

Subject: Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Task Force Meeting #5

Date: Wednesday, March 04, 2020

Location: Bert Harris Agricultural Center Auditorium
4509 George Boulevard
Sebring, Florida 33875

Attendees

In Attendance

L.K. Nandam, FDOT
 Tracy A. Hood, FDOT
 Jennifer Carpenter, FDEP
 Pam Johnson, FDEO
 Robert Richards, FDOE (Penni Hochuli substitute)
 Tom Graef, FWC
 Tim Vanderhoof, Enterprise Florida (Eric Anderson substitute)
 Tim McGrath, FDBPR
 Donna Doubleday, CareerSource Florida
 Rechell Johnson, Volunteer Florida
 Melissa M. Roberts, South Florida WMD
 Brian Starford, Southwest Florida WMD
 Donald Scott, Lee County MPO
 Chris Constance, Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO (Gary Harrell substitute)
 Colon Lambert, Heartland Regional TPO
 Nat Birdsong, Polk TPO –City of Winter Haven
 Bill McDaniel, Southwest Florida RPC
 Pat Steed, Central Florida RPC
 Katie Worthington Decker, Florida Chamber of Commerce
 Gerald Buhr, Florida Rural Water Association
 Bill Ferry, Florida Internet & Television Association
 Sherry Ambrose, FEDC
 Gary Ritter, Florida Farm Bureau Federation
 Dr. Jeff Allbritten, Florida SouthWestern State College (Bob Jones substitute)
 Glenn Little, South Florida State College
 Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti, Polk State College (Tamara Sakagawa substitute)
 Matt Caldwell, Maxwell, Hendry & Simmons LLC (arrived after introductions)
 Andrew Dickman, 1000 Friends of Florida
 Dr. Paul Gray, Audubon Florida
 Elizabeth Fleming, Defenders of Wildlife (arrived after introductions)
 Wendy Mathews, The Nature Conservancy (Janet Bowman substitute)
 Penny Taylor, Collier County
 Cecil Pendergrass, Lee County (David Murphy substitute)
 Ken Doherty, Charlotte County
 Mitchell Wills, Hendry County (Jennifer Davis substitute)
 Elton Langford, DeSoto County
 Mike Thompson, Hardee County
 Ron Handley, Highlands County
 Rick Wilson, Polk County

Not in Attendance

Janet Taylor, FDACS
Jason Lauritsen, Florida Wildlife Corridor
Weston Pryor, Glades County
Stephanie Vick, FDOH
Shannon Estenoz, The Everglades Foundation
Keith Walpole, Florida Trucking Association
Reg Buxton, Collier MPO
Mark Futrell, FPSC

Task Force Meeting		
10:00 AM	Welcome	L.K. Nandam, Task Force Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary L.K. Nandam welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He thanked Highlands County for hosting the meeting and introduced Commissioner Ron Handley. Mr. Handley welcomed the Task Force members, FDOT personnel and the public. He expressed appreciation that FDOT staff has chosen to move meetings to all counties for full participation. This county and municipalities are in full support of this corridor for economic development, goods movement and to get people through their area and improve standard of living. He noted that this is our 5th meeting now without a definitive route so we look forward to nailing down the route and creating a plan for where it will be best positioned in this county. He noted that it is high season for Highlands and it is busy, and he discussed the lunch options. He turned it back over to Mr. Nandam and Karen Kiselewski. 	
10:05 AM	Introductions, Update, and Agenda Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karen Kiselewski, Facilitator L.K. Nandam, Task Force Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Nandam stated that Governor DeSantis put a very high emphasis on safety for those using our infrastructure; we also know that safety is important for those at the Task Force meeting, so we have hand sanitizer for everyone. We are following the requirements of the legislation and want to be on track to get our recommendations to the Governor by October 1st. This morning we have a panel to discuss corridor utilities needs and opportunities. The panel is here to discuss how this infrastructure is implemented. Then we will address corridor needs. In the afternoon we will talk about corridor planning process and address questions from previous meetings including data requested. We will have conversation about Guiding Principles throughout the day. We like to hear the public comments. Mr. Nandam explained how the public can make comments and asked task force members to stay for public comments. Ms. Kiselewski asked the task force members to state their name and who they represent, as roll call for the meeting. Mr. Nandam introduced FDOT staff. Ms. Kiselewski introduced other staff. Mr. Nandam stated that for continuity of conversation we want all task force members to attend each meeting as best you can. Ms. Kiselewski went over the safety and evacuation protocols. She went over the objectives of the meeting and briefly reviewed the materials in the member packets. Mr. Nandam clarified lunch options. 	
10:15 AM	Government in the Sunshine Law – Video	John Fricke, Office of the Attorney General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Kiselewski reminded the audience of the Sunshine Law and introduced John Fricke who can answer questions about it. The Sunshine Law video was played. 	
10:20 AM	Corridor Utility Needs and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark Addison, Community Investment Program Manager, Polk County Utilities Division Terry Brigman, Former CIO and Director of Information Technology, City of Lakeland

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterling Carroll, State Engineer Florida Rural Water Association • Eric Labbe, Economic Opportunity and Community Investment Director, City of Winter Haven • Bill Lambert, Director, Hardee County Economic Development Council • Robert Ryall, Associate Vice President, Financial Services Practice Lead, Arcadis – US • Task Force Members
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- Mr. Nandam stated that in past meetings task force members have asked about infrastructure, so we have a panel to address some of their comments.
- Ms. Kiselewski mentioned that today is about water, wastewater, broadband and other utilities. She briefly introduced each panel member and then allowed them to give longer introductions about themselves.
- Mark Addison introduced himself as the Community Investment Program Manager for Polk County Utilities in Winter Haven. He is responsible for a \$150 million capital program. He has experience in utility planning, design and construction, environmental permitting and compliance, as well as water resource planning. He is actively involved in the Polk Regional Water Cooperative and water resource management and supply.
- Terry Brigman introduced himself as the former CIO and Director of Information Technology for City of Lakeland. From an IT perspective, he has experience with all the business functions. Lakeland has 350 miles of fiber to help not only the city’s needs (saving the city \$3 million a year), but to help our citizens and businesses. He is retired and continues to live in Lakeland and supports the effort here.
- Sterling Carroll introduced himself as senior engineer at the Florida Rural Water Association for 16 years. He has extensive experience with design of wastewater and water corridors. The Association is concerned with rural communities and their ability to participate in the corridor, and he looks forward to the opportunity to discuss this and how the corridor can enhance the communities it serves.
- Eric Labbe introduced himself as the Director of Economic Opportunity and Community Investment for the City of Winter Haven. He has 20 years experience in urban and regional planning. In the City of Winter Haven, we have experience with “dig once” policies and dark fiber and the implications of extending infrastructure. He has worked with Pat Steed regarding broadband infrastructure so he hopes he can contribute.
- Bill Lambert is the Director of Economic Development Council for Hardee County and manages the industrial development council. For last 20 years he has been part of infrastructure in rural communities and he looks forward to this road; he thinks it is one of the greatest things that can happen in this region. He hopes he can be of some support in broadband and how to spread it across the rural community.
- Robert Ryall introduced himself as the lead of the financial services practice within Arcadis. Through their financial services practice we help water, sewer and stormwater utilities fund and finance infrastructure. His family has been here for over 100 years and things have changed a lot since then and will continue to change. It is very exciting to be a part of this group that has an opportunity to

shape our future. His thoughts with water and sewer are that there are roughly 40,000 providers in North America, so it is segmented and challenging to work with. Water is unique because it is heavy, large and widespread. We are challenged because we need infrastructure in place before we can attract people to come and pay, so debt funding is critical for water and sewer.

- Ms. Kiselewski opened the floor to questions. *What are the challenges, successes and opportunities?*
- Mr. Carroll stated when we look at water systems that run through rural communities, they are typically old and in the worst condition. These communities experience stagnant growth or often reverse growth and often have stagnant wages, so they are working on a shoestring budget. Unfortunately, a lot of funding sources are not available for relocation of utilities.
- Ms. Kiselewski asked if there are any places that have done it well?
- Mr. Ryall said he thinks Mr. Carroll is right. There are unique challenges in rural water systems. Rural water systems are typically smaller, so efficiencies of scale are not there and there are other challenges associated with that. There are also opportunities such as if a corridor existed that included utilities it can give communities options to connect with a larger water provider to try to leverage efficiencies of scale. It may provide an opportunity to be in the water business by selling it wholesale to other providers. Maybe investment in emergency services. So yes, there are concerns but also opportunities.
- Dr. Paul Gray stated that rural development is not something he is well versed in, but he lives in Lorida which is only 10 miles from here where there is poverty, and he wants them to have economic opportunities, but when we talk about rural areas and it sounds like “if we turn this town into a city it will be more prosperous.” Is there a rural economic model that doesn’t involve just turning into a city and growth? He said he can’t reconcile how we are going to grow without just turning into a city.
- Mr. Bill Lambert stated that rural communities, especially in Florida, have languished behind, and that has led to an out migration, so we need to make changes. He never considered the road turning the area into a massive urban area, but he thinks it will make us more competitive to where we can diversify our economy. Agriculture is becoming so efficient that it employs less and less people, so we need to diversify, and this gives us an opportunity to connect with the urban areas to give us a chance to survive without ruining our way of life. For rural communities, if the road is too far from the communities then it is impossible to get the utilities to the people. We need to consider that we need to get the roads nearer to the communities for cheapness and ease of connection.
- Mr. Labbe asked, what opportunities exist in attaching these communities to the tech infrastructure (broadband)? The lack of connectivity almost exempts you from certain industries that require that kind of infrastructure. Aviation and higher education won’t look at rural communities because they don’t have the services required to run them. We have to consider putting in the conduit and opening the economic opportunities to these communities. It doesn’t crush other industries either, it enhances it. He knows a man that operates drone services to count trees and find diseases. He can get this done in a day rather than pay someone for a month of work. It is an opportunity to enhance and build upon it from a jobs perspective.
- Mr. Brigman stated there are a lot of people willing to get out of the big cities and work in small home offices, but they need connectivity.
- Gerald Buhr stated that the biggest problem we have is disposal of effluent. He can see economies of scale associated with this infrastructure that would help that. He thinks what we are missing is that the economic problems in these areas are great; and many people can’t be here because they can’t afford to skip a working day. FDOT has a false prohibition on water disposal, but he thinks engineers say it can be done effectively. So, we get the growth from the highway and the infrastructure in place to handle the new demand and solve a problem as it is created.
- Ms. Kiselewski asked, do you want to comment on aquifer recharge and things like that?

- *Mr. Addison stated for future water supply we don't even meet the needs for the next 20 years; water resource management is key here, both saltwater intrusion and having enough water for consumption. Maybe use reclaimed water and more traditional supplies. We are going to need not only power but also water. There may be funding available from the water management district so this is certainly something the task force should consider.*
- *Penny Taylor stated that this is a limited access toll road with interchanges spaced at...we don't know how far. Are we suggesting FDOT is going to lay out the utilities? Who pays for this? Then if it is not connected on the road then this is a pointless argument.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski asked some panel members to talk about examples.*
- *Mr. Labbe answered that in Winter Haven they have implemented a "dig once" policy, meaning that when we are doing work, we are going to put conduit in for fiber. Conduit is very cheap. We didn't know how to do this at first, but we asked about it and the city paid for it. Someone pays for the ditch and we just throw in the conduit. This is a "will you allow us to do this while you do that?" scenario. There are opportunities for us to work with public or private entities to do utilities while we are already doing the road work.*
- *Mr. Addison added that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, so corridors are linear. But often challenges for utility providers are transportation projects that occur that don't provide space for utilities projects. So, when he thinks about this there is an opportunity to say, "can we put in a utility and/or a recreation corridor alongside your transportation corridor." Service providers would need to pay for that, but there are a lot of opportunities for local communities to get funding for this. He urges the Task Force to consider not just transportation along the corridor, but also utilities, recreation and other things.*
- *Mr. Nandam responded to Ms. Taylor. He stated that typically when we plan transportation corridors, we add utilities later, but here we want to identify what utilities needs there are for a multi-use corridor. There are examples within communities that have done this too. We need to define the guiding principles according to what our needs are.*
- *Mr. Bill Lambert stated that the county he represents decided they needed broadband in the community ten years ago, but needed to address last mile fiber issues. What we did was fixed wireless internet systems (a point source hard fiber line that goes into radio tower like system to provide high level internet connectivity to many people). The entire infrastructure for Hardee County was \$2 million. But if the road comes through that gives us a pipe with more fiber, we can greatly improve the system. The greatest impediment we've had is that we also have microwave backhubs, but those need to be constantly upgraded as people use more and more bandwidth, whereas fiber doesn't have that problem. If you can get fiber in, then we can get these fixed points and bring internet services to these rural communities. We will put the fiber in the pipe if you put the pipe in the roadway.*
- *Sherry Ambrose stated the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has programs that assist rural communities. Last meeting on the workforce component we talked about **how communities will be able to get tech assistance in implementing this. Could staff speak to whether communities will get the assistance they need to get these projects done?***
- *Will Watts responded that there is some language going through the legislature that is earmarking funds for this, so we are addressing how do we engage and move forward with broadband expansion.*
- *Katie Worthington Decker asked a question regarding dark fiber (fiber not in use for communications). Her question stems from last meeting "what is the appetite for this?" There are people that say there is not enough demand. So what is the state, or whoever, doing to incentivize companies to come in and close that digital divide?*
- *Mike Thompson responded regarding CenturyLink. As Mr. Bill Lambert said in Hardee County, we reached out to CenturyLink who had no interest in upgrading Hardee. When a competitor came in, we*

were able to get fiber. He has fiber in his office that isn't lit yet but it's ready. If not for the wireless provider competition coming in, we wouldn't have it.

- Mr. Labbe stated if a trunk line were in this corridor there is opportunity for growth. In Winter Haven when we put the fiber in the ground, we can lease it to providers. DEO offers a Florida job growth grant for infrastructure so that job growth can happen. There are opportunities for smaller communities, if there is a trunk line that exists in these areas, the smaller providers will come in and provide service.
- Mr. Brigman stated one thing we learned from all we did was that we need cooperation between municipal and state so that we can address the needs. If we can create processes and procedures for cooperation, we can help these extremely rural areas get broadband. That would be very helpful.
- Glenn Little said at South Florida State College they struggle with internet access. We all have the newest phones and tech, but we can't use it to full extent. We doubled broadband on one of our campuses and it was all gone the next day. We need access for the workers we train but we are challenged with the broadband. We don't have the last mile service in Highlands, and we have moved to Comcast and others to try to get this to homes and businesses who struggle to get quality access.
- Bill Ferry said what Mr. Addison is saying with utilities easement is music to our ears. This is very important. But one question is how do you get a provider to provide that last mile service? There are thoughts of the middle mile "if you build it, they will come," but there are concerns with that mentality. There are situations where there can be some cost effectiveness where governments own and lease out the fiber. There is always a cautionary tale with governments spending on this though. Maybe you can speak to what are your concerns and what are your achievements?
- Mr. Bill Lambert responded that he personally would like all our broadband to be private sector, but if we need to put in conduit and bid out for private companies to put in fiber then that is possibly the best way to do it. Some stuff has to be private sector, and in Winter Haven and big areas it makes sense to use fiber in those areas, but fixed internet services are working in small communities. We need hard fiber into it, but we can do 5G and other broadband and get a gig of service to communities with ease. We recruited the last mile first. The middle mile fiber is important, and we can have all of this. But, if we don't connect to one of the tier-1 data centers then it is worthless.
- Elizabeth Fleming stated that a number of Task Force members have wondered about connection between roads and broadband. We don't dispute that rural communities need efficient communications systems. But her understanding is that a certain number of people would need to be subscribed for it to be profitable. It seems that the connection of this utility to the road is that it is supposed to bring people in and grow the communities. She asked if someone can address this connection.
- Mr. Brigman responded that Lakeland first started installing fiber for electricity purpose, and it saves money for his community. But it is capital intensive, so we need to make it as easy as possible for cities and counties to install their own fiber. We are willing to get into competition with companies just to get this going, but it is challenging. We are looking at a Public Private Partnership for more competition, but these communities are probably going to need state and municipal involvement with the possibility of private involvement.
- Mr. Labbe added there are a number of people that need to be serviced for profit. What we do is add fiber but don't use it and lease it out. This opens the market to bigger private agencies that would otherwise not want to put in the capital investment. In Winter Haven, we have a hub where trunk lines all go through. We were small (30,000 people), but we had this large provider create the opportunity to get more people connected.
- Ms. Kiselewski asked to talk about guiding principles. How does this discussion lend itself to the guiding principles?

- Jennifer Carpenter stated that she liked the comment for potential opportunity with recreation and utilities co-located. In terms of water and wastewater utilities, one thing we see with efficiency of scale, we see small cities and RV parks with situations where a small plant has problems and the solution sometimes is hooking up to bigger regional systems. A **potential guiding principle is to maximize opportunities for utility and fiber expansion and interconnectedness**. Also, how do we bolster economic opportunities while keeping the culture of these communities? People like to get out of cities and into trails. There is an opportunity to connect with the Office of Greenways and Trails. The office has a “trail town” designation that is essentially free advertising. There is a great way to co-locate utilities and recreational areas.
- Pat Steed added as a summary that in the broadband discussion some know a lot, others a little. We listen to these big areas and these small counties both. We are seeing a way to address both kinds of issues. In terms of utility corridor, we are talking about multimodal efforts (rail, utilities, non-motorized, transit, etc.) **Maybe we consider the term “multi-utility.” There are a lot of engineering efforts that need to be considered as we add new things and then end up having to move things that already exist. We can try to avoid that by planning.** There is also an issue with rural sprawl, so the idea that all sprawl is urban in nature is not true. Utility access helps establish the communities that consolidate utilities and make us better stewards of the environment. Look to SR-60 at Yeehaw Junction.
- Andrew Dickman stated part of our responsibility is the economic impact of certain things and this is geared toward broadband. We have been given financial information about construction of roadways, but would a \$100 million project from the state help to fix the first mile, middle mile, and last mile connection between urban and rural?
- Mr. Bill Lambert responded yes, it may take half a billion, but \$100 million is a start.
- Mr. Nandam informed everyone that internet is available in the meeting room as a general announcement. But one point from Mr. Ryall is that we want to **consider opportunities for partnerships to leverage larger providers to provide for smaller communities and looking at that as a guiding principle.**
- Ken Doherty asked while recognizing that road rights-of-way (ROWs) are established then utilities come in, have you done a lot of conceptual master planning for any utilities to understand how the alignment will be influenced?
- Mr. Bill Lambert responded there is an issue with getting an idea of where the corridor is. So no, but once we get that, we can make that planning happen.
- Mr. Ryall stated from a water perspective, there are some high-level master planning we can do here like who will potentially be impacted (rough estimates) and how we can generally reach these people. Where are the major supply areas? Who are the utilities that would provide the service? There certainly is some high-level planning we can do.
- Mr. Addison added we have been working on a master plan with conceptual designs. They have pipeline routes that traverse Polk County. They are always looking for corridors that are design and construction friendly. He thinks there are some opportunities from a regional perspective.
- Mr. Buhr stated the “If they come, we will build it” concept. There is no infrastructure problem, we will get it done when it needs to get done. There is no real impediment, even for small cities.
- Mr. Bill Lambert stated we have had lengthy discussions about infrastructure, but we need a little more guidance from you guys before we can really take action.
- Ms. Ambrose suggested we should **write in some coordination that lives beyond the task force that has the express purpose. Master Planning and other things that are associated with connecting utilities with the municipalities. We need that in a better wording to be a guiding principle.**
- Mr. Brigman recommended **if you dig a hole, put a conduit in it as a guiding principle.**

- Mr. Buhr stated the mean income for households in Zolfo Springs is less than \$30 thousand a year. For these people they want to know if they can get a job and get their kids to stay nearby with a job once out of high school.
- Gary Ritter stated in listening to Mr. Bill Lambert and others discuss, and Ms. Steed may disagree with this thought, but as he looks North, South, East and West, are there opportunities to expand East-West corridors with North-South corridors. SR 60 intersection with the Turnpike has lots of people coming through and lots of business. Same with Okeechobee and SR 707 (which is 4-lane now). He thinks this has created more business and activity. Additionally, there is a 20-mile bike path there now too so that is something that comes with this. Food for thought.
- Ms. Steed suggested **connectivity to regional roadway network as a guiding principle**, and she agrees with Mr. Ritter.
- Mr. Nandam was grateful for the great conversation and commended the group for getting guiding principles in while fresh in our minds. He introduced the next session.

11:10 AM

Discuss Draft High-Level Needs Summary

- Katherine Chinault, FDOT M-CORES Project Manager
- Karen Kiselewski, Facilitator
- Task Force Members

- Mr. Nandam introduced the next section by stating in meeting #3 there was discussion on needs, so we are bringing this back so we can address what we all discussed. He then introduced Katherine Chinault.
- Ms. Chinault gave her presentation.
- Ms. Kiselewski called for questions and updates to needs. *Are there any major gaps in “needs”?*
- Ms. Taylor stated she would like to see each slide for some time so we can better understand what is missing.
- Ms. Chinault clarified that the first slide was pulled out of meeting #3 notes. The following slides are a synthesis of comments categorized according to legislative categories.
- Mr. Nandam mentioned that this is just an example of notes.
- Ms. Taylor said in the revitalize rural communities section – the multigenerational families comment – **the next slide only discusses growth in economy and not also preservation of way of life and agriculture. We need to understand water as well, not just agriculture.** Rural communities are much more than economic development based on the previous slide.
- Mr. Nandam said we may see this later, so let’s keep going.
- Ms. Taylor said she understands that, but **it needs to be added to economic section as well.**
- Pam Johnson asked for elaboration on “address education shortfalls,” are there any exact examples?
- Ms. Kiselewski stated that in previous meetings the workforce training needs was discussed and we need to address educational attainment.
- Ms. Taylor stated we have stagnant wages in Collier County in downtown as well, so this is a job opportunity issue not necessarily a wage issue.
- Janet Bowman asked to **add “recreational connectivity.”**
- Ms. Taylor asked **regarding connectivity, consider adding multimodal aspect to this corridor so people that use this corridor are using bikes and other modes.**
- Ms. Carpenter asked if there are public health and quality life needs?
- Ms. Kiselewski responded yes.
- Ms. Taylor asked, does environment have its own slide?
- Ms. Kiselewski responded yes.
- Ms. Bowman **asked to add protection of conservation lands including conservation easements.**

- Brian Starford agreed on adding conservation lands and he wants to understand the overview of avoidance issues.
- Ms. Kiselewski asked for him to hold until the afternoon please.
- **Mr. Starford said the needs should include monitoring sites (historic and long term).** We have discussed water needs and if we don't address monitoring sites it will be an issue.
- Ms. Kiselewski restated that the need is to accommodate monitoring (historic and long term).
- Dr. Gray asked as we look at the future of Florida, how do we stop this peninsula from becoming a giant city? If you are going to enhance water quality and flow, we need large areas to do this. We need big functioning space. This is true for agriculture as well. We can't mandate this, but how do we protect these big green spaces to protect water and wildlife. **The bullet should be something like "protecting large blocks of green space that accommodate society and are aesthetically pleasing."**
- Ms. Fleming stated **things we have discussed regarding conserving biological diversity and endemic species needs to be broadened.** The first bullet needs to include more than just federally endangered species.
- Matt Caldwell added that we have a map from last time that collates land uses. The "here to there" issue he doesn't know how to address, but the "there" is **a map that shows where communities are planning to keep as is or where they want to see growth.** Get the communities to define what they want to be more developed and what they want to remain as is.
- Ms. Taylor stated that planning and how we do planning is critical. Communities can plan for infrastructure, but how do we plan for water recharge in the state. Agriculture is good with this, and we are in luck regarding that aspect, so we need to make sure urban sprawl doesn't disrupt this. We have a **need to plan for future water and compare to where the corridor will go and how it engages with natural water systems.**
- Ms. Kiselewski thanked the Task Force for their comments and additions.
- Mr. Nandam thanked everyone for an engaging conversation and for their modifications. He asked the Task Force to think about your needs here, and how they translate to guiding principles.

12:00 PM ***Lunch*** on your own

1:15 PM Public Engagement Activities

- Will Watts, FDOT Chief Engineer
- Marlon Bizerra, FDOT Production Lead
- Task Force Members

- Mr. Nandam asked everyone to return to the table. He noted that this morning we were unable to touch Public Engagement activities so we will do that now. He introduced Will Watts.
- Mr. Watts gave a presentation on public comments. Public comments are being made available now and staff will review the consolidated findings. He reviewed the comments and process.
- Mr. Watts highlighted "actionable" input.
- Don Scott asked out of 6,000 comments, is that for all three study areas?
- Mr. Watts stated yes, a lot of emails were general to the program, so they were rolled up.
- Mr. Scott asked, is there a way to tell which study area is getting more comments?
- Mr. Watts responded there is a way to extrapolate because they are broken down by meeting. This is more of a homework assignment. You can get a high-level view based on areas of interest. We still need a lot of input (6,000 comments vs three million residents).

- *Bill McDaniel stated it seems to be a lot of cost component in the project but other than comparing to other FDOT projects how do we get a cost estimate without a line on the map?*
- *Mr. Watts mentioned that was a good point, and this is part of a process. We need to look at getting a line on the map and that is what we are working towards in this task force right now.*
- *Ms. Ambrose asked if this number being presented is just in reference to how many people are making the comment, not necessarily how many people are residents of the area or where the people making the comments are from?*
- *Mr. Watts stated we have some data on where they are from, but it is incomplete. But you are correct, this is the number of people giving comments to a court reporter or on a comment card.*
- *Rick Wilson said he's been through five meetings and has heard a lot. He has concerns about questions and answers that have been skirted around. This has been on his mind, we have a job to do here to get back to the governor with a decision, and we have a lot of great conversations going on here, but there are a number of people here that are living in the counties and some living outside the counties. We need to know where this thing is going to know the cost; 10 or 20 miles makes a big difference in environmental terms and how communities are affected. For the last few meetings, he heard great conversation, but it is all about why we shouldn't build. He's been here all his life. We are worried about impacts, but our job is to minimize that impact. We can use existing roads to save money, but we need to figure out how to save money. We have a lot of ways to spend money, but we need to try to save money. We need to narrow this thing down, so we know how much it is going to cost because we have to do something, we aren't going to do nothing. We've heard about everything that can be hurt, but something is going to change or get hurt. He wishes it wouldn't, but we have to get to a point of "this is what we need." If we didn't need it, we wouldn't be here. We are going to hurt something by building this road, but we need this corridor, and there is no "no-build option" because people are coming. We need to figure out how to do it best and minimize impact and make it the best for communities and people. When the phosphate mining moved out, a lot of these towns went dead. We need to know where this thing is going. We need a line on the map so we can make informed decisions. Water and sewer require a lot of money, so we have to get a line drawn and get some answers. He's been thinking about this and we have a job to do here.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski made a query of the others. This is about public engagement; you understand your communities. Do other local governments want to weigh in?*
- *Mr. Thompson agreed with Mr. Wilson. The sooner we have a defined corridor the sooner we can make plans for everything. He was mad after leaving the first meeting in Tampa, and now he feels better about the process, but to take a year for us to tell you how to build a road...We just need to go faster...*
- *Mr. Buhr stated that some communities have provided resolutions stating that we need this road. For economic opportunity, it is going to be good for these people.*
- *Mr. Doherty said he understands this process and loves putting lines on the map as a design engineer for 35 years, but when we go to the agencies, they want to look at alternatives. We don't even have a conceptual idea of the alternatives, and he knows we are getting closer, but we don't have anything right now. We have a lot of talent in this room and we can help, we just need something to shoot at.*
- *Mr. Watts responded that first we talked about places to avoid, and now we are talking about existing corridors. At the next meeting we are going to talk about how we connect these corridors up; the bypass or no bypass discussion. Then the following meeting we will start narrowing down incrementally. He appreciates the Task Force's patience and FDOT wants to make sure we are getting as much input as possible. This is a process, and one of the largest endeavors the Department has undertaken, and we want to make sure we are doing it right.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Nandam stated we want to make sure we get everyone’s feedback at this table. We need discussion though, so please make sure you are giving input so we can get your thoughts in the guiding principles. 		
<p>1:30 PM</p>	<p>Corridor Planning Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will Watts, Chief Engineer, FDOT Marlon Bizerra, FDOT Production Lead Huiwei Shen, FDOT Chief Planner Barbara Davis, Toll Studies & Express Lanes Development Administrator, Florida Turnpike Enterprise Walter Breuggeman, FDOT M-CORES Project Engineer Task Force Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Watts introduced Marlon Bizerra to discuss data requested by the Task Force. Mr. Bizerra gave his presentation about the request of future land uses in the area. <i>Dr. Gray noted that under conservation there are a number of conservation easements that are not on this map. We need to make sure we include all the conservation lands. Also, want to make sure the Archbold Biological Station is identified.</i> <i>Ms. Kiselewski stated this is a synthesis of what is in each county’s Comprehensive Plan.</i> <i>Clif Tate, subject matter expert, responded that the future land use categories of local governments’ Comprehensive Plans were consolidated. The different plans had between 10 to more than 30 different land uses.</i> <i>Mr. Starford asked for clarification if any fee interest or less than fee interest maps would not be included in this.</i> <i>Mr. Tate confirmed they would be included.</i> <i>Mr. Starford requested to please explain what existing land use means.</i> <i>Mr. Tate responded that it means that at the time of the first comprehensive plan adoption, there was already an existing land use and it was inconsistent with the future categories, so they wanted to leave it as is.</i> <i>Mr. Caldwell stated he appreciates this being put together. To understand, this is not a blank map for the corridor analysis. The counties are putting corridor evaluation into this. They are considering the people living there, the roads that exist, each county has a comprehensive plan. They’ve done their own analysis for utilities, traffic, transportation and what they want their community to look like when they build out. This helps us understand where/how this corridor should go in. How does this interact with what locals think? This group can’t get into granular level, so he thinks there’s an opportunity to embrace what has already been decided and incorporate that into what we recommend. There is tension in transportation infrastructure coming to rural communities for job growth/economic success because the thinking is that suburban development will follow. Light green on the map is a synthesis of visions communities already have for their county to remain a rural and agricultural environment. Whatever way we accomplish it we need to incorporate that commitment, we don’t need to buy out land. Ironically, we are in the Bert Harris Agricultural Center building. Bert Harris rewrote eminent domain law in Florida. This is the commitment from these communities for their future land use, not existing. This is their vision. If we don’t embrace it, it will make our task that much more difficult. We should work within that framework, not against it.</i> 		

- Ms. Bowman asked if they talked about planning horizons of existing plans?
- Ms. Kiselewski responded yes. She asked, does anyone have any recommendations for needs or guiding principles with this? (No response)
- Mr. Watts discussed the truck parking, Wekiva, transportation projects and job opportunities handouts in the Task Force packets.
- Ms. Kiselewski talked about the Heartland 2060 project, 29 targeted sites and other things in the packet for review.
- Mr. Watts introduced Huiwei Shen.
- Ms. Shen gave her presentation on planning coordination and planning consistency and asked for questions.
- Ms. Fleming asked, how does conservation planning feed into this process? At Defenders of Wildlife, **we think that there needs to be a framework here for conservation planning.**
- Ms. Shen responded this presentation is more about how the M-CORES projects will be coordinated with the MPOs and rural counties, but we fully intend to address conservation and not as an afterthought. Conservation planning, transportation planning and land use planning should all go hand in hand.
- Mr. Dickman stated whenever interchanges are added, there are land use changes. There is a period between October 2020 and December 2023 that there is an evaluation period where local governments would be doing future land use mapping at the interchanges. This time is very limited.
- Ms. Shen responded FDOT will **work with local governments to make sure they are able to do the research and identify if they need to revise their comp plan and develop an interchange management plan we are well positioned to provide assistance.**
- Mr. Dickman asked, we don't even know where the road is so who decides where the interchanges go?
- Ms. Shen responded the guiding principles are going to help us with that.
- Mr. Watts stated once we move through everything here, we are going to keep you included as we go.
- Mr. Dickman asked if there is even a map with hypothetical lines?
- Mr. Watts said the only map is the one we have shown.
- Mr. Dickman responded, "So no map?"
- Mr. Watts said "No."
- Mr. Nandam added that we will start to see, as we move through these meetings, a path/course. Going to what Mr. Caldwell mentioned, these communities already have land use maps and plans for what they would like their community to look like. So one of the guiding principles could be that the corridor should support the community's vision and existing plans.
- Ms. Shen stated that in the Wekiva process they saw that the guiding principles were important to placing interchanges.
- Ms. Steed stated that the timeframe for comprehensive plan amendment (should there be one) is a formal process and is time-consuming. This formal process goes through many different people and government processes; this is very public, and people have an opportunity to provide their voice. All of them are going to look into the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and every county's Comprehensive Plan needs to be consistent with the LRTP. Any FDOT project needs to also be consistent with other plans. And every step there are so many opportunities to have voices heard.
- Ms. Bowman stated in terms of interchanges, local governments have the opportunity to go through interchange location and that is good, but the state is kind of removed. **How do we ensure the roads serve the purpose that they were intended? May need this as a guiding principle.**
- Mr. Doherty stated, as a follow up to Ms. Steed, the process to amend comprehensive plans is lengthy, so he suggests **at the next meeting (since we have a lot of work to do) as soon as you have the**

ability to let local governments know the planned layout, then let us know because we need a lot of time to knock this out.

- *Mr. Caldwell said this is probably for next section, but he thinks guiding principle #19 captured this conversation. Should this road only have exits at state transportation roads, not at county roads and local roads? If this is about moving 1.5 million people out in case of an emergency, and if there are congestion issues like I-95 and I-75, then we missed the point. **Let's make sure the exits are only at state facilities to promote all the things we've talked about.***
- *Gary Harrell responded that they are in the process of updating the LRTP and we have to adopt in October. Some of the things we are doing, we don't know how the transportation model will be affected by this.*
- *Mr. Watts transitioned to the next presentation, traffic projections and model run from Barbara Davis.*
- *Ms. Barbara Davis gave her presentation including Origin-Destination (O-D) data, inputs for 2050 traffic conditions, summary of outputs, and took questions.*
- *Dr. Gray asked to go back to 2050 Future Conditions Level Of Service (LOS) map. The goal for most of these roads is a C or D LOS? He noted a red line near Sebring going north on US 27. Is that the only place that there is going to be an issue meeting the desired LOS?*
- *Ms. Barbara Davis responded that we have different criteria for rural vs urban and US 27 may be classified as rural and urban along the route. So we have many places that are troublesome in the future and will not meet standards.*
- *Mr. Watts added this includes projects in the Long Range Transportation Plan, but it doesn't include potential M-CORES projects.*
- *Dr. Gray stated that these are really useful maps.*
- *Ms. Fleming stated in this map and the one showing congestion, Sarasota always has congestion and wonders why these roads have congestion...is the answer to this to add a road in the internal part of the state? Also, what are managed lanes?*
- *Ms. Barbara Davis responded that, for the first question, the reason for congestion is the amount of trips going in certain directions and the lack of options to take those trips. Managed lanes are a strategy to keep traffic moving by using access control and sometimes tolling. We apply operations strategies to keep traffic moving.*
- *Ms. Fleming asked, if you look at severe congestion now, are we trying to solve that problem by building these new highways or adding capacity to existing roads?*
- *Mr. Watts responded that we want to make sure everyone understands this includes all our planned projects in the 5-year work program and 10-year SIS plan. It is likely that areas in red are built out already and that is why they are red. We would need to do a deeper dive.*
- *Ms. Pam Johnson asked, regarding job growth projections, do we know what kind of jobs are in the projected growth rate?*
- *Ms. Barbara Davis responded that information comes from the model. **It categorizes the job growth, so yes, we can look into the model data set to determine the employment category.***
- *Mr. Ritter asked if the projects shown on the map were currently under construction?*
- *Mr. Watts responded they are not. They are funded in the 5-year Work Program.*
- *Mr. Ritter said so given that these projects are funded, if you shift gears into this new corridor does any of that money get shifted away from those projects?*
- *Mr. Watts responded no, what we've stated before is that M-CORES does not take away from these project priorities.*
- *Ms. Carpenter asked, what does this mean for I-75? Will we be seeing 10 lanes?*
- *Mr. Watts responded we will address this in next presentation on capacity.*

- Ms. Bowman asked, regarding I-75 you said you are planning on six lanes?
- Mr. Watts said six or more lanes depending on the section.
- Ms. Bowman asked what about people moving into these areas and their behavioral changes and how that impacts the model? What kind of assumptions are made about diversions of traffic?
- Ms. Barbara Davis responded that if we have a corridor to put into the model, we can see how traffic may be redistributed.
- Ms. Bowman asked if the model was based on O-D data?
- Ms. Barbara Davis responded that we have lots of data inputs that include, among other things, O-D data.
- Mr. Watts stated the idea here is to get comfortable with the accuracy and methodology of the model, then once we nail down a corridor we can determine the validity.
- Ms. Bowman stated that her question is about addressing the kind of traffic. We could not improve I-75 and do a North-South road inland to address traffic on the interstate, but that doesn't matter if people traveling on I-75 are doing so as local traffic, meaning they only go a few exits.
- Mr. Nandam responded that the study presented addresses O-D data. **The model will use this kind of data to determine who is traveling where.** The improvements we show are from cost feasible plans. It only includes cost feasible plans as a first step, then it also looks at how built out areas are already. So, this is a big picture, and with a multi-use corridor we have a lot considered in the model.
- Mr. Watts introduced Walter Breuggeman who gave his presentation.
- Mr. Dickman thanked Mr. Breuggeman for showing the 39 major planning projects on map. He wondered if any of the PD&E studies would be helpful for us because there are a lot of impact studies associated with these which could be useful.
- Mr. Watts responded that **we can bring back a summary of each of these for you all to look at.**
- Mr. Dickman stated he just wants summaries.
- Mr. Watts began his presentation on avoidance areas and stated that we have now covered avoidance area, will not impact and no new corridor through. We want to enhance the discussion on existing corridors. We've taken a first look at what corridors need to be included in the study area. Make sure we did not miss any corridors on the map that are viable candidates.
- Ms. Bowman stated that on the avoidance and enhancement area (the avoidance specifically) the map omits some public conservation lands and several of our preserves, conservations purchased with NRCS and USDA money, some easements around Avon Park Airforce Base, Archbold Biological Station, etc. We are missing some significant conservation lands from the avoidance areas.
- Mr. Watts stated this is a discussion on any existing corridors we have missed or want to add.
- Mr. McDaniel said this is very insightful. He mentioned that **Dr. Gray said in the first meetings that we would have to abide by an existing corridor**, that it is too challenging to get through the red tape to do a new corridor. **As a guiding principle we should seek Environmental Restoration along these existing corridors.** We want to include wildlife flow and whatnot. Let's be careful about saying "absolute avoidance" and look into improvements and fixing previous wrongs.
- Mr. Watts said that is a great point, Mr. McDaniel is just two steps ahead.
- Elton Langford asked if there are any East-West corridors.
- Mr. Watts responded yes, if you want to add any please let us know.
- Mr. Langford said that when we are looking at hurricane evacuation and when one coast is looking like it might be impacted and the other is safe people try to get over to the other coast and it is troublesome to do so (i.e. Hurricane Charley).
- Mr. Watts agreed that we should consider the network as a whole.
- Mr. Dickman asked for clarification if enhancements includes existing roads, rail, or airports. It is very important to recognize the **international airports** in Lee County and Punta Gorda, and the **existing rail**

system. He doesn't know how the data bears this out, but we should be looking into connectivity of these major facilities.

- Ms. Ambrose said she would like to echo **the East-West corridor concern. SR 70** was mentioned at last meeting.
- Dr. Gray asked if there is an interactive map on the website where we can look at the layers on our own.
- Mr. Watts stated we have one GIS tool on the website that has every layer for all the maps we have talked about. The next slide will give us an opportunity to further define this. In the packet there is a sticker with a QR code which is a Southwest-Central Florida Corridor mapping tool for you to play with. It includes four categories: **total avoidance, no new through, impact with enhancement, & minimize and mitigate.**
- Ms. Kiselewski stated there was a question if these **categories are in the packet? (no, but we will get it to you)**
- Mr. Harrell said **East-West along CR 74 should be added.**
- Mr. Caldwell said **East-West along SR 64 should be added as well.**
- Mr. McDaniel said regarding interchanges at major state highways as a priority; we should look more at the North-South because the interchanges are going to ultimately feed into the East-West roadways. **North-South is the focus for this Task Force.**
- Mr. Wilson said in Polk County, **Highway 60 should be considered too.** We will be extending from the Polk Parkway to Highway 60, so it is a good corridor to include.
- Mr. Starford said looking at notes from last meeting, **we are considering no new impact and no new corridor through; so maybe we should add something in between those to the guiding principles.**
- Mr. Watts introduced Mr. Bizerra to discuss enhancements.
- Mr. Bizerra gave his presentation.
- Ms. Kiselewski asked for any other enhancement opportunities we want to consider.
- Mr. Watts reiterated FDOT will commit to performing these actions when determining this roadway.
- Mr. Nandam stated when you do your homework look at the alignment and enhancement opportunities. He thanked the staff and stated there will be a discussion on guiding principles after the break.

2:45 pm

Break

3:00 PM

Discuss Draft AMME Guiding Principles

- Karen Kiselewski, Facilitator
- Task Force Members

- Mr. Nandam stated that next on the agenda is draft guiding principles.
- Ms. Kiselewski stated we are going to talk guiding principles, so we want to bring them back to you from last time. We broke them into four sections as illustrated in the handout: natural, cultural, social, physical. We have pulled items that are more implementation strategies out and to the end. We will start with cultural section first this time. Are there any additions?
- **Dr. Gray said some historic Native American Cultural Sites are not necessarily owned by Native Americans but should be considered.**
- Ms. Kiselewski asked for any social principles?
- Ms. Jennifer Davis asked to **emphasize #16, giving special consideration to counties that need it the most.** Hendry has #1 highest unemployment rate in Florida and lowest broadband connectivity in Florida, so this is a great opportunity for Hendry and Glades County in economic terms.



- Ms. Kiselewski clarified there was a previous request to show the guiding principles for the other corridors which will be brought in this meeting and the next meeting. Until then, you can find those other guiding principles under each Task Force on the website.
- Ms. Ambrose asked about schools. **She doesn't remember "avoiding schools" in the conversations. But we don't want to exclude colleges and universities or other significant institutions you may want to have connectivity with.**
- Ms. Kiselewski responded **yes; we were more talking about safety for public schools and kids crossing roads.** Are there any other places we want to consider connectivity with?
- Ms. Carpenter said **we want to include fiber and utility expansion and recreation corridors.**
- Ms. Nandam asked for a summary of guiding principles from earlier today.
- John Kaliski, subject matter expert, reviewed guiding principles from earlier.
- Mr. Caldwell said for **#19 we should add "limit access to state roads and SIS facilities."**
- Ms. Taylor asked, how many interchanges are we expecting?
- Ms. Kiselewski responded that by limiting to only state roads that would be the limiting factor on number of interchanges.
- Ms. Taylor asked if there is going to be an issue with safety spacing and having strategic interchange spacings?
- Mr. Nandam suggested **we prioritize state roadways but give the Department discretion to work with the local communities to determine where interchanges will be located.**
- Dr. Gray said **on #23, controlling light pollution is good, but add on nearby urban areas because people don't want streetlights shining into their windows? Minimize should be fine, you can remove the "to the extent feasible" portion since it is a fudge phrase.**
- Mr. Dickman **added that donating land should not drive the location of an interchange.**
- Ms. Kiselewski asked, what criteria would Mr. Dickman suggest?
- Mr. Dickman responded that he doesn't know, he just thinks people shouldn't just be allowed to buy interchanges.
- Ms. Kiselewski said we have been putting all guiding principles on the list, but eventually we need to discuss and tease out what we do and don't want. So, silence could start to mean consent if nothing is opposed. Please weigh in.
- Ms. Fleming responded that silence on her part does not necessarily mean agreement just that she is tired.
- Ms. Taylor said she agrees with Mr. Dickman. This is about economic development, so we need to focus on that, and that donated land should not drive the location of this road.
- Ms. Kiselewski said we did social and physical together, do we want to talk more about utility ROW guiding principles? Recreational and utility co-location? Any other comments from that discussion earlier this morning?
- Mr. Wilson asked to go back – when it comes to one of the off ramps, we do not want them to be donated. We should not just rule out areas that are donated, but that shouldn't be a reason why we select as a location. We need to at least leave that open if it is a reasonable place to add an interchange.
- Mr. Langford clarified that **donation of land shouldn't drive where on or off ramps should be, but if someone offers the land then, so long as it makes sense to do it there, then we should.**
- Mr. McDaniel asked regarding #23 – and this is directed to Dr. Gray – isn't "minimize" alone just zero without the "to the extent feasible" phrase?
- Dr. Gray stated that minimize just felt redundant.
- Mr. Nandam stated that interchange locations are based on O-D studies, community land use, and the amount of traffic. It is never driven by someone donating land. To Mr. Langford's point, we go about land acquisition as stated in the legislation.

- Mr. Caldwell asked what is something we can put down that is going to last longer than we are around? If we are concerned with new roads building out into the middle of nowhere and creating new communities, then we are writing out too much for the legal framework. **We should just say “interchanges only where the state roadways exist” that way the pros and cons are considered and meets all the expectations voiced.**
- Ms. Ambrose asked for clarification that 74 is a county road, so would we need to designate it as a state road to get a ramp there?
- Mr. Caldwell said absent that question about CR 74 and its complicated history, we can capture the pros and cons of interchange location by just putting them where state roads exist.
- Ms. Davis stated that she has a question and comment. From a freight perspective, did you **delineate with the maps the difference between freight and passenger?** Freight as the primary use will **pull trucks off other roadways which can improve safety.**
- Ms. Kiselewski responded that we have discussed freight in the past too, but are we missing any guiding principles for that?
- Ms. Davis said **we should look at places where we have lots of freight traffic and move it off existing roads to improve safety.**
- Nat Birdsong said in Polk County **this would be difficult because moving freight North-South is already so prolific that altering the route is challenging.**
- Ms. Kiselewski asked if there were any other thoughts?
- Mr. Thompson asked, what does B on this list mean? (Implementation: Enhance infrastructure and transportation planning processes to support co-benefits of implementation. [previously #21])
- Ms. Kiselewski responded that Ms. Shen talked about working with all the partners to guide the corridor. So, we want to look at things that are beneficial in multiple ways, i.e. something that benefits transportation as well as utilities. **This can be rephrased to be clearer.**
- Mr. Doherty said he thinks C – avoid any impacts to funding – **needs to get more “minimize” language.**
- Dr. Gray asked under conservations lands, do we need to **include more private conservation land?** He provided a couple of examples.
- Ms. Kiselewski responded we have seen these a few times, but **the phrasing can be revised in the natural bullets.**
- Mr. Starford said when the Task Force decided to implement avoidance, we stuck to no impact and no new corridor though. **So, we might consider new language to help continue guiding our decision at the next level.**
- Ms. Taylor added as we talk about **avoidance where possible, we are saying don’t do this and that; can we draw it on a map so we know what it might look like?**
- Mr. Watts responded that right now these are a collection of thoughts. How do we get that all together as the final thoughts?
- Ms. Taylor responded just put it on the computer (meaning just make a map so we can see where we certainly cannot go).
- Mr. Nandam said the homework as it relates to the layers helps so that when you come back with more information the guiding principles will have changes and the layers and categories will be better identified.
- Ms. Taylor said for #7 - **water farming to purify water - as far as water is concerned, we should weave in “open land for water recharge.”**
- Ms. Carpenter asked on #1 - the added sentence “provide enhancement for mitigation lands” - are we saying mitigate for the lands we are already mitigating?
- Ms. Kiselewski responded yes; we are saying if lands need to be touched that were mitigation lands for another project, then we will provide enhancements to offset that.

- *Mr. McDaniel said it's difficult to discern, but he wants there to be a proactive stance to fix environmental circumstances that are prevalent. He doesn't think that prioritization is spelled out there.*
- *Ms. Ambrose said #7 made her think that some of the guiding principles we added today encompass some of the ones written here. At what point do we go back and consolidate ones we have already done?*
- *Ms. Kiselewski responded that **we will synthesize this before the next meeting for you, so it is consolidated.***
- *Mr. Little said for #9 he doesn't understand "existing roads." Are we saying those that would be co-located?*
- *Ms. Kiselewski said yes, upgrade to current best practices for roads not already built that way.*
- *Mr. Ritter said for #6 he is thinking of a large restoration project south of the Caloosahatchee River that could be impacted. **We should minimize impacts to wetland projects.***
- *Ms. Kiselewski transitioned to next steps.*

3:45 PM

Next Steps

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

- *Ms. Kiselewski addressed next steps for future meetings.*
- *Ms. Fleming said for the refined avoidance area graphic, Ms. Bowman was going to send additional conservation areas, but the group should also make sure they do the same to address items that are missing.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski asked the Task Force to please send that.*
- ***Mr. Nandam said staff will compare what Ms. Bowman sends to the map we have and see what is missing to send back out to everyone.***
- *Ms. Bowman said this is a basic question about changes made to the GIS tool. Do you identify data layer source or just areas on the map?*
- *Mr. Watts responded that we took comments from Task Force meeting 4 and added them to the map and will update that as we continue.*
- *Mr. Nandam clarified that you will see on the map the different layers, and you can toggle them on and off.*
- *Mr. Nandam thanked all the Task Force members for participating today. He also stated that public comment is an important part of the process, so if you can stay that is good. He asked Ms. Kiselewski to go over the upcoming meetings.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski reviewed upcoming meetings and asked the Task Force members to designate an alternate if they are unable to attend a future meeting.*

4:00 PM

Public Comment

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

- *Mr. Nandam thanked the public for being here to provide their comments.*
- *Ms. Kiselewski went over rules for public comment.*
- *John Dame, Jr thanked everyone. He is from Lake Alfred and he is an artist and naturalist. He is a 7th generation Floridian. He would prefer that no new road comes through, but he is encouraged that there is a discussion for ranchland preservation, land for water recharge, and avoidance of new and existing conservation lands. Nothing here addresses Corkscrew Swamp and Florida Gulf Coast University. We can't get back our heritage once it is gone and the Florida panther can be used as the measure for that.*

- *Julianne Thomas is from the Conservancy of Southwest Florida in Naples. We are for the no-build option. One of the things that struck her is that a road is a road and doesn't address any of the utility needs we have. The future congestion is showing essentially no issues. The issue is for broadband and utilities. Someone said we are going to run out of water, and this should be terrifying. We shouldn't do more of the same thing. This is the same thing because it is not innovative. We need water and sewer and broadband. FDOT doesn't do broadband or sewer, FDOT builds roads. What are we really doing here if we can't guarantee water and sewer and broadband? What does a toll road do here? Please recommend the no-build. Mr. Dickman alluded to the point that this will be expensive and the best way to spend this money is to buy land for water recharge and the Florida panther and urban revitalization. Don't build new roads.*
- *Marian Ryan is from Winter Haven – the February M-CORES stated that the graphic shows no or limited impact to the environmental resources. The avoidance graphics show that some areas are supposed to be available. He believes this is wrong. Many of the areas we are looking at are the conservancies held by both private and public conservations. This includes private holding by Nature Conservancy, Audubon, NRCS wetland reserve, FDEP, Green Swamp Land, local governments and the Circle B reservoir. There is no mention of primary panther habitat or wide-ranging species either. It is a tragedy that the Florida Forever Program has been drastically underfunded since 2009. We have 700 thousand acres unacquired. There are 2.5 million acres missing elsewhere. If you are truly interested in conservation look at the map (he describes an online map) and look at each defined parcel and see its ecological significance. New toll road is not the way to address the issues we have.*
- *Jennifer Hecker is the Executive Director of the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership, funded by US Department of Environmental Protection, in partnership with 10 counties in this corridor area as well as some Task Force members. On behalf of CHNEP, protecting natural resources is a high-level need for this Task Force. Our job is to gather the best available data to show to you how best to address this. We have a map in your packets. This restoration needs map presented to you addresses the things that you have identified as important areas of protection. We want to make sure this is a known resource and there are many missing things from the maps you have seen today, and we really think it is important to capture the various conservation area. We need to add these to the no-new corridors map.*
- *Lyn Payne has been a Highlands County resident for 25 years. She is a native Floridian. The environment is most important and there is no way this is going to be safe for our environment.*
- *Tom Palmer thinks that the maps are inadequate. She is a 72.5-year resident, and when you push growth you are kidding yourself. You can't build your way out of congestion. She thinks there are better ways to help the rural areas than a toll road.*
- *Dr. Richard Karlson thanked the Task Force for the opportunity – He left Pompano to move to Highlands on Fisheating Creek. Over 50 years a resident here. He realizes the business of this legislature is hard to understand so he won't say whether it will or will not be, but being the orthodontist for three towns in Highlands County, the worst things that happen are on 27, which is a connector to your corridor. One day he was driving on that 2-lane highway and had a blowout. There was no place to turn off, so he called AAA. If he had gotten out of the car, he may have been destroyed so he just drove to the nearest exit. This is a death highway; we hear about deaths on a weekly basis. He asked the sheriff how many accidents there have been, and in a 10-month period there were over 80 accidents. Please 4-lane this highway to save a lot of lives before starting a new one.*
- *Harriett Jones is from Williston, Florida, Levy County and our local paper today says death by toll. Our commissioners have said that we don't need this road and they are punishing us for not wanting this road. They are taking our rural roads funds for this. We don't need the new road gumming up everything. You build a road and it gets congested and new business comes in, then everyone leaves after a while and there are derelict buildings everywhere. Seventy percent of land in our county is agriculture or conservation and we like it that way.*

- *Eugene Kelly is from the Florida Native Plant Society. He came here today for the avoidance area map. He noticed that there are a lot of things missing. His society submitted a report that summarized burning needs across study area. We used Cecil Webb Wildlife Area as excerpt. Mr. Kelly read from document goals 6.1.1 and 6.1.2. This calls for a lot of burning which is a lot of smoke. Smoke and roads don't go together. There are a number of plants and animal species (the pawpaw) that rely on burning. Cecil Webb is a poster child for that because there are many unique species. We need to allow for more burning and allow for private landowners to do burning as well.*
- *Michael McGrath is from the Sierra Club and Roads to Ruin representing over 83 organizations. We are overwhelmingly for the no-build scenario. Rural communities should not need to choose between toll road and broadband. This has failed to address how we will improve wetlands and recharge areas. The only option is a no-build option. Speak out so that we don't move forward. No build is the only option and we must demand it.*
- *Bill Matturn said most conservative estimates will outpace the build funding cap. If you want to build the road then we should raise gas tax from 28 to 50 cents. We should raise tourist tax for short term rentals to the max of 2%. Next, we should charge tax for each mile within the county. He also proposed some system of continual drone monitoring to assess fees for wildlife destruction. Fifty dollars for killing a squirrel or bird and a third-degree felony for panther killing, with \$25,000 fee and five years in prison. If you want to build a road then you have to deal with the consequences of your decisions.*
- *Hilary Swain said we need to visualize the dichotomy between road building and land uses. What is the feasible domain within the entire study area? We don't have a future land use change map. There are excellent modelers in Florida that could show what future Florida will look like given changes in land use so you can make a better decision. We need rural prosperity in Florida which will maintain our environment. What are the scales of the watershed? How do you as a task force consider the consequences of anything? Any transportation will need to deal with fog, fire and water here. When we look at transportation, we have a 2000s vision, and we are stuck in the past.*
- *Wendell Conley has been here 50 years. He is just asking for relief on 27. Currently 27 reminds him of I-4 it is getting so bad. Get the truck traffic off as much as possible. He appreciates that we are looking at environmental concerns, and truthfully whatever you do you are going to be wrong in someone's eyes. Thank you for your time and the decision you have to make.*
- *Steve Turner is from Lake Placid and thanked the Task Force for the public comments. Looking at no-build areas and no transit areas he is concerned that there are ecologically sensitive areas that are not included in the map. There are areas missing that are under easement or where there is not enough money to put them under easement, but they want to be under easement. Please do better to map.*
- *Doug Morrison gave a brief analogy - Westinghouse was going to build a toxic waste incinerator in the state. This was supposed to be responsible presumably. We looked into it, and the waste company would be allowed to bring toxic waste into the state. The point is, that was an ill-conceived scheme and so is this. This is about building new subdivisions out in rural areas that we don't need. He thinks this highway means the end of the Florida panther, so he urges you to support the no-build option.*
- *Dan Kauffman has been a resident of the Bartow area for 40 years – on his beloved Peace River. He is confident that many speakers would be able to speak to the technical aspects of this corridor. The panel understands many of the concerns. Mr. Kauffman read a poetic piece that he wrote. This was prompted by the release of a news article that reported on March 2, 2011 the Eastern cougar was declared extinct. Ghost Cat ode, epithet and eulogy. This a final ode to ghost cat...hence no more the wild. Empty now the wood of spell. Only now but empty dens. You prowl these woods no more...Think, everyone one of you, that there are consequences.*

- *Clint Minfus asked to please consider a route west of Avon Park. He cannot speak to this as anything other than a resident, he just wants it to be quiet. He is a little selfish because he likes the quiet, but please consider this out of his backyard.*
- *Dale Gillis represents Highlands Audubon and we voted against this road. Several years ago, there was the Heartland Parkway, which was abandoned because there was no evidence we needed it. This is the same thing. 1000 Friends of Florida thinks this is looking at costing up to \$10 billion. Whether paid by toll or taxes, it is still paid by the public. Looking at a map, the proposed routes would cut the state in two. Wildlife won't be able to get across. Don't put in obstacles where we don't need them. If everyone gets in their car at once the roads are going to be a mess no matter what. There are trucks mounted on rail which would cost a lot less. The public could ask experts in another task force, but this format doesn't allow that.*
- *Ray Royce is with the Citrus Growers Association voicing his support for this corridor. He thanked everyone for considering this corridor, which will have a great impact economically, and address environmental issues. His family has been here for over 150 years. He is a man of this community, working very nearby. There is an opportunity to direct this into the areas we want. Agriculture is falsely being utilized as a means to say no to this project. Don't confuse the desire to keep the agricultural heritage and lifestyle as a means to say we shouldn't do this. Many of you seem to want this as your park and have no regard for the future of the area. We need to balance current needs with future needs.*
- *James Upchurch asked himself, why do we need to build a superhighway into the environmentally sensitive areas of Florida? It's because powerful investors want to develop land for development. Will this reduce truck traffic? He asked truck drivers if they will move to the new road and they said no because they don't want to pay for tolls. The burden will fall on taxpayers to foot the bill when there is not enough revenue to pay the bonds. Will this impact the wildlife? Of course, it will. He wants his grandchildren to enjoy the environment and the highway doesn't do that.*
- *Bert Harris III is from Lake Placid. He adopts the position taken by Ray Royce. Our county should have access to the economic prosperity the same as everyone else in Florida. He hopes everyone enjoys Highlands County and he supports the road.*
- *Carole Fields is with Save Our Creeks. Ellen Peterson founded our organization fighting the fights we are still fighting. We were dedicated to keeping Fisheating Creek for the citizens to enjoy. We are trying to protect our environment from degradation, and this will definitely degrade the environment. Eighty-three environmental groups say this will hurt the environment, so we are definitely no-build supporters.*
- *Andrew Wilson stated a toll road is not a freeway; it is a toll road. The issue with toll roads that is not talked about is that there is always a bank somewhere. Debt and real estate development are always involved. Who finances and who benefits? He supports rail, not road. If you want to get your car from London to France, you take it with you on rail through the Chunnel. We need to develop rail. If you want to get support in building these roads, all you have to do is write into statute no carbon burning vehicles on the road other than evac helicopter. Electric vehicles are coming, and we should support electric vehicles only.*
- *Pam Fentress is from Lake Placid, and up and down 27 the citrus farms are suffering. Her family's and community's livelihood are going out of business. She sees this corridor as an opportunity. We need opportunities for jobs and growth and wages. We need higher paying wages and growth. We are a fan of the Southwest Connector Corridor because we see an opportunity for growth. Thank you.*
- *Mr. Nandam thanked everyone for public comments. He stated that everything will be uploaded to the M-CORES website. He asked everyone to please visit the website for materials and please complete evaluation forms. He went over closing remarks.*

5:10 PM

Adjourn

L.K. Nandam, Task Force Chair

Text Format:

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

Notes Taken By: Richard Driscoll and Erin Kersh