

Project: Southwest-Central Florida Connector  
 Subject: MCORES Task Force Meeting #3  
 Date: Monday, December 09, 2019  
 Location: LaBelle Civic Center  
 481 SR 80  
 LaBelle, Florida 33935

Attendees (check all in attendance)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	L.K. Nandam, FDOT	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reg Buxton, Collier MPO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tracy A. Hood, FDOT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chris Constance, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jennifer Carpenter, FDEP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nat Birdsong, Polk TPO – Mayor Pro Tem City of Winter Haven
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pam Johnson, FDEO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pat Steed, Central Florida RPC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Robert Richards, FDOE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bill McDaniel, Southwest Florida RPC (arrived after introductions)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stephanie Vick, FDOH (arrived after introductions)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Andrew Dickman, 1000 Friends of Florida
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tom Graef, FWC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dr. Paul Gray, Audubon Florida
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Janet Taylor, FDACS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Elizabeth Fleming, Defenders of Wildlife
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Futrell, FPSC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wendy Mathews, The Nature Conservancy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tim Vanderhoof, Enterprise Florida	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Shannon Estenoz, The Everglades Foundation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pending, FDBPR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jason Lauritsen, Florida Wildlife Corridor
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Donna Doubleday, CareerSource Florida	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brian Starford, Southwest Florida WMD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rechell Johnson, Volunteer Florida	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Melissa M. Roberts, South Florida WMD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rick Wilson, Polk County	<input type="checkbox"/>	Katie Worthington Decker, Florida Chamber of Commerce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mike Thompson, Hardee County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Keith Walpole, Florida Trucking Association
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Elton Langford, DeSoto County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gerald Buhr, Florida Rural Water Association (arrived after introductions)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ron Handley, Highlands County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bill Ferry, Florida Internet & Television Association
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ken Doherty, Charlotte County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sherry Ambrose, FEDC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Weston Pryor, Glades County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gary Ritter, Florida Farm Bureau Federation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cecil Pendergrass, Lee County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti, Polk State College (Tamara Sakagawa Alternate)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mitchell Wills, Hendry County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Glenn Little, South Florida State College (Joe Wright Alternate)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Penny Taylor, Collier County (arrived after introductions)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dr. Jeff Allbritten, Florida SouthWestern State College (Bob Jones Alternate)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Colon Lambert, Heartland Regional TPO (Jim Brooks Alternate)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Matt Caldwell, Maxwell, Hendry & Simmons LLC (arrived after introductions)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Donald Scott, Lee County MPO		

Task Force Meeting		
9:00 AM	Welcome	L.K. Nandam, Task Force Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L.K. Nandam welcomed the Task Force members and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Nandam clarified that this is the third of nine task force meetings, which is an additional two based on Task Force feedback. He covered the statutory purpose of the Task Force and reviewed the agenda, which was modified to be more interactive. He stated that this meeting would discuss needs and the role of the Task Force in the pre-planning process with an afternoon panel of experts to help develop the</li> </ul>	

<p>guiding principles. Mr. Nandam reviewed the options for public comments to be received and reminded attendees of the Community Open House on December 12<sup>th</sup> in Collier County.</p>		
9:05 AM	Introductions and Safety Briefing	Karen Kiselewski, Facilitator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karen Kiselewski led a roll call with Task Force members introducing themselves.</li> <li>• Mr. Nandam introduced other Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff supporting the meeting including Marlon Bizerra (FDOT Production Lead), Huiwei Shen (FDOT Chief Planner), Beth Kigel (HNTB), and John Fricke (Office of the Attorney General) and Ms. Kiselewski introduced other consultant staff including John Kaliski (Cambridge Systematics), Erin Kersh (Cambridge Systematics) and Sheri Coven (Cambridge Systematics).</li> <li>• Ms. Kiselewski then conducted a safety briefing followed by an overview of the meeting objectives and materials provided to Task Force members in their packets. She announced that the GIS tool on the Florida MCORES website was up and running again.</li> <li>• Mr. Nandam introduced and played the Sunshine Law video as a refresher for Task Force members and substitute members. Ms. Kiselewski asked Mr. Fricke to stand such that Task Force members know who to ask clarifying questions of.</li> </ul>		
9:20 AM	M-CORES Vision and Task Force Goals	Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, P.E. (via video)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Nandam introduced the Secretary’s video which was then played for the Task Force members.</li> </ul>		
9:30 AM	Purpose, Needs, and Process Overview; Task Force Work Plan Moving Forward	Will Watts, Chief Engineer; Huiwei Shen, Chief Planner; Marlon Bizerra, FDOT Production Lead; Task Force Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Nandam introduced the next agenda item and reiterated that it’s meant to be interactive with a discussion on data, needs, and the project development process. Task Force members were encouraged to ask questions at any time and Will Watts, Ms. Shen, and Mr. Bizerra were introduced.</li> <li>• Mr. Watts reviewed the bullets on the Presentation Outcomes slide and clarified that the intent is to bring up a topic and a few discussion points before opening up the floor to the Task Force members. He stated that the facilitator has determined some of the topics the Task Force wishes to cover based on comments from the last meeting as well as data that has been requested.</li> <li>• Mr. Bizerra reviewed comments from the last Task Force meeting and the status of data requests.</li> <li>• Mr. Watts acknowledged that FDOT is trying to catch up on data requests and compiled this information and the GIS website is available.</li> <li>• Ms. Kiselewski clarified that Mr. Bizerra’s presentation is what the Task Force has asked for and wants to demonstrate that FDOT hears what the Task Force is saying.</li> <li>• <i>Andrew Dickman expressed an interest in learning more about the traffic analysis. He was unsure how much further detail would be provided such as level of service and traffic counts on I-75 and other main corridors. Mr. Dickman wanted to know if this would be provided.</i></li> <li>• <b>Mr. Watts stated that a data collection effort is underway as it relates to accidents and delays and that a statewide model of traffic is under development which should be provided to the Task Force in February.</b></li> <li>• Mr. Watts continued the presentation reviewing the purpose and objective which comes from the legislation. There were no questions on this portion.</li> </ul>		

- Mr. Bizerra walked through preliminary needs from the PowerPoint presentation before opening up the discussion to Task Force members.
- Mr. Watts stated that needs should be the number one topic of the day and Ms. Kiselewski clarified that the Task Force is to identify needs related to the five topic areas identified in the statute (i.e. job creation and the environment). Ms. Kiselewski reminded Task Force members that they were asked to sit on this Task Force based on their expertise in these topic areas and that both needs and opportunities should be discussed to help draft guiding principles in the afternoon.
- *Cecil Pendergrass began the discussion on economic development by stating that this would be a driving force for Collier and Lee counties for the next 20 years. Mr. Pendergrass stated that Lee County is looking forward to this project, particularly for economic opportunities in the eastern part of the county.*
- *Gerald Buhr also stated that cities in Hardee and Highlands counties are looking forward to a highway to encourage economic development in their area. Mr. Buhr said that this would bring industry to areas where they have limited access highways and would diversify the economy as the current major employers are the prisons.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski encouraged the Task Force to elaborate on specific economic opportunities.*
- *Mr. Pendergrass stated that Charlotte County is looking to expand Babcock and the expansion of Ave Maria and colleges, such as Florida Gulf Coast University, offer great opportunities for economic development.*
- *Mike Thompson stated that all three municipalities within Hardee County and the county itself have passed resolutions in support of the corridor. Mr. Thompson stated that Hardee has the highest unemployment of the surrounding counties and is missing out on new developments based on a lack of infrastructure.*
- *Pat Steed had general comments about economic issues. One thing tied to the economy is low wages which have a big influence on poverty levels. Ms. Steed stated that while unemployment levels are historically low, wages remain the same and employees are struggling. Frequently, the longer it takes employees to get to work, the harder it is to balance employment and housing as traveling longer costs more. She stated that affordable housing fits into this. Ms. Steed also stated that agriculture and freight movements are a big part of the economy and as agriculture changes, so too should the transportation network change to continue supporting agriculture and freight movements in the future.*
- *Mitchell Wills stated that Hendry County is like Hardee and accessibility is key, particularly for infrastructure such as broadband, water, and sewer. This corridor would help the county get more centrally located access to both sides of the state. Mr. Wills also stated that this would help Hendry quite a bit with accessibility and hurricane evacuation options.*
- *Mr. Buhr stated that there are wastewater challenges in Hardee and Polk. There is a clay layer below the surface which makes it difficult to get rid of wastewater. The integration of effluent disposal along a limited access highway would greatly improve that.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that this is an opportunity for innovation.*
- *Mr. Dickman stated that he appreciates the comments about the economy and employment in interior areas but stated that coastal areas experience employment issues as well. Mr. Dickman would like to see maps of unemployment rates and an understanding of what types of jobs are needed in places like LaBelle and Arcadia. As someone who grew up in Future Farmers of America, he was unclear if having a McDonald's and big box stores would be the type of employment they are looking for. Mr. Dickman stated that the numbers alone are not clear with rates being presented versus the actual number of people. If jobs are being pushed as one of the main missions, what kind of jobs are being sought?*

- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that the conversation could be opened up to what type of industries could be pursued.*
- *Mr. Wills stated that they should build the economic diversity, starting with the cornerstone of hospitality. The future workforce may include more technology and freight as people continue moving to Florida. Mr. Wills reminded the Task Force that this was ground zero for unemployment during the recession with large impacts on the Heartland, including its population and colleges.*
- *Sherry Ambrose said that elected officials know their county and that this region already has a lot of groups thinking about the competitive advantage to identify types of jobs and industries. They are also thinking ahead to education and training needs to grow these industries. Ms. Ambrose appreciated that the packet included some of this information such as how manufacturing needs technicians and healthcare needs medical personal. Many types of infrastructure are needed but broadband ties everything together.*
- *Ms. Steed was thankful that the targeted industries in the Heartland were highlighted (which also includes Okeechobee although it isn't part of this corridor). The counties have worked to develop both a five-year economic plan and a longer term visioning as a high-level roadmap. Ms. Steed stated that opportunities available now in agriculture, logistics, and some manufacturing tourism can support other roles such as ecotourism, aviation, and energy.*
- *Chris Constance appreciated Mr. Dickman's comments and expressed issues about concurrency regarding I-75. Mr. Constance views this as a 25 to 50-year vision of how the state will roll out transportation infrastructure. He wants to know how much more I-75 can be stressed and what would happen if this corridor is not built. This analysis can help figure out why inland movement is needed and can decompress growth on the coast. He would like to know what the cost of no action is.*
- *Mr. Wills acknowledged that the type of industry is important. He expressed that most of the existing industry was agriculture but that has faded. Mr. Wills stated that there is a need to look for growth that is good growth, not just for the sake of growth. There is a need for more education opportunities and transportation brings that, but there is also a need for businesses which will stay and grow. Students are educated but leave because there are no opportunities.*
- *Nat Birdsong stated that one of his concerns that he is trying to get a better understanding of is that, if the corridor goes from South Polk County, movement between South Polk County and North Polk County is already stressed. Mr. Birdsong would like to know what kind of corridor would improve this movement.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski acknowledged the need for northward connections.*
- *Shannon Estenoz expressed that this was exactly the conversation she was hoping to have, perhaps even earlier in the process. Ms. Estenoz was glad induced development was being discussed because that's what is desired but also brings about anxiety. There is a desire to induce development but no knowledge of what that development ultimately looks like 25 years from now. When roads are built first, local government comprehensive plans are impacted. Ms. Estenoz stated this may also change the future land use maps of these areas. She expressed anxiety about what will happen if the roads are built first. There should be an understanding of what the community envisions. For example, what does Immokalee look like? Immokalee is interesting because of its alignment and what's around it. However, if SR 29 is widened, what will Immokalee look like 25 years from now and how spread out is it? Ms. Estenoz said that a lot of this area is wetlands now and wants to know how this can avoid the wetlands and the Everglades as they cannot be replaced. As the conversation continues, there needs to be a discussion of the maps and how communities can help the Task Force envision what they look like 25 years from now.*

- *Ms. Kiselewski said that that is a question that has been heard throughout the day. This can be part of the expert panel in February to complement what the Task Force wants to see. Local governments can respond now.*
- *Gary Ritter stated that his biggest concern is agriculture preservation as there are still many landowners that would like to keep their land in agriculture. These multiuse corridors go down green space and much of that is agricultural. Mr. Ritter wants to know if there is a way to avoid and minimize the amount of agricultural land lost. In looking at some development, particularly in coastal areas, the urban services boundaries encroach on agricultural land which puts pressure on farmers to get out because of development pressure or, in some cases, because of environmental restoration pressure. Mr. Ritter stated that he is not in favor of continuously losing more agricultural land because that is one of the key drivers of the state's economy.*
- *Mr. Nandam reminded the Task Force of the Heartland 2060 Plan which sets the framework for future land use. He also reminded them that this multiuse corridor would be a limited access toll facility such that the majority of growth would happen around interchanges. Local governments with an interchange would have to amend their comprehensive plans for things such as natural resource protection and appropriate uses around these interchanges.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that one of the afternoon panelists would discuss the Heartland 2060 Plan and also mentioned that there is a map with urban development boundaries.*
- *Jason Lauritsen discussed how economic needs should not lose sight of the connectivity between the health of the natural system and the economy. Much of the economy is tourism or agriculture based and there needs to be an understanding of how communities have been impacted economically as a result of catastrophic events (i.e. red tide, saltwater intrusions, drought stress). Mr. Lauritsen would like to know factors that have impacted local economies because there hasn't been a tie between the quality of life in Florida with the quality of life of the environment.*
- *Elton Langford stated that some of the struggle he sees in rural communities such as Hardee and Hendry is access to get product and people in and out in an emergency. Some of this happened during Hurricane Charlie as people tried to use SR 70 and were backed up trying to get out. Before jobs are brought in products need to be able to get in and out. Mr. Langford stated that it all needs to be tied together in order to make it work. He agreed with Ms. Steed that there are a lot of people willing to drive further to have a decent job, not making \$20k-30k/year as they can't provide for themselves in affordable housing in that job range. The area needs to attract industry to help with this, but agriculture still needs to be protected. An example of this is the Wal-Mart distribution center in DeSoto County. It is primarily staffed by people who live in Charlotte County.*
- *Penny Taylor shares this anxiety about economic needs and desires. This has happened too much in Florida where a road is built and then development follows behind it. Ms. Taylor stated that the people the road was going to serve were pushed further away. Collier County is a great example of this. The change from agriculture to housing caused an increase in housing costs and now affordable housing is supplied by Lee County. There should be a clear plan or idea of what should be preserved. Ms. Taylor believes this road is being heralded as a saving grace for broadband access, but broadband is based on population and would mean that a lot of people are moving in. She is unsure if this is what is really wanted and if it will become a repeat of Collier. Immokalee is losing population and LaBelle could lose population if people move somewhere else. Land gets crowded and expensive as developers come in and build houses. There should be an overarching idea like what Lee County has done with their old airport. Ms. Taylor stated that this road is a dream for bringing things to this region, but she is unsure it will bring what is wanted.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski asked if this is a need for regional partnership and/or planning.*

- *Ms. Taylor agreed since once the road is built, things will change quickly. There is a need for a clear plan or guide, because even though there may be a battle in the commission, at least there's a plan.*
- *Janet Taylor mentioned that the Task Force is always talking about agriculture as that is the most important area the Task Force represents. The other discussion has been about evacuation. Ms. Taylor stated that this corridor could split Hendry County and may benefit one side more than the other. She also mentioned workforce and that, while the Task Force can discuss this a lot, but there needs to be trained people. There should be an incorporation of regional training to market people where the corridor is going to go in order to accommodate economic growth.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski asked if any colleges wanted to weigh in.*
- *Donna Doubleday stated that this a double-edged sword to figure out if training should come before jobs. This goes back to planning and the work done by Heartland 2060 with the encouragement of job creation. This six-county plan was put together by local governments and the public. The packet of information provided to the Task Force has information about different types of industry and industry clusters including agriculture, healthcare, and freight. Some of this is there and growing. Logistics and supply chain distribution gets impacted by corridor as a means to move freight. In regard to training, Ms. Doubleday stated that the colleges are responsive to create training as the need occurs and can happen very quickly. Once industries are identified there is a quick turnaround of training.*
- *Bill Ferry wants to stay on the topic of economic development but also discuss the multiuse connectivity for economics, hurricane evacuations, etc. When it comes to broadband into rural areas, population is a driver for that as there is an economy of scale for a provider to be more efficient in places with population. Mr. Ferry stated that the other component is policy. One of the needs is a discussion on policy, not so much on placement or mechanics. Policy is extremely important for how to build that. Some concepts Mr. Ferry would like to get out there such as competitively neutral, non-discriminatory access. Equipment and technology change every day and it's hard to know what they will look like in two to five years. Fiber is starting to be more efficient and there needs to be a discussion on policy for how to set these things up in the future.*
- *Ms. Estenoz stated that she agreed with everything she has heard and wants to learn more. There should be an honest conversation of what communities should look like, not coded conversations that have less meaning than they think they do. When the Growth Management Act was written, it gave the State a big role as communities needed to worry about how they grew and their future, but it wasn't their burden to worry about state resources (i.e. environment, mobility). Florida has systematically dismantled this framework in the last decade. This looks like pre-1985 when a lot of bad planning and development decisions were made. Ms. Estenoz related that she drives 39 miles from Fort Lauderdale to Miami and that it takes 1.5 hours since traffic sits still for a large chunk of that time. That's bad. Don't want to end up there because the old way of development was used, although maybe the Heartland 2060 Plan is the new way. Ms. Estenoz stated that she doesn't want to hear about how comprehensive planning and urban development boundaries will help protect against bad development decisions as she does not have confidence that that will happen.*
- *Mr. Dickman stated that he is sensitive to the remark about getting product in and out as this is very important. He grew up in Florida and saw the citrus industry leave Orlando. He cautioned about being careful what you ask for as previously Tamiami Trail was the main connector for product and when I-75 was built it ruined the economy of Ruskin. He doesn't know all of the small towns, but he sees the effort that they put into preserving their main streets and that shouldn't be lost as it is quintessential Florida. Mr. Dickman acknowledged the discussion about limited access and exit planning but there should be a precaution about losing these main streets. Agriculture is also one of the life bloods of Florida and it shouldn't be lost as it's a major contributor to Florida economy.*

- *Ms. Kiselewski asked if the rural communities should be able to make that decision for themselves as with the agriculture owners.*
- *Mr. Dickman stated that, in the larger prospective, a lot of places can be passed by when traveling on the interstate and drivers never know they are there. There are a lot of special places in the interior of Florida, but the livelihood of individuals shouldn't be disrespected.*
- *Ken Doherty stated that he reflected on the comments discussed and he is looking forward to the panel discussion in the afternoon. As an engineer, the process of this is important. There has been a lot of debate about comprehensive plans and modifications, but all of that will hinge on when communities actually see the alignment. He is curious about the PD&E process and when some concept of where the interchanges could be located will be available. There are a lot of east-west roads which will be intersected by the corridor and the local governments will need sufficient data to make appropriate decisions.*
- **Mr. Watts stated that this is still the preplanning stage. Corridor process will start in January or February and that information will be brought back to the Task Force.**
- *Mr. Doherty stated that sooner would be better as there is a lot to coordinate.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that as swaths are designated, it will take this into account.*
- *Ms. Steed stated that she hasn't looked at what kind of traffic relocation or relief will happen and whether or not a new corridor would contribute to that but it's a huge part of the PD&E. She stated that she works with 39 local governments and many discuss how they remember their main streets before US or state roads were widened. She sees a struggle in the community to recapture the ability to use the roadways, especially when trucks are 30% of traffic right by schools and businesses. This happens all over the country and there needs to be a balance of what the community wants to maintain and the understanding that six or eight lane roadways is not how to maintain communities.*
- *Mr. Wills appreciated that everyone wants to make sure downtown areas are not destroyed. He does not want to see a road like I-75 or I-95 coming through towns such as LaBelle and destroying the small community culture. A lot of agriculture is already gone and this trend has continued. The local government will be key when it comes time to decide the roadway alignment. Mr. Wills loves driving home but the area needs access. The airport in Clewiston is also another opportunity for growth. He would appreciate if everyone takes what will happen to the local communities into account.*
- *Mr. Constance offered a perspective from Charlotte County that the roadway is all about location and there is an understanding that business and industry want to cluster around Airglades. He stated that businesses look for a workforce when they are locating somewhere. This workforce isn't available in Charlotte County, so they go to Orange County. He does not believe that the roadway will provide instant economic opportunities but will in 15-20 years. He stated that everyone has issues with affordable housing so there needs to be an understanding of how communities are planned so that people aren't driving 15 miles in 45 minutes. Neighborhoods should be revitalized so that jobs and residences are in the same area. The Task Force needs to be forward thinking. This process may require changes to the comprehensive plans but that will occur once more information is available. Charlotte County may not get a roadway at all, but the roadway may grow it. If this happens, there should be a development of a new population center, not urban sprawl.*
- *Joe Wright stated that he is here to represent a college but is also involved in agriculture. He said that this conversation can get as basic on economic development as possible. One view is looking at the percent of school kids with free or reduced meals and that tells the story of economic development. The Florida college system, of which his school is a member, adapts quickly for work training programs. Most recently they worked towards a mobile welding lab. His personal business is a dairy farm and the surrounding roadways are overloaded and need to be four lanes. Due to increased traffic, vehicles have gone through their fence a few times a month when it used to be a few times a*

year. There have even been instances of people going on their property and using their internal roadway network. There is a need for roads. One suggestion about agriculture, keeping in mind that all agriculture is not the same, is that there should be more resources for rural and family lands protection, particularly geared towards cattle ranches. He is not in favor of the state owning more land as the state is bad at managing it. People in dairy or citrus are already looking at alternate uses for their land so development is going to happen anyway. It would be smarter to have some thought in it to provide infrastructure. If this happens without it, it will be a bigger mess. Mr. Wright drives 35,000 miles per year and sees that the state's roads are a mess. Something needs to be done but it needs to be done in a smart way.

- Jim Brooks stated that he has lived in Florida his whole life and has seen a lot of changes in Florida, including how Naples was a small fishing village. There are now 21 million people in the state compared to five or six million when he was growing up. The region has tried to get jobs in the area (i.e. distribution centers, Airglades, Highlands Inlands Port), but there needs to be access to the major north-south and east-west roads. Natural resources and areas are enjoyable but there needs to be connectivity. Highlands County is 50 miles north to south and there are three roads that intersect east to west. There is a steel factory at the north county line to supply rebar on the coasts of South Florida but there needs to be a way to get there. Mr. Brooks does not see comprehensive plans as a problem as they are developed for the needs at the time and have to be able to change. For the agricultural lands, citrus has been dwindling and he acknowledges that he doesn't know what the future brings but with this prime property there is a chance for a win-win situation.

10:30 AM	Break	
10:45 AM	Purpose, Needs, and Process Overview; Task Force Work Plan Moving Forward (Continued)	Will Watts, Chief Engineer; Huiwei Shen, Chief Planner; Marlon Bizerra, FDOT Production Lead; Task Force Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Kiselewski stated that the needs discussion would continue after the break and the Task Force should go back to the handful of topics which were not directly addressed, starting with hurricane evacuation.</li> <li>• Ms. Steed stated that the CFRPC has been involved in this for decades as a region. One thing that really needs to be considered is that there is no way to effectively evacuate Central/South Florida on the existing roadway system. Other solutions are not just transportation, part of it relates to the behavior of people. A lot of people have not lived in Florida or been through numerous evacuation situations. There needs to be a consideration of realistic ways to travel. Not having another corridor to work with is pretty scary when looking at anticipated population increases. The solution is not more east-west connections but north-south so that traffic can flow that direction.</li> <li>• Ms. Kiselewski asked Ms. Steed to explain the CFRPC's role in emergency management.</li> <li>• Ms. Steed explained that CFRPC staff are part of local emergency preparedness committees that each county has which also includes law enforcement, fire officials, etc. The CFRPC also does a regional statewide evacuation plan to look at all components of what is involved with an update beginning next year. This looks at how people behave, where evacuation zones are, predicted evacuation times, what network people are likely to travel on, and where shelters are available. As everything changes (i.e. population, flooding), everything else changes, especially with storms coming from every direction. Tourists and newcomers are unpredictable in that situation. Transportation is only one part of this but it's really important.</li> </ul>		

- *Mr. Dickman appreciates these comments but stated that evacuation shouldn't be the only solution. Of his time in Florida, Mr. Dickman indicated that the only storm he had to make a decision during was Hurricane Irma. Right now, the "get out" mentality is the prevailing one. Florida should look at land use and put more money into public facilities to make them more inviting and safer. Not everyone needs to evacuate. This led to gridlock on I-75 from Naples to Tampa with people running out of gas.*
- *Ms. Estenoz wondered if local governments tie their comprehensive plans with growth rates and patterns to hurricane evacuation. She would like a better understanding of clearance times. Monroe County is the extreme example of this with only one road in or out. When local governments allow development to increase, what are the assumptions about clearance times?*
- *Ms. Penny Taylor stated that they encourage the shelter in place option. The idea that hurricane evacuation is facilitated by roadways is in contrast to what happened during Hurricane Wilma when it wrapped around both sides of Florida. Ms. Taylor believes climate forecasting is accurate and storms will be stronger than Irma. There is also a safety issue with evacuation. People need a lot of time to evacuate or get to a school (Collier County schools are evacuation centers).*
- *Elizabeth Fleming finds the MCORES concept paradoxical in a long narrow state surrounding by ocean. More roadways could result in people driving more (i.e. using more fuel) which will then further exacerbate sea level rise. At the same time, they could usher in more development which will then clog the new roadways. This is a reason why this project moved forward but there has to be significant thought given to these roads, so they do not perpetuate the kind of problematic growth that created this mess in the first place.*
- *Ms. Doubleday asked for the Task Force to consider that the state already has congested/stressed highways and there should be an attempt to minimize the impact to locals on roads that are already being used, particularly for access to employment. Crossing highways is problematic in some areas and access to gas, groceries, etc. is all impacted when smaller highways are used for evacuation purposes.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski summarized this as "getting out on state roads is problematic".*
- *Mr. Brooks stated that the Heartland tends to shelter in place except maybe mobile homes. During Hurricane Michael a lot of Southeast Florida crossed Highway 70 which backed up on US 27. People are getting across the state but have to have somewhere to go once they get there. He hopes to see improvements on 70 in the future. There has to be a somewhere for the traffic to go once they cross the state, otherwise they are getting on I-75 and adding to the traffic there.*
- *Mr. Constance suggests that new development be to new hurricane standards. In Charlotte County, the majority of population lives in the western third of the county, but it makes more sense to develop outside of surge area so that they can shelter in place.*
- *Stephanie Vick wanted to also discuss healthcare. There is an opportunity, but just because you build a road and a facility with healthcare doesn't mean providers will go there. Rural areas pay less than urban areas, so it is harder to get skilled people to provide services. There are also now more ways to access healthcare other than a facility/provider on site such as telemedicine.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that goes back to the technology aspect.*
- *Ms. Estenoz wanted to revisit her question about what kind of communities are wanted. There is a chance LaBelle could become part of Fort Myers' bedroom community, which is something that is seen in Southeast Florida. This can create expensive housing among other issues.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski mentioned that the Task Force has touched on quality of life, access, and where people want to live. She asked the Task Force to discuss other needs related to transportation or economic development such as water quality.*
- *Ms. Steed stated that she hoped new corridors would have opportunities for changing technology to be incorporated into them. If the environment is disrupted and patterns are changed, then everything*

*possible should be included. Technology changes so fast that it is difficult to predict the future (i.e. electric cars, aerial vehicles, drones). The Task Force needs to think outside of the box. These are not the road corridors of 50 years ago but are the things driving the communities of the future.*

- *Mr. Constance stated that right now new technologies without predictive planning in urban areas are difficult but could fit in if they are planned for.*
- *Mr. Ritter mentioned that more employees working from home also gets people off of the roadways. Broadband access may allow companies to give flexibility to their employees and put fewer people on the road.*
- *Mr. Buhr mentioned connected and autonomous vehicles. For electric vehicles, there are black holes which require users to plan well in advance for where to stop and how to get home, particularly the area north of Alligator Alley and south of Kissimmee between I-75 and I-95. Planning limited access highway with chargers would help support this usage.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski asked the Task Force if they had any more comments about workforce and how to prevent brain drain.*
- *Mr. Wills stated that more students are in vocational training than going to college. Electricians and HVAC specialists are needed to build anything before the industry even comes. A lot of college graduates work in a field they didn't study anyway. Water quality will also be strained with the more rooftops that are built. Any growth will stress the roads and municipalities so there has to be a look at the big picture. He wondered what affordable housing would look like in LaBelle and perhaps there should be workforce housing for teachers, etc.*
- *Ms. Doubleday stated that, from a workforce standpoint, common feedback is not the need for hard skills but for soft skills such as work ethic, showing up on time, problem solving, and decision making. This appears to be lacking.*
- *Jennifer Carpenter asked for examples of mobility options.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that it is open to any options for mobility. Mobility as a service is kind of like Uber or Lyft where users can subscribe to a transportation service provided by a public entity.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski asked the Task Force if there are transit needs.*
- *Mr. Nandam stated that this ties into the technology conversation and how communities can build around technology.*
- *Brian Starford stated that environment preservation is not really covered in the needs. From a water management perspective, there are fee-owned, less-than-fee owned, and conservation lands which meet the areas of responsibility while providing environmental or recreational opportunities. Mr. Starford stated that is critical in the evaluation process that these lands are avoided. Monitoring activities provide information on these networks a lot of what they do is the groundwork for the scientific foundation for regional water supply planning, modeling, water levels, and quality. These scientific evaluations help planning activities to ensure the future water supply.*
- *Mr. Watts introduced Ms. Shen who discussed the Wekiva process as an example and asked what multi-use means to the Task Force.*
- *Mr. Dickman asked for a step back from the Wekiva example as it is frequently referred to yet the legislation that initiated it was very different from the MCORES one. Wekiva was related to congestion on I-4 as a beltway to Orlando. The design was to mitigate environmental impacts and not spur economic development. The legislation was drafted such that recommendations would become law. There are similarities but Mr. Dickman believes the Task Force needs to understand that it's not completely comparable. The Task Force should read the bill as the conversation has gone off track of what is supposed to be done.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that the purpose of discussing Wekiva is as an example of how guiding principles track through the process but acknowledged that it was a very different process.*

- *Mr. Brooks stated that he is somewhat familiar with Wekiva Parkway and that it has been in the works for over 20 years, but he is not sure if it is completely open yet. He wants to know how this compares with MCORES needing to be built in 2030.*
- *Mr. Dickman stated that, based on calculations that he has, Wekiva cost \$64 million per mile due to the elevation and techniques to mitigate and avoid environmental areas. This project had nothing to do with promoting economic development and was for relieving traffic on I-4. These numbers are astronomical and he assumes that at some point there will be a discussion of the economic feasibility.*
- *Mr. Pendergrass asked if it is the role of the Task Force to determine financial feasibility.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that any project has to pass financial and environmental feasibility. No steps are being skipped in the process but there has to be a starting point.*
- *Ms. Penny Taylor asked how many interchanges would be on the corridor.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that that has not been decided yet.*
- *Ms. Penny Taylor found it fascinating that there are discussions about the accommodation for water and sewer connectivity with limited interchanges. She would like clarification of this connectivity as they follow growth, not a road.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that the corridor would try to accommodate any type of utility. Traditionally it would not but the wording of the bill opens up that opportunity.*
- *Ms. Penny Taylor asked if there would be an opportunity for pipes to be laid.*
- *Mr. Watts said that that was the case.*
- *Mr. Buhr stated that wastewater disposal would become easier with this right of way, particularly in places with clay layers. In the past, FDOT has been hesitant for this type of use. However, connectivity does not come without growth. The economic circumstances are pretty evident with the opportunity for the sharing of resources for potable water and/or wastewater along the corridor. The corridor would provide connectivity in these areas.*
- *Ms. Estenoz felt that water and/or sewer within a roadway corridor was even more speculative than power or broadband. There is already an issue with existing wastewater as treated wastewater still causes a nutrient overload to existing waterways. She wants more transparency about colocation as it is speculative about where growth will go.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that the afternoon's panel members would discuss subsurface utilities.*
- *Mr. Ferry wanted to contribute to the broadband/colocation conversation. If you think about utilities or internet, it is inefficient for a building with several units to have multiple lines, so there is colocation in the basement and there is a handoff. Colocation for this type of project has to be rethought as all of the providers don't want to be in the same conduit. As it's done now, companies go into the right of way and lay their own lines in their own conduit because they don't want them all in the same one. There needs to be a policy about equal access and non-discrimination and a plan for providers to have their own lines.*
- *Mr. Nandam stated that as the Task Force goes through the process there will be guiding principles. One thing that that may mean is the kind of partnership that needs to happen to make sure the right colocation is happening as it relates to different types of infrastructure.*
- *Mr. Dickman asked about the Wireless Deployment Act which prevents local governments from taking down utility poles because they want to collocate internet on them.*
- *Mr. Langford stated that this is putting the cart before the horse. He is not talking about water or sewer but there would be access if it was going in. Right now, Hardee County would like to be on DeSoto's water and sewer system but there is no way financially for that to happen. It can only go where it is convenient. There are a lot of things that go into water and sewer districts but it's up to each community. Each local community should sit down and figure out what they can do in that area as the state is not running it up and down the corridor.*

- *Mr. Watts stated that this will be needs based and every opportunity would be looked at.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that this moves into some of the processes that happen after the Task Force.*
- *Mr. Watts clarified that all of the answers have not been found yet and the Task Force can help define what multi-use means.*
- *Mr. Constance stated that he appreciates Mr. Langford's comments and while services can be provided every mile, not every section will have it or need it. Local communities will have to make this determination. Grants through the Department of Environmental Protection or others could help get this infrastructure put in but the right of way would at least be there and the corridor provides this.*
- *Mr. Watts reminded the Task Force that it is long term planning to accommodate future needs.*
- *Ms. Penny Taylor asked for clarification that FDOT does not allow multiple types of infrastructure on easements.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that complete streets promote different modes. Limitations are due to the space needed.*
- *Mr. Buhr stated that it is something that is not really allowed despite communities requesting it. There are long water lines to get potable water to places that do not have it. Some places try to dispose effluent 10 miles away and can't afford it but that is the only option if they want population growth. This should not be the only reason to construct this corridor, but it should be taken into consideration, especially if there is a plan for economic opportunity as it all links together.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that this would not be the last time this subject is discussed.*
- *Mr. Nandam stated that this leads into the leveraging of existing corridors and the colocation of the multiuse corridor.*
- *Ms. Estenoz asked for a clarification of what a non-toll frontage road is.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that this is an example where access is maintained with the existing road.*
- *Ms. Estenoz asked if I-595/SR 84 is an example of this.*
- *Mr. Watts said this included parts of Wekiva.*
- *Mr. Nandam clarified that I-595/SR 84 is an example.*
- *Ms. Estenoz agreed that SR 84 has more access.*
- *Mr. Constance stated that he grew up in New York and service roads work very well. The major road can be put in and the outer right of way can have local roads that do not pay a toll. The through traffic is then located in the center pipeline. He also asked if the PowerPoint graphic included solar panels as he has seen in Germany on existing extra right of way.*
- *Mr. Watts said the process is open to that vision.*
- *Ms. Carpenter stated that topics such as non-motorized trails, freight and rail, public transit, and quality of life have not really been discussed. These things can relate to tourism and ecotourism which she believes was intended by the legislation.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that if the Task Force is interested, someone in this topic area could be included in the next panel.*
- **Mr. Watts stated that FDOT is seeking input from all stakeholders which is then narrowed down to three or four locations for the PD&E with the process starting in January or February. Anything that is drawn will be brought back to the Task Force and there will start to be opportunities to put lines on a map.**
- *Ms. Shen spoke more on the process with the slide provided to Task Force members in their packets. She identified key takeaways including that, as the process moves from Task Force to planning and project development, data will be collected at a finer resolution. Under project development everything will be project specific. Public engagement activities will continue to occur all the way through the Task Force, planning, and project development.*

- *Ms. Estenoz had a question about the scope such as where the financial analysis occurs, who does it, can the road pay for itself, and how will it meet the relevant criteria for being financially feasible. She would also like to know what the financial impact is on communities. South Florida has Express Lanes and communities along them express bitterness about them being tolled. People who can't afford this are stuck in the more crowded free lanes. The option is to pay up to \$20 or sit and not move.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski clarified that the Task Force is looking for an understanding of what level of financial analysis is done at each stage in the process.*
- *Ms. Shen clarified that Florida's policy is that the construction of Express Lanes does not take away free lanes from the public but this topic can be discussed again at future meetings. Right now, the Task Force should provide general guidelines. Since there aren't any alternatives currently it is difficult to say but the discussion should focus on general information and the process.*
- *Mr. Lauritsen wanted to know what the planning horizon is for this roadway and will traffic projections and analysis come into play with this. He wanted to know if Florida will have to conduct this again in 20 years. Understanding the timeframe would help the Task Force determine the need of the project.*
- *Ms. Shen stated that FDOT is generally consistent with the MPOs' timeframe of 20-25 years. This is a starting point but MCORES is a substantial change in the way FDOT does its business that the Task Force needs to be visionaries to look even further in the future. Travel behavior and technology will change and need to be used to make Florida a place where people want to live, work, and play.*
- *Mr. Dickman felt that the last slides seem to try to illustrate the purpose of the legislation. He referenced Subparagraph C3 [sic], Line 209 on page 8 of the legislation that mentions "shall evaluate the need for". He wanted to know if there is a no-build option available. There seems to be an assumption that the corridor will be built by 2030 but the legislation's language means that the Task Force evaluates the need for it.*
- *Ms. Shen clarified that the no-build option will always be evaluated, and that the Task Force can look at operational improvements.*
- *Mr. Dickman countered that it does not say during the PD&E, but rather that the Task Force will do that. He understands the PD&E process. He wants to know if the Task Force has to wait to give its recommendations even though the law says that the Task Force can bring it up.*
- *Ms. Shen clarified that it can be a guiding principle.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski clarified that that was partly what the morning's discussion was for. The Task Force decides on guiding principles and they can say that there isn't a need. This is overly general, but it is whatever the guiding principles are that the Task Force comes up with.*
- *Dr. Paul Gray acknowledged that the Task Force has more questions than answers. He is interested in the financial analysis and wondered if all three Task Forces recommended roads what kind of financial capacity FDOT would have to build all three as it would be very expensive. Dr. Gray would like more information on bonding/lending authorities and the relationship between the three roads.*
- *Mr. Watts clarified that FDOT has to be able to afford it and that funds for other projects would not be diverted for MCORES.*
- *Ms. Penny Taylor mentioned the no-build option again and reiterated that she would also like to see a budget.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that the process has to start somewhere with the corridor analysis and where it's going.*
- *Ms. Taylor expressed wanting to know how the project would move forward financially and what kind of budget it would entail.*
- *Mr. Watts stated that that is part of the project, but it is too early to make that determination. The corridors and interchanges have to be developed first.*

- Ms. Taylor said that this would be after the Task Force sunsets.
- Mr. Watts clarified that the corridor would not be built unless it is financially feasible.
- Ms. Kiselewski suggested that a per mile amount would give the Task Force an idea.
- Mr. Nandam stated that an important element is the cost and the segmentation of the corridor. The cost won't be known until the Task Force develops the Guiding Principles and the corridor goes through the planning process as some amount of engineering must be done in order to determine cost.
- Mr. Dickman asked if there were historical costs from the Wekiva project to give the Task Force an idea of what this type of project may cost.
- **Mr. Watts stated that historical costs can be provided to the group.**
- Bill McDaniel stated that this is the infancy stage of the project and he believes the Task Force's questions are all viable. With the way the legislation is set up, he feels that the process is counterintuitive so they can't ascertain components like budget constraints, swaths, expenses, and environmental concerns. He expressed frustration and suggested the Task Force be patient in getting through the process to a point where they can get answers.
- Ms. Kiselewski stated this will be taken into account.
- Ms. Fleming asked for clarification of Ms. Shen's prior comments regarding the no-build option.
- Ms. Kiselewski clarified that the Task Force must reach consensus, but it does not need to be unanimous.
- Ms. Fleming asked for the clarification of what consensus means.
- Ms. Kiselewski reminded the task force that the package of Guiding Principles can be supported, accepted, or a Task Force member may choose not to oppose. She reminded the Task Force that there is a lot to do before the Task Force gets to that point and suggested they move forward with some of the other types of needs.
- Mr. Dickman acknowledged that Ms. Kiselewski has a difficult job given the diversity of representation on the Task Force. He suggested that minority suggestions also be included so that those voices are not left out.
- Ms. Shen provided a brief summary of the work plan.

11:45 AM	Public Engagement Activities	Marlon Bizerra, FDOT Production Lead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Nandam introduced Beth Kigel to go over public input to date and future meeting dates.</li> </ul>		
12:00 PM	***Lunch*** on your own	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Nandam thanked the speakers from the morning's presentation and Ms. Kiselewski for leading the discussion. He also thanked LaBelle for their hospitality in hosting the Task Force meeting.</li> </ul>		
1:30 PM	Panel Discussion: Environmental, Community, and Economic Resources in the Study Area	Wildlife Protection Representative; Native Plant Society; Water Quality Representative; Utility Representative; Economic Development Representative; Community Planning Representative; Agriculture Representative;

		Task Force Members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Nandam introduced the panel session and handed it off to Ms. Kiselewski who introduced the panel members</li> <li>• Ricardo Alvarez – Regional Director, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, South Florida</li> <li>• Mark Cantrell – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Liaison to FDOT</li> <li>• Jennifer Codo-Salisbury – Deputy Director, Central Florida Regional Planning Council</li> <li>• Eugene Kelly – Conservation Biologist, Chair of the Florida Native Plant Society’s Policy and Legislative Committee</li> <li>• Dave Kramer – Bureau Chief, Environmental Resource Permit (ERP), Southwest Florida Water Management District</li> <li>• Jerry Parrish – Chief Economist and Director of Research, Florida Chamber Foundation</li> <li>• Nicholas Zembillas – Recognized Subsurface Utility Engineering Expert</li> <li>• Panelists were given the opportunity to provide a brief biography of themselves before the floor was opened to Task Force members to ask questions.</li> <li>• Ricardo Alvarez is the South Florida Regional Director for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services which covers Martin County south to Monroe County and West to Lee and Collier Counties. He works to promote and advance the Department’s policies in South Florida and ensures that stakeholders can connect. His background is in sustainable agriculture and has worked with the USDA, Peace Corps, and other similar projects throughout the world.</li> <li>• Mark Cantrell’s agency is part of the Department of the Interior where he has been for 25 years. Fish and Wildlife is known for refuges, of which there are many in Florida and along the MCORES. The responsibilities of his organization include managing, monitoring, and protecting migratory birds, recovering endangered species, and expert environmental impact work. They are talked by the US Congress to have experts in a number of areas to determine impacts and is working with FDOT to review any proposed plans. Mr. Cantrell acknowledged that it is important that they are there today. While it is early in the planning process there has been a lot of progress made in the last few months.</li> <li>• Jennifer Codo-Salisbury is part of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council and mentioned the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization for the southern counties. They are working on an update to the Heartland 2060 Plan and Ms. Codo-Salisbury’s position is to work with communities and local governments for planning and growth in the region.</li> <li>• Eugene Kelly has worked in Florida nearly his entire life and, as part of the Florida Native Plant Society, his mission is to conserve native plant communities in Florida. This is a holistic look at natural resource protection that goes beyond plants and plant communities. He spoke at the last public comment period and stated that he wanted to ensure that plant species are included on the list of endangered species, not just animals, as there are twice as many federally listed plant species. Mr. Kelly looks forward to sharing analyses results with the Task Force in the future. With 23 federally listed plants in one small portion of study area alone, he wants to make sure plants aren’t forgotten. This should be considered in terms of long-term management of needs (i.e. habitats for animals) and issues such as invasive species management should be part of deliverables moving forward.</li> <li>• Dave Kramer is with environmental resource permitting which regulates new construction and redevelopment, which includes roadways. Part of this review includes the protection of water resources from a storm water standpoint, the insurance that quality/quantity of water is maintained, and that resources are protected to the maximum practical extent. Wetlands impacts and mitigation are also appropriately handled.</li> <li>• Jerry Parrish is with the Florida Chamber Foundation which is charged with looking 30 years into the future and coming up with solutions for Florida, including both current and future issues.</li> </ul>	

- Nicholas Zembillas has worked in both the public and private sectors, including time at FDOT. He is currently the owner and operator of a global engineering firm. He is considered a subject matter expert and has helped to write standards in other countries in these disciplines.
- Ms. Kiselewski opened it up for the Task Force to ask questions.
- *Ms. Estenoz wanted to discuss the Heartland 2060 Plan as it has been mentioned that there needs to be an overarching plan as the construction of roads by themselves can create unpredictable growth patterns. She has tried to view the Heartland 2060 website, but it has not worked and she finds it difficult to drill down into this plan at a more granular level.*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury said that stakeholder groups and the community contributed to it as it was underway. Core values include the stewardship of natural and water resources, respect for agriculture, children's future, and the value for the community. The Plan included multiple factors such as regional transportation corridors and the environment and where the region is from an education and employment standpoint. As they look towards an update, updated statistics for communities such as LaBelle will help determine the future, but it may not be exact. This update also includes economic modeling which uses future nodes for future growth whereas historical modeling showed those areas built off of historic communities.*
- *Ms. Estenoz asked if there is a plan.*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury stated that building a resilient regional plan is part of the update.*
- *Mr. Buhr asked how concerns about the roadway and overlays can be dealt with without being catastrophic to individual main streets*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury stated that that can be done at the local level which is where it should be done.*
- *Dr. Gray asked if the plan looked at roadway needs and if that included expansion and construction.*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury stated that the plan looks at the existing regional network and how it will function over the next 20 and 40 years, not new roadway corridors.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that the plan does have some recommendations about how new roadways should be developed.*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury concurred that there were core guidelines and considerations for the environment and job creation.*
- *Bob Jones had a question for Mr. Parrish about what types of economic impacts can be determined this early in the process.*
- *Mr. Parrish stated that, until there is a path, it is difficult to look at specific economic development issues. Looking at metrics from Florida's Scorecard, an example is that 31.1% of children in Hendry County, or 3,310 kids, are living in poverty. The impact of the creation of jobs can help with this in regard to tax benefits and economic benefits to get people out of poverty. When recruiting businesses, things like transportation and broadband access are considered as well as its impact on the delivery of educational services. He cannot determine what those jobs would be, but businesses look for improved transportation. There isn't one specific thing for rural economic development but rather a combination of factors.*
- *Mr. Lauritsen asked what the relationship is between that and job creation as economic development is a key component. He asked for examples of roadway construction that either went well for economic development or did not.*
- *Mr. Parrish stated that economics considers necessary (does not guarantee an outcome) and sufficient conditions (outcome will occur). The Trade and Logistics Studies 1.0 and 2.0 and soon to be 3.0 is used for transportation planning in the state of Florida. There has to be education that a road is there. People may relocate from other places and workforce is an important component. Florida has the top state college system in the United States and can help produce people for those jobs. Florida could do*

*better at marketing this to the outside world and let people know that roadway improvements are coming as well as a stronger workforce.*

- *Dr. Gray asked if this could really get 3,000 kids out of poverty and do the people coming in take the jobs. He cannot see that a road would change the demographics of the community.*
- *Mr. Parrish stated that the Florida Chamber's Florida 2020 Report produced 39 goals which include having 100% of kindergarteners ready for it and having third graders reading at a third-grade level. This would make a significant dent in child poverty. The goal is to have less than 10% in poverty by 2030. The Atlanta Federal Reserve has also been working on the same issue. Some jobs, such as transportation and logistics, help with this and increase manufacturing in particular offers a significant opportunity. There is a substantial cost to inbound freight since half of containers leave empty and an increase in manufacturing can better balance this so that Floridians can have cheaper inbound freight.*
- *Mr. Parrish also discussed the value of a job to the State of Florida. Economic development previously looked at just tax revenue but there is also value in a diverse economy. While it varies by county, at a state level, each job produces \$8,000 - \$10,000 in tax revenue alone. So, if each job costs less than that to create then there is a benefit. This would take people out of poverty by giving them higher incomes. There is also a secondary effect of not having to pay for social services.*
- *Mr. Constance asked Mr. Alvarez to clarify what his region is.*
- *Mr. Alvarez stated that it was Martin to Monroe counties as well as Lee, Collier, Hendry, and Glades counties.*
- *Mr. Constance asked why the Central Florida RPC is on the panel instead of the Southwest Florida RPC, or both.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that the CFRPC was chosen due to the Heartland 2060 plan and the indication that the Task Force wanted to have a more robust conversation about this.*
- *Mr. Constance asked Mr. Parrish if there were any studies focused on the impact of technology and telecommuting to encourage efficient economic development due to shorter commute times.*
- *Mr. Parrish stated that he is not an urban planner and does not keep up with that literature, but he has heard discussions about creating jobs where people live. When thinking about the cost of living, the Scorecard marks the percent of people who are cost burdened by housing, but that only takes into account the actual cost of rent, not the travel costs. That combined with the full cost of driving a car from where you live is the real cost. Economists need to do a better job explaining this to people to make life, work, and retail more efficient.*
- *Mr. Constance asked if this also included daycare.*
- *Ms. Estenoz expressed that she was still having difficulty connecting a roadway to reductions in poverty. Broward County has a 15% poverty rate with 290,000 people (including 89,000 children) in poverty and yet Broward has plenty of roads. She wants to know how you get from a new road to pulling a child out of poverty as it is a significant leap. If you consider \$8,000 - \$10,000 per year is worth spending to create a job, that does not include the billions spent to build the roads. There are a lot of numbers and data, but the Task Force is charged with thinking about how a new road pulls a child out of poverty in a specific community. She wants to know if this is planned at this kind of granular level or if that is perhaps something that Heartland 2060 addresses. Ms. Estenoz stated that there is a difference between correlative and causative and the process has to be open and honest.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that the current meeting's focus is on needs and opportunities. Other agencies may be involved in this, not just FDOT alone.*
- *Mr. Dickman had a question for Mr. Cantrell. He mentioned that Collier County has a significant amount of wildlife/human interaction and that his question comes from reading the MCORES bill as it relates to other topics such as federal lands, NEPA, the Clean Water Act, etc. He wanted to know what*

*the role of services is during the process and what the Task Force should know about endangered species and critical habitat. He wondered if there had been any research about economic value and jobs involved in preserving ecology. This meeting has talked about jobs and the economy as part of the bill so intuitively there must be some value to preserving the ecology.*

- *Mr. Cantrell stated that there are economic impacts of outdoor and recreation pursuits conducted. In particular, tourism is a huge fuel to Florida's economy and wildlife-based recreation has increased tremendously. The Department of the Interior has a new program to encourage people to get outside and enjoy the outdoors which is also in national wildlife refuges and other federal lands. These studies value the ecology and the environment as it provides recreation and other economic benefits. (i.e. trees provide oxygen to help abate pollution). This is quite valuable and can't be replaced otherwise. Mr. Cantrell offered to provide this information to the Task Force members. Regarding the question of federal, state or private lands, this goes back to the review process of NEPA. Some federal lands are set aside for parks or refuges, but it is a complex topic that falls under Section 4 of the Transportation Act. With an overlap of federal and state regulations, it is important to determine who the decision makers are for road construction impacts.*
- *Mr. Dickman asked if the USFWS would be involved throughout the process.*
- *Mr. Cantrell replied yes and that while it would be nice to avoid the important things, it is difficult to avoid all of them.*
- *Ms. Steed referenced the work done for the Florida ecological greenway which ranked resources and habitats which originally began with the Heartland through the efforts of various agencies and scientists. It was determined that every part of the Heartland is important and the Florida Greenways is a priority system that has been have adopted. She wanted to hear others' perspectives on what is the most important resource to protect when locating a new corridor across nine counties.*
- *Mr. Kelly stated that when looking at the Florida Forever areas on a map, these are some of the most important connections to preserve as they provide functional habitats. There also needs to be thought given to how to maintain the viability of the area. Simply avoiding them with the transportation footprint is one thing but they may still be impacted by, for example, land managers ability to prescribe fires as the urban/wildland interface can make this difficult. There has been a significant investment made to conserve this land and this stands to be compromised by road development and induced development. It is a combination of being mindful of the needs that have already been invested in and those still needed.*
- *Mr. Alvarez stated that for corridors there must be balance in what is being developed. As new commodities and opportunities arise in agriculture this can impact existing communities. The Department of Agriculture is looking into innovative ideas in water and energy usage, particularly as it relates to rural and agricultural communities. There needs to be a balance between these communities and preserving the ecosystem to make sure water is flowing, the Everglades is preserved, and that larger urban communities have clean water too.*
- *Mr. Zembillas stated that there is a challenge with the infrastructure already in place. Upgrading facilities such as for wastewater expansion may be different as the local entities will have to pay more to expand these services. The public needs to look at this from a rate of return standpoint in that upgrading the facilities can spur economic development. Florida's industries have been very proactive and visionary but FDOT can help with this too.*
- *Mr. Kramer stated that from the perspective of his program it would be inappropriate to respond as their main goal is to represent all property owners in any corridor and make sure that they are not discriminating on the type of development it may be. The goal is to make sure that the change in land use can be regulated to make sure it doesn't impact environment, etc.*

- *Mr. Ritter asked Mr. Alvarez about challenges to agriculture. He thought back to when burning in Lake Okeechobee was postponed due to concerns for US 27 and other corridors. Since Mr. Alvarez had discussed the benefits and disadvantages of transportation corridors for agriculture, Mr. Ritter would like to hear his perspective on what the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services sees as the opportunities or challenges for agriculture.*
- *Mr. Alvarez stated that a major challenge is still in the citrus industry due to greening and canker and that a lot of land has been lost. Another issue is the USMCA import market and the stabilization of farmers. This is a bipartisan issue and the Coalition has been vocal about voicing disapproval to Washington. Climate change is also involved and as well as the cost of development in some parts of South Florida. This cost is a big challenge for any farmer who wants to expand their operations. Agritourism is on the rise as well as an encouragement of more local agriculture, family farming, and urban farming. There is a reshaping and reconsideration of what agriculture is (i.e. In the country vs backyard operations). Introducing industrial hemp into Florida with 2018 Farm Bill is one opportunity for states. The CBD market has thousands of uses for this commodity and represents a diverse opportunity for all parts of Florida.*
- *Mr. Alvarez mentioned that other opportunities would be the implementation of innovations and technology in farming.*
- *Mr. Lauritsen thanked him for being on the panel and appreciated hearing this information from an expert. He wanted to follow up with Ms. Codo-Salisbury and stated that plans and visions are fantastic but wanted to know how those plans are implemented in order to avoid those kinds of growth strategies.*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury said that, in the example of the Heartland 2060 Plan, each local government is a stakeholder and they refer to the Plan as they do with their own Long Range or Comprehensive Plans. The RPC was created from the local governments that it serves so it is everyone's plan to carry forward.*
- *Mr. Lauritsen asked if that is typical for RPCs around the state.*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury stated that she cannot speak for the other regional planning councils but that it is the pretense for how they were formed.*
- *Mr. Wright appreciated Mr. Alvarez offering some alternatives but felt that he stopped short. A big challenge is the concern of urban sprawl and farmers need incentives not to convert their land to other uses. Carbon trading started in the grasslands which is good for wildlands. He wanted to know if Florida could do carbon trading alone or if the federal government would need to be involved.*
- *Mr. Alvarez stated that he could not necessarily speak from the federal perspective about how it would work out or look but there are opportunities for carbon sequestration or incentivization for farmers in the broader sense. For hemp, it offers opportunities for soil remediation, etc. and, being a commodity that utilizes less resources (water), the amount of product that can be produced is more advantageous. The question is how to get the agriculture community involved which would have to be through education, awareness, and the development of capacity amongst the community, so they know innovations are possible and what it represents in the larger scheme.*
- *Mr. Wright asked if the other panelists have looked at it as some cattlemen have started to write articles about it.*
- *Mr. Kelly said that he can't speak directly to the carbon question but, in conversations with ranchers, he has heard that they feel squeezed. They want to continue in their tradition as several generations of their families have been in agriculture and cattle and they feel vulnerable when development starts to encroach on their lands. Difficult to be viable. Really looking for other economic values that can help sustain the livelihood and this question points to the need for more research.*

- *Ms. Estenoz asked a question about the permitting process and whether it would be a cumulative impacts analysis. No distinction between a road or a Wal-Mart or a school was mentioned but the cumulative impacts would be very different.*
- *Mr. Kramer replied that that is correct.*
- *Ms. Estenoz asked if it would be within a single drainage basin for a road.*
- *Mr. Kramer said that roads are different, and the regulations are different. For transportation impacts, it would likely cross many drainage basins and the requirement of the program would require that the road builder mitigate within the same drainage basin to the maximum extent.*
- *Ms. Estenoz asked that, if the proposal is to mitigate within the existing drainage basin then the Department does not have to do cumulative.*
- *Mr. Kramer replied that that is correct.*
- *Ms. Estenoz asked if permitting was done by the districts or the Department.*
- *Mr. Kramer replied that it is done by the water management districts, but those conversations have not yet occurred. There have been similar projects such as cross-state rail projects that the Department of Environmental Protection was chosen to oversee. This could be a combined effort with two water management districts involved.*
- *Ms. Estenoz questioned the state ERP permitting process which lacks a requirement to do cumulative impacts if they are within the basin. She also asked Ms. Codo-Salisbury if the 2060 Plan required that comprehensive plans be consistent with the RPC Plan.*
- *Ms. Codo-Salisbury replied that it is not a requirement as RPCs are not regulatory entities. They serve the local government and act as scribes for a regional vision.*
- *Mr. McDaniel had a question for Mr. Zembillas regarding the costs of certain utilities and that municipalities don't subsidize the rollout of broadband as it is all private capital. He asked for policy considerations for broadband and what more progressive states may be doing.*
- *Mr. Zembillas replied that there are a few states doing that and having ongoing discussions within DOT such as California and Texas yet there are no set policies in place.*
- *Mr. McDaniel asked what kind of considerations are given for a new corridor ("green field") versus an existing state road (i.e. Call Before You Dig).*
- *Mr. Zembillas stated that, in that case, they ask what kind of facility it will be. Utility procedures dictates what's reimbursable. The biggest concern for utility infrastructure on a new road is planning for what that utility will accommodate, not just what its already specified as. There needs to be an assurance that the industry/Department designs and builds something that won't need to be upgraded in the near future.*
- *Mr. Buhr asked Mr. Zembillas if there is an opportunity for the cooperation of water supply between counties similar to potable water sharing with Tampa Bay water and Orlando wastewater.*
- *Mr. Zembillas replied that it is certainly an opportunity and it would also bring employment as staff are needed to take care of that.*
- *Mr. Buhr asked if that was an opportunity for FDOT to reconsider its past policies.*
- *Mr. Zembillas stated that he couldn't answer that but perhaps it should be discussed. He has not seen it happen in other states and it would depend on the type of project delivery/build (i.e. following FDOT guidelines or a public-private partnership).*
- *Mr. Constance asked for clarification on the RPC and assumes that RPCs do not plan but act as a facilitator for city and county governments to discuss projects which may impact others or that they may need additional input on. Counties are the ones who develop long range plans. Mr. Constance thinks the MCORES process should go through some regional planning councils to get more input from cities and towns who may have more to say about the alignment of the road. He wants to look at how this will affect the state from a high level so that 25-50 years from now there is not a question of what*

*should have been changed. This is his biggest concern. He knows that people like the no-build option, but the waterfront is busy, and the green is going away but people are still coming. There has to be a decision about where those people go.*

- *Mr. Parrish stated that those are the two scenarios and that with another four million people expected to come to Florida by 2030, planning needs to be better than for the last four million people.*
- *Ms. Fleming had a question for Mr. Cantrell and Mr. Kramer. What has happened in Florida certainly in this region is there are parts of public land base acquired as mitigation for road projects, then a decade goes by and there's a need to bisect a parcel which is mitigated. Can't mitigate for that again. Finite amount of land. As agencies, how do you stop that or approach that?*
- *Mr. Cantrell heard about many environmentally sensitive areas and a winding path would try to avoid all of them. In looking at previous lands for mitigation, those are some of the highest priority lands, some of which may not have yet attained their full impact. These would be prime to avoid as they were set aside. Mostly wetlands and other species impacts. Do need to avoid, it is a challenge to avoid all the environmentally sensitive/important areas. Endangered species, even historic properties. There is a need to reach a balance and adequately restore other lands to offset those impacts yet again.*
- *Mr. Kramer went back to the preferences for roadways and disturbing lands. It is a preference from a regulatory stance that includes not just conservation lands but all places that a road should not be built. Mitigation banks offset previous impacts and those are the hardest to develop or impact. Those must be identified but there may be more sensitive lands that will have to be evaluated.*
- *Mr. Cantrell stated that earlier discussions talked about ecological processes like water flow and prescribed fires. Ecological integrity is important and postage size mitigation doesn't keep the natural communities functioning. Connectivity is important and fragmentation should be avoided.*
- *Mr. Doherty wanted to follow up on the environmental permitting process with Mr. Cantrell as he understands the challenge of federal permitting, particularly given the schedule of the project. Since substantial construction completion must be conducted by 2030, he wondered if there is an expedited federal process to help meet that timeframe.*
- *Mr. Cantrell stated that the MCORES process is new and has an accelerated timeline, especially in preplanning. There are staff across the state dedicated to reviewing FDOT projects as their sole task. Looking at a comprehensive plan is easier than conducting this review piecemeal over several small segments in order to consider the overall environmental impacts. He welcomes the process and is ready to dedicate staff to this project given how significant the impacts could be.*
- *Mr. Doherty asked if, since they look at similar things, FDOT and the reviewers can work concurrently to have a smoother process and if there is an agreement on that.*
- *Mr. Cantrell stated that they already have working relationships.*
- *Mr. Lauritsen stated that working lands and ranch lands have significant ecological values as ranchers will conduct prescribed burns and preserve wetlands on their property. He has heard that the state is reluctant to purchase such land due to the cost of maintaining ecological lands. One estimate states that for a 30-kilometer radius of wood stork property, there is an ecological cost of \$1.9 billion. There are costs associated with not purchasing the land, but it is also expensive to maintain and manage. Mr. Lauritsen would like to hear more about fragmentation and how it influences maintenance costs as roads come in and encroach upon them.*
- *Mr. Cantrell stated that, due to economy of scale and the urgency of timing, this should move forward sooner rather than later before parcels are broken up and fragmentation begins. Sometimes this divide is only on paper, but it still results in a management cost and can increase transaction costs to put it back together. One single large area provides the same ecosystem services as many small parcels of habitat, but the smaller parcels are at a much greater cost (i.e. time to open and close gates on various properties). Smoke management is also crucial as they have to wait for the right wind*

direction in order to reinstate ecological basins. Lightning strikes used to burn thousands of acres but now the fire cannot go very far before it meets a road and can't get the same amount of coverage. The panther also suffers from the same impact as it has to cross fences across the fragmented landscapes.

- Mr. Kelly wanted to reinforce comments made about the larger infrastructure project. In terms of green infrastructure, this should be protected first as it is more efficient to manage resources when natural area protection is approached in that manner. The Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge was created to protect plant species, but this is more challenging because of fragmentation.

**2:45 PM**

**Break**

**3:00 PM**

Discuss Potential AMME Considerations

Karen Kiselewski, Facilitator;  
Task Force Members

- Mr. Nandam welcomed the Task Force members back from the break and had Ms. Kiselewski start the conversation about all components of avoid, minimize, mitigate, and enhance (AMME).
- Ms. Kiselewski stated that this would be a broad discussion about key topics, and phrasing for guiding principles would be ideal. She mentioned that there is a hard stop to the conversation at 4:30 for the public comment period.
- Ms. Estenoz started the conversation by proposing two guiding principle ideas. The first is to prioritize existing corridors and to prioritize opportunities to upgrade existing infrastructure to meet the economic objectives and needs. The second is to maximize opportunities to reverse the environmental impacts of existing roadways like Tamiami Trail or US 441 over Paynes Prairie. Environmental projects to raise the roadways can be opportunities to reverse environmental impacts for these roads that were built a long time ago.
- Dr. Gray should like to be more specific about endangered and threatened species to specify globally imperiled such as the scrub to protect native cover systems.
- Mr. Lauritsen wanted to add onto Ms. Estenoz's suggestion. Another chance to enhance and reverse historical environmental impacts is where I-4 crosses the Green Swamp region near the East River to the Green Swamp. FDOT is looking to create a land bridge which would help with restoration and benefit the entire state. With the Greenways Network including the Peace River after I-4 had severed it, this can help bring entire system back into higher ecological value
- Ms. Fleming suggested adding existing natural resources under avoidance. Land should be set aside as mitigation. There should be clarification that the corridor can be used for different things such as a road or a wildlife habitat. There needs to be more clarification about which corridor is being discussed.
- Mr. Buhr requested for a better perspective of economic development with a map showing the median income of some counties compared with the coastal counties. For the connected and automatic vehicles chart he would also like this changed to include electric vehicles which could benefit from the corridor.
- Ms. Kiselewski asked if Mr. Buhr would like to propose a guiding principle for electronic vehicles.
- Mr. Buhr said that charger locations for electronic vehicles should be shown. Not specifically ones at shopping malls but some super charges which are available for different types of cars
- Mr. Nandam suggested that Mr. Buhr's comment is to add to the technology aspect of corridors that electric vehicle infrastructure should be part of the corridor.
- Mr. McDaniel also added to the connectivity of technology piece that there should be nondiscriminatory/neutral access to FDOT right of way for providers.
- Tracy Hood mentioned that he had heard about enhancements to east-west corridors and it may be worth mentioning that those enhancements need to continue.

- *Ms. Doubleday suggested that for hurricane evacuation purposes there should be an effort to minimize negative impacts to locals who reside in the towns along the way. Not necessarily for the evacuation of locals, but their amenities and access to employment, etc.*
- *Matt Caldwell stated that he would like to see more feedback on the enhance piece. He sees positives in the existing policies in place, existing roadways, and existing land development and comprehensive plans. The imbalances and those things which should be avoided or mitigated should be utilized in order to not destroy valuable resources. Mr. Caldwell would like to know how to enhance existing infrastructure planning that is in place on a regional scale as it related to rural land stewardship. Regarding earlier comments about using existing infrastructure, Mr. Caldwell stated that a wildlife crossing is needed on I-4.*
- *Ms. Steed stated that a new corridor would have to have connectivity to the existing roadway network. This includes making the opportunity available so that people can also have access to some of this connectivity. This is not just about restoring the natural environment but making sure that people can enjoy the enhancements that may come from this.*
- *Mr. Dickman asked where there are opportunities on the existing network to enhance bottlenecks which cause problems for the movement of goods and services. He suggested identifying 20 towns and cities in the corridor area. He has concerns about a capital road project which may draw the economy away from the main streets.*
- *Tamara Sakagawa stated that this relates to the economic development conversation, that there should be an enhancement of what locals have an interest in and understanding of where they want that to happen.*
- *Mr. Pendergrass reiterated that Lee County supports this project and that it is a focus for the county.*
- *Mr. Starford suggested that the corridor should avoid impacts to existing scientific data collection sites.*
- *John Kaliski stated that the Task Force follow up with what was discussed in the meeting's morning portion.*
- *Mr. Lauritsen suggested that, where possible, mitigation citing should be encouraged within the Florida Wildlife Corridor footprint and should align along existing boundary.*
- *Mr. Constance asked if there was an opportunity to ask regional planning councils to discuss this at their next meeting. With the incorporated cities and counties sitting at the table, it may be helpful to have that information as another source.*
- *Dr. Gray wanted to add that fragmentation should be minimized under number seven, specifically including dark skies due to their impact on humans, wildlife, and pollinators.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that the morning's needs discussion will be utilized to develop the guiding principles as well.*
- *Mr. Nandam asked if a summary of needs should be reflected in the guiding principles*
- *Mr. Kaliski stated that these are two related but separate products: Summary of Needs; and Guiding Principles for how to address needs.*
- *Dr. Gray stated that street light design should be considered for the corridor due to their impact on dark skies.*
- *Ms. Fleming added to Dr. Gray's comment that the legal status of lighting should be examined. FDOT required streetlights be put along I-75 in the Big Cypress National Preserve. The four corners were set aside for mitigation and added to public land base. FDOT likely has a state law about intersections needing to be lit. Ms. Fleming would like this information to be included at the next meeting.*
- ***Ms. Kiselewski suggested that it may be a safety related issue, but that information will be provided at the next meeting.***

- *Ms. Steed stated that, across the country, some DOTs have changed their lighting to be downward which still allows for safety but reducing the impact on dark skies. Dark skies are also critical for the Air Force range training as lighting can mess with night vision training. This is important as it is the only such location for the Air Force east of the Rocky Mountains.*
- *Mr. Thompson asked if economic development had been stressed enough. He asked that it be emphasized again as it is still early in the location determination process and it is difficult to be specific on what is needed.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski mentioned that this can be from a community and business development standpoint.*
- *Mr. Dickman stated that the Task Force should focus on panthers and other critical wildlife habitats. Land should be acquired for wildlife mitigation and crossings. There should be an examination of best practices for crossings if they have to go in but there is no moving forward if the impact to panthers and wildlife habitats can't be avoided. Those areas should not have a roadway going through them.*
- *Mr. Lauritsen appreciated Mr. Dickman mentioning that and noted that as Ms. Shen mentioned with the Wekiva guiding principles, there's some language that's similar and the translation in the planning process was elevation. He requested adding crossing language into guidelines.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that panther crossings are part of what the Task Force looks at.*
- *Mr. Kaliski reviewed language based on Wekiva and prior Task Force meetings noting information in the packet. The next step is to think about how each of these carries forward in the process, which is longer than Wekiva's was. The facilitators are trying to capture some of their notes as examples and to have the intent of the Task Force documented.*
- *Ms. Carpenter stated that critical resources and economic development have been discussed but there are also experts in tourism and ecotourism on the coast. There may be an opportunity for the people who are the gateways of these resources to connect in a way that has not yet occurred and for communities to leverage this.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski stated that comments received earlier about what should be discussed at the next meeting would be incorporated and that any other comments should be directed to her or Mr. Nandam.*
- *Dr. Gray stated that nothing was mentioned about avoiding cemeteries and historical markers should be included as well, depending on what they are marking.*
- *Wendy Mathews suggested consulting with the master site file available through the Department of State which is a very thorough list of what is known. Separately, while it is probably covered under number seven, multi-generational families in cattle and agriculture have a deep connection to the land and their rural heritage is important to these families.*

4:15 PM

Next Steps

L.K. Nandam, Task Force Chair;  
Karen Kiselewski, Facilitator

- Mr. Nandam had John Kaliski recap the meeting and asked the Task Force to bring this information back to their organizations so that they know what is going on as well.
- John Kaliski mentioned that the next meeting will bring the data that was not in the packet but acknowledged that much of the data that has been requested has now been provided. **Other documents, such as the Heartland 2060 Vision, will be posted on the website. Traffic data will also be included in the February meeting as well as a synthesis of the community vision and comprehensive plans that already exist. The plans will be explained about how they tie together and relate to the purpose of the Task Force. There will also be opportunities to discuss transit, trails, and other non-highway modes as well as clarification on the financial process. The next meeting will include language about regional and local needs as well as refined language about guiding principles. As more information becomes available, status reports will be a part of future**

**meetings.** Meeting materials for this current meeting are posted online and a meeting summary will be developed in two weeks.

**4:30 PM**

Public Comment

L.K. Nandam, Task Force Chair;  
Karen Kiselewski, Facilitator

- Julianne Thomas is at the meeting on behalf of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida and wanted to discuss a variety of topics. One of the first things she addressed is the notion that something has to be built because the population is going to continue to grow. People can be directed to the most appropriate places to live by directing infrastructure in areas that are already developed and protecting those that aren't. This can be done with proper planning, but the planning is backwards for this project. No need or problem has been identified. One Task Force member urged caution about what is asked for and no one asked for this road. Parallels with Wekiva have been discussed but there was a need for Wekiva and there is no need for this toll road. There is a regressive tax on everyone that uses it and it's more important than ever to make sure that it's actually necessary and solves a problem. There were discussions about economic development and revitalization, but Ms. Thomas wondered how a toll road will bring lasting good jobs as there is no data or analysis as to how a toll road can revitalize communities. She also wanted to talk about the panther and how important it is to protect their habitat, especially because the statute says that they have to. There is data about the habitat that they need, how to expand it, and how they move around. This information needs to be considered and valued very carefully.
- David M. Forman lives in Broward County and owns property in Highlands County. As a representative of the Audubon Society, he opposes toll roads. They create compartments like cages in a zoo. As a grandparent and great grandparent, Mr. Forman is concerned about the next generation having a deteriorating state and planet. He questioned if they wanted to be remembered as the generation that buried their heads in the sand. A recent study authored by Ken Rosenburg announced a 29% reduction of the bird population in North America which amounts to three billion birds. 529 species are in decline, many of which are in Florida. The human lateral landscape is hurting birds. 50 million Americans enjoy outdoor activities and birding is one of the fastest growing as evidenced by the Merritt Island annual birding festival and the many chapters of the Audubon Society. Building more roads will not help the long-term sustainability of Florida and existing roads should be enhanced such as US 27 west of Orlando.
- Lindsay Cross is the Government Relations Director for Florida Conservation Votes and is a Pinellas County resident. It resonated with her how many questions there are and how there is a lack of a strong need. Questions have been based on an assumption of benefits but there is knowledge about what the real threats are, which aren't being discussed. Florida's website recommends sheltering in place in your own county. There have been discussions about broadband, but that assumes that the roads will bring better education even though increased technology leads to children that are more distracted and prone to depression. There is an assumption that roads will bring doctors and clinics, but the real threat is that roads and pollution harm human health. There is an assumption that sewer will be good for water quality and quantity, but more acres and miles of impervious pavement increases pollution and decreases the quantity of water. Ms. Cross said that this roadway feels like a bad relationship or a job that doesn't fit and a reason such as "he's got a great car" is why you should be in that relationship. She recommends that the no-build option be at the beginning, middle, and end of the Task Force's documentation.
- Tracy Whirls is the Executive Director of the Glades County Economic Development Council and has been in Florida for 25 years where she has worked with many of the smaller communities. As someone who evacuated for Hurricane Irma, Ms. Whirls believes that additional hurricane options are desperately needed. Some coastal communities can accommodate residents in mobile home parks,

and some don't have to leave but 65% of residents in Glades County live in mobile homes. In 25 years, the Governor never called for an evacuation but then Clewiston was evacuated. By Wednesday morning, I-75 and I-95 were already packed with more cities than being evacuated. She experienced extreme congestion on the roadways with traffic backed up for miles and there was an inability to get fuel or hotel space, none of which was available south of Atlanta. She implored the Task Force to consider that when evaluating the need for an evacuation route in South Florida.

- Susan Caruso is a retired teacher and feels as though this meeting is the last class of the day. As a member of the Sierra Club, Ms. Caruso is mostly concerned about environmental damage. Fragmenting habitats is tantamount to destroying them. The way the legislation progressed did not start with FDOT and those who drafted it are not urban planners, but think they know what is best for urban communities. She is impressed with the Task Force members who have a desire to do the right thing. The map in the room with the overlay of water, agriculture, and natural resources is almost all red with no place for a road. She thinks the Task Force is being asked to make terrible sacrifices when none are necessary and those were already made those when roads such as I-95, the Florida Turnpike, and SR 80 were built. There is a quality of life in rural areas that can't be found in urban areas. She would like to know how many children would be lifted out of poverty for each mile of highway built. If lawmakers really care about that then money should be directly spent on education, job training, and sheltering in place. These are all things that would benefit rural communities, not an unneeded roadway. A road can always be built but it cannot be unbuilt. She wanted to know what would be lost if this proceeds and thinks many of these questions should have been answered before the legislation was passed. She recommends the no-build option and encourages community planning.
- Marian Ryan from Polk County stated that green infrastructure is a natural support system for native species, sustainability of water and air resources, and impacts quality of life of human life. These areas should first be identified and conserved before other aspects are address. This project could impact huge swaths of Florida's Ecological Greenway Network which is needed for species like the Florida panther. This includes existing conservation lands and Florida Forever, among others. Six of Florida's top cattle counties are within the toll road study area and are used to connect habitat. This is not just a destructive path of road but will also lead to urban sprawl and a new heat island while Florida is hot enough. This can lead to a significant difference to those that live on the edge. A change in the edge will change the composition of creatures that live there through things such as pollution, predation, and roadkill. The focus should be on green infrastructure, not an unneeded toll road.
- Dan Kauffman thinks this is an important issue and has no specific expertise but has seen a lot in his lifetime. He wanted to reinforce what had already been said and quoted Einstein as saying that insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results. One of the afternoon panelists asked what the connection was between the roadway project, general progress, and poverty and Mr. Kauffman does not believe there is one. In looking at the past, there has been unbridled progress and poverty still exists while sprawl increases and the environment collapses. What is really lacking here is imagination because doing the same thing over again is unlikely to solve any problems.
- Bill Lambert is from Hardee County and represents the antithesis of the people with the green No Build signs. He has worked in economic development in Hardee County and understands the rural ideology. Mr. Lambert does not want to see it destroyed but they are facing millennial children leaving rural areas for urban areas. People coming from Broward or Pinellas will say that this is wrong, but he believes they are doing things wrong. The urban areas are creating the need for a road and it is needed.

- Michael McGrath is a Sierra Club member from Lee County and is part of the No Roads to Ruin Coalition which is a grassroots movement currently consisting of 63 members and growing. Mr. McGrath read the partners who are currently part of the Coalition which speaks to the diversity of voices that want to see opposition to the toll roads. He recommended the Task Force go with the no-build option to preserve the rural heritage of Florida.
- Cris Costello is part of the Sierra Club and stated that the statute says the Task Force will evaluate the need for a new toll road, but the no-build recommendation can only come from the Task Force if it is a guiding principle. Of the 47 members of the Task Force, 22 are state employees (i.e. MPOs, RPCs, WMD), nine are county employees, and three are state university employees such that 72% of the Task Force is paid directly or indirectly by the state. She questioned if the Task Force is truly unbiased and representative. A minority report should be allowed and facilitated but it should get just as much attention as any recommendation that comes from this body and the state funded positions should be made transparent to the public.
- Jennifer Hecker is the Executive Director of the Coastal and Natural Estuary Partnership which represents Federal, State, County, and local government and cities including 10 counties and 25 cities, almost all of which are within the corridor. Their mission is to unite central and southwest Florida to protect the environment. Ms. Hecker stated that they recently completed a study which looked at the impacts of climate change on habitats. She has provided factsheets to give Task Force members a resource of all critical current and future habitats in the corridor region. This can aid natural resource management and transportation/land use planners to avoid, minimize, mitigate or enhance impacts to this critical resource. A valuation study underway is also looking at natural resources as economic drivers to understand how future impacts will also impact them. This involves modeling future scenarios and determining their economic impacts. There is a fact sheet online that can also be used as a resource.
- Dale Gillis is president of the Highlands County Audubon society and is concerned with where the proposed toll roads are going. It looks as though the routes are going through the most pristine and important lands in the state. In particular, Mr. Gillis says that this looks like the Heartland Parkway which was defeated a few years ago and also had no enthusiasm for it. He is concerned about the fragmentation of the wildlife habitats. He has particular concern for the conservation of bears and panthers. US 27 has existing bear crossing areas and he is concerned that the Southwest Corridor will block the natural movements of nature. Highlands County has important conservation lands in the southwest corner of the county which Audubon has worked to protect, and they are very close to the proposed roadway. This area should not be disturbed. He was told that FDOT did not request these tolls roads before the legislature demanded they look at them and he does not think toll roads are good for tourism, working people, or for the state to raise revenue. He does not think these roads will pay for them themselves and that taxpayers will end up footing the bill. Roadways in congestion areas should instead be widened and the rural areas should be asked what they need instead.
- Matthew Schwartz is the Director of the South Florida Wildlands Association which was founded in March 2010. This is very much a part of their mission and the impacts that are coming from it. This is something that has been done before such as the Florida Turnpike in the 1950's which has obvious impacts. Even the HEFT [Homestead Extension of Florida's Turnpike] is not just a corridor as development is seen all along it. This corridor is a sprawl inducing monster for entire western side of Florida. He sent an email in the morning to press/colleagues with a document from the Fish and Wildlife Services which called the project a disaster for the panthers and all the wildlife along the corridors. This place is the Amazon of North America. The problem with public lands is that the panthers don't know where public land is. The panthers live on the private uplands. The Everglades is useless for the panthers and most wildlife especially because of development, Hurricane Irma, sea

level rise, and the vegetation. Panthers tend to live north of Big Cypress. The process is all wrong. The Task Force is all that should have been funded but instead there is a fully authorized project to completion.

- Leonard Bryant is from Highlands County with Save our Creeks who has worked on litigation to open a creek for a canoe trail, but it has been stuck in Tallahassee 20 years. He was reminded that this road has been found three times in studies by FDOT and private companies and has been found not economically feasible. Former Governor Scott previously removed it from the list of roads. Money should be spent on existing roads and not on roads through Florida's natural areas. Commissioners in Highlands, Polk, and Glades counties know that roads are needed more than anyone else but there needs to be lessons learned from the past about the way to build roads. Building them off the ground would allow everything to flow underneath them. This would also address issues with sea levels so that the roads won't flood, and people can evacuate if they need to. Mr. Bryant believes the evacuation need for the corridor is irrelevant since the state mandate is to shelter in place. He does not believe that existing roads will get funding if another major roadway is built 20 miles away. There are enough existing roads that just need to be reengineered to be higher and within the existing right of way. He stated that he only knew about this effort due to a Sun Sentinel article and recommends the Task Force find a different path to solve this problem rather than a new corridor.
- Jan Davidson is from Manatee County and thinks that this is an important group that is here to discuss an important subject. The discussion here is the implementation of a bill that was rushed quickly and quietly through the Governor by key interests. Public input was only ensured so that this doesn't look like a card trick. Ms. Davidson considers this the biggest environmental mistake since the Florida Cross Barge project and is worse than the Heartland Parkway which was abandoned due to financial infeasibility. Toll roads will impact the few remaining wildlife corridors, increase water and air pollution, and encourage development in the last remaining Florida wildlands, rivers, and habitats. She has lived in Florida since she was a toddler and has enjoyed the oceans, rivers, and Keys but has seen Florida sold out and paved. She asks the Task Force to recommend the no-build option and save funding for more needed investment projects.
- Glenn Sorensen is from Manatee County and has spent the last 40 years in Florida, primarily in private industry and telecommunications and secondarily for Palm Beach County IT. He believes that relying on a highway system to enhance broadband capability would do more harm than good. He worked on the largest fiber optic loop in the state for Palm Beach County and technology is rapidly going to make it irrelevant. Broadband access does not need a roadway or right of way to be built, particularly if it takes ten years to build. Mr. Sorensen spent time in Europe during college and finds it less environmentally intrusive to develop a light railway over a superhighway. A tollway will also require toll access and bypass small towns that the need employment.
- Diana Umpierre wanted to comment on what was mentioned earlier as she has served as the Chair of the International Dark Sky Florida Chapter (and has previously served as president and vice president of the national organization). This topic is very important as nothing tells us more about the spread of humans than city lights. This roadway will be a catalyst to expanding and creating new towns and industrial centers. This will result in the loss of the remaining dark sky in Florida which is important for our cultural heritage and for the nocturnal habitats of birds and fireflies. The Everglades Agricultural area has lights for miles. The intersection of I-75 and US 29 has a lot of lights despite its location next to the Big Cypress Preserve which has been designated a dark sky area and a wildlife/panther refuge. She read a quote by the Florida cabinet and stating that this proposal goes against everything that the department stands for. If working agricultural lands are developed, they will be lost forever and will only increase pollution. This quote was said about only 2,000 acres and she wondered how much more true it would be about the MCORES project. She then showed Task Force members a photograph of the expected area of impact.

- Faith Scripter has been a resident of Glades County since 1992 and is at the meeting to represent herself, the community, and her son. She lives on 80 acres of pristine land which is one of the last conservation areas in the county, so she sees wildlife. She is concerned that this would be demolished and ruin the wildlife corridor for endangered species such as the Florida panther. She does not want animals' homes to be crushed. Ms. Scripter believes the toll road is unnecessary and that other routes could be widened instead of destroying citrus groves and homes.
- Renz Torres has lived in Highlands County for 18 years and also wanted to express support for the no-build option. He is thankful for the Task Force member who mentioned induced demand and that there is no connection between a roadway and more diverse jobs and a more educated community. Few people have talked about the no-build option. He is against this road due to the environmental aspects alone. He is interested in the alternatives to the no-build option such as alternative transportation in the form of buses or bike infrastructure, which has not been discussed. The Task Force should explore smart growth and dense growth. Highlands County is sprawled out around US 27. The population used to be centered around downtown Sebring but now it is random commercial sprawl instead of being able to walk. There should be an effort to attract more people to a denser area in order to use economies of scale for transportation and so that people can bike places instead of being so automobile dependent.
- Doug Morrison is from Southeast Polk County and thanked the Task Force members who stayed. He stated that this has been done before with the Heartland Parkway being turned down due to a lack of need. He sees the same scenario in this situation. When looking at the maps on the way, there is not an acceptable route for this tollway. Highway 17 would serve many of the needs that were stated during the day. He quoted Will Watts of the FDOT as stating that the no build is always an option and that the Task Force can make any recommendations they want. Mr. Morrison stated that projects like these with no demonstrated needs but costing hundreds of millions of dollars are why people lose faith in the government. He reminded the Task Force that they can make any recommendations they want, including the no-build option. He urged the members to reach consensus on no-build.
- Catherine Price is from Lake Wales and stated that many in attendance are there due to concerns about the state of Florida and where money is being spent. She expressed that she previously ran for the Senate due to her concerns. She stated that these meetings are difficult to sit through and that there is a lot going on that doesn't make sense to the public. When she heard that 34 members are being paid to be here, she lost some of her pity for them whereas the remainder as in attendance due to their concerns about the state. Other cities and counties are playing by the rules and then this gets thrown in the middle of the pile as those in Tallahassee work around the process. People are saying there's a lot of traffic, but this is creating congestion and people where there aren't people. The focus should be on areas with traffic and reducing carbon emissions which MCORES is not doing. The public will stand up and speak out at meetings. She believes that even those that believe the no-build is the best option will be constrained by the political environment. She is very cynical about the outcome of the meeting. There needs to be an environment and not a destruction of the sea with this project.
- Holly Schwartz illustrated the transportation needs already in place by discussing FDOT District 1's work program. She stated that all counties will be impacted by the Southwest Corridor and detailed the money spent within the program. She recommended that the construction of an unplanned toll road should not be expedited when there is not enough funding for the already identified needs. Ms. Schwartz hopes that the no-build option is considered.
- John Cassani agreed with most of the concerns expressed by the afternoon's panel and sees significant problems with this road including habitat fragmentation. There were painful lessons learned from the construction of I-75 including flooding and water quality that are still issues today.

He hopes the committee will do a full cost accounting to determine the net benefits and economic benefits, but he is in opposition to the plan as it is now.

- Mr. Nandam thanked the members of the Task Force, the public, and those Task Force members that stayed for the public comments. He reminded the audience that the next meeting is in February and that there is a community open house in Collier County.

**TBD**

**Adjourn**

L.K. Nandam, Task Force Chair

Text Format:

Regular – Agenda outline; *Italic* – Discussion notes; **Bold** – Action items

**Notes Consolidated By: Erin Kersh**