

Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) Program

- CS/SB 7068 creates the M-CORES program within the Florida Department of Transportation under s. 338.2278, Florida Statutes.
 - Purpose: 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.
 - Objective: advance the construction of regional corridors that are intended to accommodate multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure.
- The bill identifies three corridors:
 - Southwest-Central Florida Connector (Collier County to Polk County).
 - Suncoast Connector (Citrus County to Jefferson County).
 - Northern Turnpike Connector (northern terminus of the Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway).
- FDOT must convene a Task Force, appointed by the FDOT secretary by August 1, 2019, for each corridor composed of representatives of:
 - Department of Environmental Protection
 - Department of Economic Opportunity
 - Department of Education
 - Department of Health
 - Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 - Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
 - Local water management district(s)
 - Local government officials from each local government within a proposed corridor
 - Metropolitan planning organizations
 - Regional planning councils
 - Community (individual or member of a nonprofit community organization, as determined by FDOT)

- Appropriate environmental groups, such as 1000 Friends of Florida, Audubon Florida, the Everglades Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, the Florida Sierra Club, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor, as determined by FDOT.
- Corridor Task Force roles:
 - Coordinate with FDOT on pertinent aspects of corridor analysis, addressing issues such as 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; and protection or enhancement of primary springs protection zones and farmland preservation areas designated within local comprehensive plans.
 - Evaluate the need for and the economic, environmental, hurricane evacuation, and land use impacts of the corridors.
 - Hold public meetings in each local government jurisdiction in which a project in the identified corridor is being considered.
 - Report their evaluations in a final report submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by October 1, 2020.
 - Other requirements identified for specific corridors in the legislation:
 - Southwest-Central Florida Connector: address the impacts of the construction of a project within the corridor on panther and other critical wildlife habitat; evaluate the need for acquisition of lands for state conservation or as mitigation for construction; evaluate wildlife crossing design features to protect panther and other critical wildlife habitat corridor connections.
 - Suncoast Connector and Northern Turnpike Connector: evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction on water quality and quantity of springs, rivers, and aquifer recharge areas; agricultural land uses; and wildlife habitat.
- In designing the corridors, FDOT must adhere to the Task Force recommendations to the maximum extent feasible.
- The Task Force may consider and recommend innovative concepts to combine right-of-way acquisition with the acquisition of lands or easements to facilitate environmental mitigation or ecosystem, wildlife habitat, and water quality protection or restoration. FDOT, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection, may incorporate those recommended design features into each corridor during the project development phase.

- By December 31, 2023, a local government that has an interchange within its jurisdiction must review the task force report and its local comprehensive plan. The local government review must consider whether the area in and around the interchange contains appropriate land uses and natural resource protections and whether the comprehensive plan should be amended to provide such appropriate uses and protections.
- Project construction in a corridor may not be funded until the final report for that corridor is submitted and until 30 percent of the design phase is complete (except for project phases under construction or for which alignment has been determined).
- Corridor projects are subject to FDOT's responsibilities for environmental review applicable under the National Environmental Policy Act. If such review is not required, FDOT must perform a project evaluation that considers similar issues. At a minimum, decisions such as corridor configuration, project alignment, and interchange locations must be determined in accordance with applicable FDOT rules, policies, and procedures. To the greatest extent practical, corridor configuration, project alignment, and interchange locations must be designed so that project rights-of-way are not located within conservation lands acquired under the Florida Preservation 2000 Act and the Florida Forever program.
- Projects undertaken in the identified corridors are tolled facilities and would be considered to be approved turnpike projects and Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facilities.
- Subject to economic and environmental feasibility requirements, funding is authorized for M-CORES projects through turnpike revenue bonds, right-of-way and bridge construction bonds, the FDOT Financing Corporation, and/or public-private partnerships.
- FDOT is authorized to accept donations of land for use as rights-of-way or to secure or use rights-of-way.
- To the maximum extent feasible, corridor project construction must begin no later than December 31, 2022, with the corridors open to traffic no later than December 31, 2030.
- Funding for the M-CORES program:
 - FY 2019/2020, \$12.5 million
 - FY 2020/2021, \$57.5 million
 - FY 2021/2022, \$100 million
 - FY 2022/2023 and thereafter, \$103 million.

Workforce Development Program

- FDOT is authorized to provide a road and bridge construction workforce development program for construction of projects designated in the department's work program.

- The workforce development program is intended to provide direct economic benefits to communities in which FDOT is constructing infrastructure projects and to promote employment opportunities, including within areas of low income and high unemployment.
- FDOT will merge any of its own existing workforce services into the program to create a robust workforce development program. The workforce development program must serve as a tool to address the construction labor shortage by recruiting and developing a group of skilled workers for infrastructure projects to increase the likelihood of projects remaining on time and within budget.
- FDOT may administer workforce development contracts with consultants and nonprofit entities, such as local community partners, Florida College System institutions, and technical institutions or centers. These entities will provide support for workforce recruitment; training curriculum for road and bridge construction projects; and support services to remove barriers to work.
- FDOT will develop performance and outcome metrics to ensure accountability and to measure the benefits and cost-effectiveness of the program.
- By June 30, 2020, and annually thereafter, FDOT will provide a report to the Governor, President of Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives describing these activities and containing any recommendations relating to future program refinements.
- Beginning in FY 2019/2020 through FY 2021/2022, FDOT will provide \$2.5 million per year for these activities.

Other Program Enhancements

- Beginning in FY 2019/2020:
 - Small County Road Assistance Program, \$10 million per year, to be used as specified in s. 339.2816, with preference to projects in counties impacted by hurricanes.
 - Small County Outreach Program, \$10 million per year, to be used as specified in s. 339.2818, with preference to projects in counties impacted by hurricanes.
 - Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, \$10 million per year, to be used as specified in s. 427.0159.
- Beginning with FY 2022/2023 fiscal year, \$35 million per year to Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, to be used in accordance with s. 338.2278, with preference to feeder roads, interchanges, and appurtenances that create or facilitate multi-use corridor access and connectivity.

