improvements to our water and sewer facilities so that they have clear capacity to serve controlled growth.

The availability of support for continuing moderate growth and expansion consistent with improved access and calculated to serve the best interests of the community and the region.

It is our conviction that the overall logistical interest would be served by a correction of the drainage problem that was caused by the expansion of US Alt 27 in the early 2000's. We would propose concrete channeling and a retention area as is done in other cases.

Another item raised by Bronson's Town Council is the specific location of on and off ramps with a view to annexation of the adjacent areas and the tax benefits that would yield.

We thank you for the opportunity to have input in this process and look forward to further exchanges of information and advice.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SW', is written over a horizontal line.

STEVEN WARM, ESQUIRE
SW:mol

TOWN OF GREENVILLE



154 SW Old Mission Avenue • Post Office Box 235 • Greenville, Florida 32331-0235
Phone 850-948-2251 • Fax 850-948-3363

Incorporated 1907

RECEIVED IN FDOT
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EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The Honorable Kevin J. Thibault, Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

January 22, 2020

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Please find enclosed a Resolution from the Town Council of the Town of Greenville in support of the Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance program in general and in particular the Suncoast Connector.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Reams
Town Clerk

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-01

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF GREENVILLE, FLORIDA; DECLARING ITS SUPPORT FOR THE MULTI-USE CORRIDORS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE ("M-CORES") PROGRAM IN GENERAL AND THE SUNCOAST CONNECTOR IN PARTICULAR; WELCOMING THE SUNCOAST CONNECTOR TO THE TOWN OF GREENVILLE, FLORIDA, AND MADISON COUNTY; PLEDGING ITS FULL COOPERATION TO THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, STATE AGENCIES AND REGIONAL PARTNERS TO MAKE THE SUNCOAST CORRIDOR TASK FORCE A SUCCESS; EXPRESSING ITS DESIRE THAT THE SUNCOAST CORRIDOR BE CONSTRUCTED AND OPENED AS QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF ALL CONCERNED; AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE TOWN CLERK TO TRANSMIT A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, THE PRESIDENT OF THE FLORIDA SENATE, THE SPEAKER OF THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND THE SECRETARY OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

WHEREAS, the Town of Greenville, Florida is a municipality as that term is used in Article VIII, Section 2, Florida Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is the governing body of Town of Greenville, Florida; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is aware that the Florida Legislature has enacted, and the Governor of the State of Florida has approved, Ch. 2019-43, Laws of Fla. (2019), which created Section 338.2278, Florida Statutes, establishing the "Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance Program" (hereinafter the "M-CORES Program"); and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is aware that Section 338.2278(1), Florida Statutes, provides that the purpose of the M-CORES Program is to "revitalize rural communities, encourage job creation, and provide regional connectivity while leveraging technology, enhancing quality of life and public safety, and protecting the environment and natural resources."; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is aware that Section 338.2278(2), Florida Statutes, provides that the M-CORES Program will be comprised of several corridors including the "Suncoast Corridor", which extends from central Florida to northern Florida and includes Madison County; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is a rural community in great need of revitalization, job creation, regional connectivity, and the enhancement of quality of life and public safety, while protecting the environment and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is aware that Section 338.2278(3)(c), Florida Statutes, requires the Florida Department of Transportation to convene a corridor task force comprised of representatives from the local governments, state agencies and other regional partners within the corridor as an inclusive, consensus-building mechanism for each proposed multi-use corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is aware that Ch. 2019-43, Laws of Fla. (2019) creates Section 334.044(35), Florida Statutes, which provides for a workforce development program which is, "intended to provide direct economic benefits to communities in which the department is constructing infrastructure projects and to promote employment opportunities, including within areas of low income and high unemployment" and which will then be funded as provided in Section 338.2278(8), Florida Statutes, in the amount of \$2.5 million per year for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021. and 2021-2022 fiscal years; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida is grateful to the Legislature and the Governor of the State of Florida for taking bold steps establishing the M-CORES Program to provide the revitalization so needed in rural communities, like the Town of Greenville, Florida, and Madison County, and furthermore giving such rural communities a voice in this process through the corridor task forces.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF GREENVILLE, FLORIDA as follows:

SECTION 1. The Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida supports the M-CORES Program in general and the Suncoast Connector in particular.

SECTION 2. The Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida pledges its full cooperation to the Florida Department of Transportation and all other state agencies, local governments and regional partners to make the Suncoast Corridor Task Force a success.

SECTION 3. The Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida desires that the Suncoast Corridor be constructed and opened as quickly and efficiently as possible in the best interest of all concerned.

SECTION 4. The Town Clerk of the Town of Greenville, Florida, is hereby authorized and directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Florida, the President of the Florida Senate, the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, and the Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation to give them notice of this action by the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida.

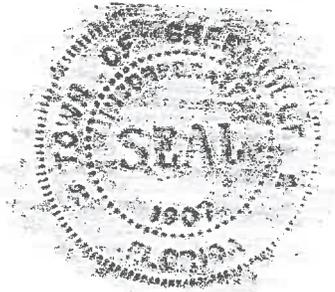
Following the reading of the foregoing resolution, the Honorable Calvin Malone moved that the foregoing resolution be adopted. The Honorable Cynthia James seconded the motion for its adoption.

The Honorable Brittini Brown put the question to a roll call vote, and the result was as follows:

Hon. Bobby Burnett, Councilmember	Voted: <u>yes</u>
Hon. Teresa Harville, Councilmember	Voted: <u>yes</u>
Hon. Calvin Malone, Councilmember	Voted: <u>yes</u>
Hon. Cynthia James, Vice Mayor/Councilmember	Voted: <u>yes</u>
Hon. Brittini Brown, Mayor/Councilmember	Voted: <u>yes</u>

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Town Council of the Town of Greenville, Florida, this

21 day of January, 2019.



ATTEST:

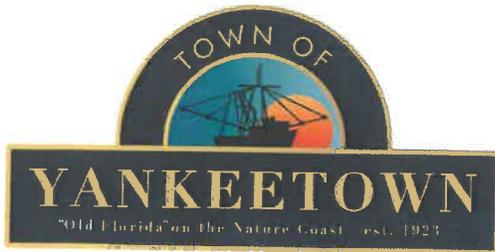
Kimberly Reams
KIMBERLY REAMS
Town Clerk

APPROVED:

Brittini Brown
HON. BRITTINI BROWN
Mayor/Councilmember

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

John Laurance Reid
JOHN LAURANCE REID
Town Attorney



Town of Yankeetown

*6241 Harmony Lane
Yankeetown, Florida 34498*

Phone: 352-447-2511

Email: yankeetownth@bellsouth.net

Web Site: <http://yankeetownfl.govoffice2.com>

May 04, 2020

Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS 54
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Suncoast Highway

To whom it may concern:

The Town of Yankeetown has a vested interest in the extension of the Suncoast extension. The Town's opinion is that all facts and information is critical for us to fully understand the impact. While Levy County has expressed by Resolution their feelings, as a Municipality we do not at this time share the same sentiment. If the Suncoast Extension becomes a reality the Town Council would want to share its desires and request assistance that will come from the economic development requirements that would most likely affect the Town and Southern Levy County. It is for this reason the Town Council voted and approved the following economic development projects for consideration.

- ~ Construct access and exit ramps and to have proper signage to provide travelers access and direction to the Town and the Gulf access points and to Yankeetown Commercial and business district, as well as its Boat Ramps and ECO-Tourism locations.
- ~ Acquisition of land for the development of additional Town Parking lots to eliminate on street parking.
- ~ Additional assistance in grant funding outside of normal channels for a Regional Sewer and Waste Water Treatment Plant serving not only Yankeetown but also Inglis and parts of Southern Levy County.
- ~ Funding for water quality improvements including pump out stations at marinas in the Town and assistance in additional funding to replace aged water mains in the town consisting of Asbestos and Cast Iron.
- ~ Enhance existing roadways in the Town and improve storm water drainage issues on County Road 40

On behalf of the entire Town Council, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to voice and express our opinions and future needs as this Suncoast Connector project moves forward.

Please contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,



Jack H. Schofield, II
Mayor, Town of Yankeetown

Cc: Levy County Administrator
Levy County Commissioner District 1
Levy County Commissioner District 2
Levy County Commissioner District 3
Levy County Commissioner District 4
M. Cores

