• The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m.
• Please enter your PIN to join with audio if you are not using computer audio
• If you are a substitute, please email Jennifer Stults with your information
• If you experience technical difficulties, please:
  1. Try logging in again, or
  2. Contact technical support
     • Tommy Bull – Tommy.Bull@dot.state.fl.us
     • Jennifer Stults– Jennifer.Stults@dot.state.fl.us
Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Force Meeting #7

August 26, 2020
Introductions, Update, & Agenda Review

Christine Kefauver, Facilitator
The Public Comment Period begins at 5:00 p.m., or as soon as the agenda items are completed.

We will receive comments virtually and then subsequently from our two physical public viewing locations.

Requests to provide comments virtually, received by 4:00 p.m. today, will be addressed during the Public Comment Period.

- If you have not yet registered, please sign-up on the website under today’s event. If you need the link emailed to you, please use the “Raise Hand” function and one of our team members will email you the link to sign-up.

Requests to provide comments at one of the public viewing locations can be made by completing a speaker card on-site at the registration area.
• The meeting is being recorded and will be available with other materials on the M-CORES website.

• Task Force Members will remain muted for the presentations and then you will be self-muted during discussion.

• Task Force members can use the “raise hands” feature during the discussion periods to indicate their desire to ask a question or provide comments.

• The facilitator will recognize individual Task Force members to speak. If you have self-muted please be sure to unmute before speaking.

• Do not put the webinar on hold or take another call, as we will hear your hold music.
**Today’s Agenda**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>9:05 AM</td>
<td>Introductions, Update, and Agenda Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 AM</td>
<td>Moving from Task Force Recommendations to Corridor Planning and Project Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:45 AM</td>
<td>Update on Work Plan and Recommendations Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions</td>
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<td>10:45 AM</td>
<td>Stretch Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:55 AM</td>
<td>Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions (Cont.)</td>
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<td>12:30 PM</td>
<td>Break for Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30 PM</td>
<td>Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions (Cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:15 PM</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30 PM</td>
<td>Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions (Cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30 PM</td>
<td>Review Draft Task Force Report Sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 PM</td>
<td>Next Steps</td>
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<td>4:55 PM</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
John B. Fricke, Jr.
Office of the Attorney General
PL-01 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

850-414-3764

John.Fricke@myfloridalegal.com
Task Force Member Roll Call

Christine Kefauver, Facilitator
Moving from Task Force Recommendations to Corridor Planning and Project Development

Will Watts, FDOT Chief Engineer
Illustrative Paths/Courses Development

- Avoidance Areas
- Attraction Areas
- Co-location Opportunities
  - Florida’s Turnpike
  - Suncoast Parkway
- Regional Connectivity

*Image shows a map with areas highlighted in pink, indicating avoidance or attraction zones. The map includes references to various roads and highways marked in different colors.*
Four Potential Starting Directions

- Near CR 470
  - Allows for a southern path

- Continuation along SR 44
  - Allows for co-location with SR 44

- Near existing terminus going north
  - Allows for power line co-location

- Near existing terminus going north and then west
  - Avoids traversing the Cross Florida Greenway
- Cross Florida Greenway
- Withlacoochee River
- Goethe State Forest
Cross Florida Greenway
  - Crossing included in previous 1999 PD&E Study
  - Potential crossing areas
    - SR 200 Area
    - US 41 Area - West of Dunnellon

Cross Florida Greenway*
* Ability to traverse the Cross Florida Greenway is allowed per development of initial Avoidance Map

Will Not Impact
No New Corridor Through
Electrical Power Transmission Line
Sabal Trail Gas Line
Suncoast Parkway 2, Planned
Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Withlacoochee River
  o Numerous adjacent conservation lands
  o Five existing bridges
Goethe State Forest

- Purchased by the state in the early 1990s
- Potential southern expansion

Goethe State Forest

- Will Not Impact
- No New Corridor Through
- Electrical Power Transmission Line
- Sabal Trail Gas Line
- Suncoast Parkway 2, Planned
• Opportunity Zones
• Future Land Use
  • Commercial,
  • Industrial,
  • City
• Electrical Lines, Gas Line
Next Steps

Identify and refine

- Potential paths and courses
- Bypass areas
- Co-location
• Feasibility Defined in Florida Statutes

**Florida Statutes, Section 338.2278**

*The three M-CORES Corridors are subject to the economic and environmental feasibility statement requirements of Florida Statutes (FS) Section 338.223*
Feasibility Components

Feasibility Includes:

1. **Environmental Feasibility**
   - Determined as part of the Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study
   - Ensures New Roadway Project Can Be Constructed to Minimize Environmental Impacts (to Extent Possible)
   - Focuses on the Natural, Physical, and Social Environments

2. **Economic Feasibility**
   - Determined during the Design Phase
   - Financial Evaluation for New Roadway Projects
   - Based on the Project’s Net Revenue Forecast
   - Considers Other Funding Sources
Financial Feasibility

- Determined during the Design Phase
- Requires Net Revenue Forecast
- Utilizes Design-Level Project Cost Estimate

Estimate Net Revenue
- Investment-Grade Level Traffic & Revenue Study

Determine Turnpike Funding Contribution

Address Funding Shortfall
- Project Cost
- Other Funding
Questions?
Update on Work Plan and Recommendations Framework

Huiwei Shen, FDOT Chief Planner
Needs Evaluation Process

• Task Force (Pre-planning)
  • Identify high-level needs tied to statutory purposes
  • Provide guidance for needs evaluation

• Post Task Force (Planning + Project Development)
  • Evaluate conventional transportation needs + regional co-benefits
  • Consider full range of alternatives including “no build” option
  • Evaluate economic, environmental, land use, and emergency management impacts
  • Assess financial feasibility including Turnpike standards
  • Conduct robust analysis meeting statutory requirements & industry standards
  • Support through corridor advisory group and robust public input
Use of Guiding Principles & Instructions

Section 338.2278 (3)(c)(6), F.S.: “To the maximum extent feasible, the department shall adhere to the recommendations of the task force created for each corridor in the design of the multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure associated with the corridor.”

• Guiding principles & instructions function as a set of directions to FDOT and partners in implementing Task Force’s recommendations.

• Statutory direction is inclusive of both guiding principles and instructions.

• Additional information or changing conditions may warrant refinements to specific instructions; in these situations, guiding principles and Task Force intent will inform refinements, in consultation with the corridor advisory group.
• Eliminated qualifier language
• Revised cross-cutting principles
  • Consistency with existing plans
  • Maximizing existing facilities
• Revised principles for environmental and community resources
  • Specific avoidance commitments in principles and/or instructions
  • Expanded instructions to document future analyses and decision points
• Revised additional principles based on member discussion
Corridor Advisory Group

• Members
  • Local governments, state and regional agencies, environmental groups, industry partners, etc.

• Role
  • Advise FDOT on implementation of Task Force recommendations
  • Help track FDOT and partner commitments
  • Review and provide feedback on needs evaluation, PD&E, and other documents
  • Assist with robust outreach process
Today’s Discussion

High-Level Needs (Why?)

Guiding Principles (How?)

Instructions for Project Development & Beyond (What’s Next?)

- Focus on refining guiding principles and instructions as a set
- Understand how this language will direct future planning and corridor development decisions
- Review revised high-level needs for incorporation in Task Force report
• **Meeting 8** (tentatively September 22) – prepare draft recommendations for public comment

• Additional **Community Open Houses** – August 27 in Bushnell, September 23 in Crystal River, and TBD date/location in October

• **Public comment period on draft recommendations** during month of October

• **Meeting 9** (tentatively week of October 19) – complete recommendations and final report

• **By November 15**- submit final report to Governor and Legislature
Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions

Task Force Discussion
Consistency with Statewide, Regional, and Local Plans and Visions

1. Be consistent with the vision, goals, and strategies of the Florida Transportation Plan (s. 339.155, F.S.). Be consistent with goals, objectives, policies, and resources identified in local government comprehensive plans (s. 163.3177 and 163.3178, F.S.), metropolitan long-range transportation plans (s. 339.175, F.S.), and strategic regional policy plans (s. 186.507, F.S.)

Maximizing Use of Existing Facilities

2. Develop potential alternatives for addressing statewide and interregional mobility and connectivity needs in this priority order:
   i. Safety and operational improvements to existing transportation facilities;
   ii. Then additional capacity in existing transportation facilities or right of way in or near the study area including co-location of facilities within existing right of way and other approaches to transforming existing facilities and right of way to accommodate additional modes, uses, and functions;
   iii. In circumstances where purpose and need, and/or guiding principles cannot be addressed by operational or existing facility/right of way improvements, or in circumstances where these improvements are not consistent with local government comprehensive plans or documented community goals, then evaluate new facilities.

Technology

3. Incorporate technology into corridor planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance.
4. Accommodate emerging vehicle and information technologies such as autonomous, connected, electric, and shared vehicles (ACES) and mobility as a service (MaaS).
Community Character
5. Avoid or minimize impacts to communities and reinforce the unique character of each community.

Economic Development
6. Develop infrastructure that strengthens existing local businesses and enhances economic development and employment opportunities.
   Avoid impacts to natural assets important to tourism, agritourism, ecotourism, and outdoor recreation.

Conservation Lands
7. Restore and enhance existing and planned conservation lands to support statewide and regional conservation goals.
8. Avoid impacts to and fragmentation of existing and planned conservation lands.

Wildlife Habitats and Connectivity
9. Enhance and restore wildlife habitats and corridors to support statewide and regional wildlife protection goals.
10. Avoid impacts to endangered or threatened species and fragmentation of their habitats.

Water Resources
11. Enhance important water resources in support of statewide and regional water supply and quality goals.
12. Avoid impacts to important water resources including springsheds and aquifer recharge areas.

Agriculture
13. Avoid impacts to and fragmentation of farmlands, silviculture and cattle ranches.
Emergency Preparedness and Response
14. Plan, design, construct, operate and maintain resilient corridors that support state, regional, and local plans for emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Infrastructure Opportunities
15. Plan and design enhanced or new corridors to enable co-location of broadband and other utility infrastructure.
16. Coordinate utility investment with future land use, economic development, transportation, and water quality plans.

Transportation Network Connectivity
17. Enhance interregional connectivity by providing direct connections between major statewide corridors.
18. Plan interregional corridors to support the function of regional and local networks.
### Purpose
- Enhance Quality of Life and Public Safety
- Leverage Technology

### Draft High-Level Needs
Strengthen emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery to enhance safety.

### Draft Guiding Principles
14. Plan, design, construct, operate and maintain resilient corridors that support state, regional, and local plans for emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

### Draft Instructions
For Project Development and Beyond
- Do not place new corridors through category 2 storm surge zones.
- Avoid and do not impact high risk coastal areas consistent with comprehensive plans.
- Coordinate with state, regional, and local response plans and priorities, including evacuation and sheltering.
- Provide opportunities for staging areas for emergencies (SAFE) as outlined in SB 7018.
- Plan and develop corridors that consider vulnerability to risks such as inland flooding, storm surge zones, and changing coastlines/sea level rise.
- Design and construct infrastructure to withstand and recover from potential risks such as extreme weather events and climate trends.
M-CORES and Emergency Considerations

Don Lewis, Emergency Evacuation SME
Four Phases of Emergency Management:

- **MITIGATION**: Preventing and minimizing emergency impacts
- **PREPAREDNESS**: Developing plans and tools for emergencies
- **RESPONSE**: Activities during the emergency
- **RECOVERY**: Returning to normalcy after an event

*M-CORES impacts all 4 phases of Emergency Management*
Roles in Florida Emergency Management:

- **STATE** - Implement State Emergency Ops Plan; oversee and coordinate all phases of emergency management including FHP law enforcement and management of state facilities and resources; facilitate communication with counties and federal partners; monitor congestion on statewide highways.

- **REGIONAL** - Coordinate emergency activities of neighboring counties for situational awareness, real time needs identification, and communication.

- **LOCAL** - Activate local plans including county decision making, evacuation messaging and areas, sheltering openings, and coordination with state and regional partners. Manage recovery efforts including resource storage and distribution.
Evacuation Traffic Capacity Needs:

- More north-south capacity needed for evacuation and re-entry
- Hurricane Irma - one emergency scenario that gives a glimpse of what can happen: minor track shift could have been worst-case
- M-CORES possible I-75 relief / dispersion of evacuees so that more destinations can be reached safely and timely
- Stronger events = more out of county evacuation
Role / Realities of Public Sheltering:

- Critical role for transportation disadvantaged and those needing a last resort refuge
- Sheltering in place - less severe emergency events
- With Covid-19, public shelters will not be a destination most will choose
- Past hurricane events - less than 10% of the evacuating population go to public shelter
- Local pre-Covid-19 shelter capacities could only handle a small portion of the evacuating population, now more constrained by virus / social distancing
- Even if we could build enough structurally safe shelter capacity for various severe emergency events, citizens will not go there if they feel unsafe
Local County Emergency Challenges / M-CORES Help:

- Long traffic clearance times and difficult decision-making
- Better control of evacuee egress out of storm surge areas
- Separation of local and through evacuation traffic in many areas
- Preservation of local shelter space for local needs
- Messaging to through-traffic to control local impacts
Emergency Considerations

M-CORES Hurricane Emergency Benefits and Usefulness:

• Very much scenario specific
  • Track and intensity
  • Public participation
  • In-County vs. Out-of-County destinations
  • Traffic control and messaging
  • Tourist populations

• Evacuations conducted before the arrival of pre-landfall hazards (sustained tropical storm winds and flooding cut-off)

• Mitigation of long evacuation lead times where track and intensity confidence is poor

• Southwest Florida to Tampa Bay most difficult evacuation area in US
  (Source: National Hurricane Conference)
Questions?
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<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Draft High-Level Needs</th>
<th>Draft Guiding Principles</th>
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Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions Discussion
Break

floridamcores.com
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Lunch

Task Force Meeting #7

August 26, 2020
The meeting will resume from lunch break at 1:30 p.m.

Please enter your PIN to join with audio, if you are not using computer audio.

If you experience technical difficulties, please:
1. Try logging in again, or
2. Contact technical support
   • Tommy Bull – Tommy.Bull@dot.state.fl.us
   • Jennifer Stults – Jennifer.Stults@dot.state.fl.us

Public Comments

If you wish to provide public comments virtually, please complete the form on the website https://floridamcores.com/event/northern-turnpike-corridor-task-force-meeting-7/

If you are at a public viewing location and wish to provide public comment, please register with staff on-site.
• Requests made online to provide comments virtually, received by 4:00 p.m. today, or via speaker card at the public viewing locations will be addressed during the Public Comment Period.

• If you have not yet registered to provide public comment during today’s virtual meeting and wish to do so, please sign-up on the website under today’s event or by completing a speaker card at one of the on-site public viewing locations.

• If you need the link emailed to you, please use the “Raise Hand” function and one of our team members will email you the link to sign-up.

• Comments can be submitted at anytime to FDOT.Listens@dot.state.fl.us
Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions (continued)

Task Force Discussion
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</table>

Review and Refine Guiding Principles and Instructions Discussion (Continued)
Break

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Review Draft Task Force Report
Sections

Task Force Discussion
Final Report Outline

- Transmittal Letter
- Introduction  
  - Statutory requirements
- Task Force Overview  
  - Membership  
  - Work plan/meetings  
  - Public and agency involvement
- Study Area Overview  
  - Key characteristics
- Task Force Recommendations  
  - High-level needs  
  - Guiding principles  
  - Instructions for project development and beyond
- Action Plan  
  - Anticipated future planning and project development activities  
  - Ongoing partner coordination
- Appendices  
  - Task Force membership  
  - Task Force work plan  
  - Glossary  
  - Link to on-line resources
INTRODUCTION

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

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

- Suncoast Corridor, extending from Citrus County to Jefferson County;
- Northern Turnpike Corridor, extending from the northern terminus of the Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway; and
- Southwest-Central Florida Corridor, extending from Collier County to Polk County.
These corridors are viewed as part of a broader program to address the complete statutory purpose of M-CORES, creating strategic opportunities to revitalize rural communities and enhance economic development. The statute also provides FDOT the direction and tools to help advance other regional goals related to environmental stewardship and quality of life in parallel with corridor development.

With this broad approach, the intended benefits of M-CORES include addressing issues, such as emergency evacuation and response; congestion mitigation; trade and logistics; broadband, water, and sewer connectivity; energy distribution; autonomous, connected, electric, and shared vehicle technology; multimodal options, including shared-use non-motorized trails, freight and passenger rail, and public transit; mobility as a service; availability of a trained workforce skilled in traditional and emerging technologies; protection or enhancement of wildlife corridors or environmentally sensitive areas; and protection or enhancement of primary springs protection zones and farmland preservation areas.

The statute directed FDOT to convene a Task Force for each corridor as an inclusive, consensus-building mechanism. The FDOT Secretary appointed the members who were representatives from state agencies, regional planning councils, metropolitan planning organizations, water management districts, local governments, environmental groups, and the community.

The Florida Legislature charged each Task Force with providing recommendations and evaluations in a final report which will guide the Florida Department of Transportation in its subsequent study phases through the implementation of high-level needs, guiding principles and instructions. This report documents the Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Force's activities and recommendations.
TASK FORCE OVERVIEW

In August 2019, FDOT convened the Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Force with 39 members representing state agencies, water management districts, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, regional planning councils, environmental groups, and community organizations (see Appendix A for Membership List).

The Task Force met 13 times between August 2019 and October 2020 through nine Task Force meetings and four webinars or virtual meetings. Over the course of 15 months, the Task Force reviewed data, trends, and issues; discussed key considerations for planning transportation corridors; received and reviewed public input; and developed high-level needs, guiding principles, and instructions for project development and beyond. Subject-matter experts joined the Task Force members to provide information related to specific aspects of the Task Force’s charge, including community planning, economic and workforce development, agriculture, environmental resources, broadband and utilities, emerging technology, and emergency management.

In March 2020, some unique challenges arose resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Force adapted meeting formats to comply with the Governor’s Executive Orders. The later Task Force meetings were designed with a combination of virtual and in-person ways for both Task Force members and the public to participate (see Appendix B for Work Plan and Appendix C for Meeting Locations).
FDOT staff developed and maintained a geographic information system (GIS) tool to provide the Task Force access to a wide variety of data on existing demographic, economic, land use, environmental, infrastructure, and other resources in the study area. This tool specifically was used to help identify areas where direct impacts from corridors should be avoided, as well as areas where a connection to a corridor is desired. FDOT staff conducted one-on-one technical briefings to provide Task Force members with a tutorial of the GIS tool and to discuss data-related questions. The Task Force used the GIS tool to help understand the relationship between draft guiding principles and potential corridor location decisions. The GIS tool was a living tool and was updated based on feedback and suggestions from the Task Force members. The GIS tool remains publicly accessible at all times on the project website (floridamcores.com) and through a mobile-friendly format.

During Task Force meetings, a facilitator and staff supported the Task Force in effective discussion and collaboration. Documentation of the Task Force activities, including meeting agendas, materials, and summaries, as well as the GIS tool, can be found on the project website.

Public engagement was a critical component of the Task Force process. Opportunities for public engagement were included at each Task Force meeting through a dedicated public comment period, and comment stations were set up to receive written comments. Meetings were broadcast live and recordings were posted on the project website for members of the public who could not attend in person. The public also could attend the webinars and hybrid meetings virtually through the GoToWebinar platform. Overall, a total of \# people attended the in-person meetings and \# people attended the webinars and meetings virtually.
To further public engagement, Community Open Houses were held in Lecanto, Wildwood, Chiefland, Crystal River, and Bushnell to share information about the process and receive public input. At the Community Open Houses, members of the public could directly ask questions of FDOT staff, view informational material, and experience hands-on use of the GIS tool. A total of # people participated in the five open houses.

FDOT received communication 24/7 through the project website, FDOT Listens email address, phone, social media, letters, newsletters, and more. In total, FDOT received # unique and # form letter comments through these communication methods, which were shared with the Task Force.

In addition to engaging the public, FDOT conducted active engagement with partners. FDOT gave # presentations to interested agencies and organizations at their workshops, meetings, and conferences. FDOT staff also attended metropolitan planning organization, regional planning council, and local government board meetings to share updates on the Task Force's process and answer questions. The Task Force also considered resolutions adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in Citrus County and Levy County, and by the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization. [Staff to add others received before the date of the final Task Force meeting]

The Task Force received the compiled and summarized written public comments. FDOT tracked topics at a high level so that the Task Force could discuss and consider those topics throughout the process at their meetings. [Public comment summary to be expanded at Meeting #8]
The Northern Turnpike Corridor extends from the northern terminus of the Florida’s Turnpike in Sumter County northwest to the Suncoast Parkway. The study area covers more than 3,800 square miles encompassing all of Levy, Sumter, Citrus and Marion Counties. Major population centers within the study area include Ocala with over 60,000 residents, followed by Inverness, Wildwood, Crystal River, and Dunnellon. Figure 1 depicts the study area.
ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS
The study area is rich in natural land and water assets that support significant fish, wildlife, and plant populations, many of which are endemic to Florida.

- Approximately 40 percent of the study area is held in public and private conservation, according to data from Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI). Conservation lands include Goethe State Forest, Withlacoochee State Forest, Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve, Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, Ocala National Forest, Cedar Key Scrub State Reserve, Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park, Crystal River Preserve State Park, and Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area.

- Thirty-five percent of the study area has been identified as critical linkages in the Florida Ecological Greenways Network that connects conservation lands across the state and provides opportunities to connect existing gaps in the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

- Agricultural lands in the study area are mainly used for cropland, nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, pasture, rangeland, and woodland. Apart from agriculture operations, these lands are important for protection of the ecological functions of various natural resources. Some agricultural lands are preserved through the acquisition of permanent agricultural land conservation easements under the Florida Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

- Twenty-two percent of the study area is covered by coastal, freshwater, lake and riverine wetlands. For instance, the Cedar Key area has extensive wetland ecosystems and is part of the northeast Gulf of Mexico shoreline, which contains about 60 percent of the coastal and freshwater marshes in the United States.

- There are four aquatic preserves in the study area, including the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve, which is the largest aquatic preserve and one of the most pristine places in Florida.
• The study area has more than 200 springs that support diverse ecosystems, including Silver Springs, Rainbow Springs, Kings Springs, Homosassa Springs and Chassahowitzka Springs, which are classified as first magnitude springs, discharging at least 64 million gallons of water per day.

• Parts of the study area serve as primary recharge areas for the Floridan Aquifer. There are numerous rivers and lake systems, including the Withlacoochee River, which forms the boundary between Citrus County and the other three counties in the study area.

• Notable federally and state listed threatened and endangered species within the study area are the West Indian manatee, eastern black rail, Florida scrub jay, gopher tortoise, eastern indigo snake, and loggerhead sea turtle.

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Community characteristics reflect the diversity of the population, cultural resources, and land uses in the study area.

• The estimated total 2019 population of Levy, Sumter, Citrus and Marion Counties was approximately 678,128. Projected population growth varies by county through 2045. Sumter County’s population is projected to grow at more than twice the statewide overall growth rate, while Citrus, Levy, and Marion Counties are projected to grow below the statewide rate. Table 1 shows 2010, estimated 2019 and projected 2045 population for each county.

1 https://www.fnai.org/pdf/MAXCounty_202003.pdf
Table 1. Existing and Projected Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2010 Census</th>
<th>2019 (Estimated)</th>
<th>2045 (Projected)</th>
<th>2019 – 2045 Percentage Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Citrus</td>
<td>141,236</td>
<td>147,744</td>
<td>177,300</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levy</td>
<td>40,801</td>
<td>41,330</td>
<td>45,500</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>331,298</td>
<td>360,421</td>
<td>460,800</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumter</td>
<td>93,420</td>
<td>128,633</td>
<td>211,500</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>18,801,310</td>
<td>21,208,589</td>
<td>27,266,900</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research²

- Per capita personal income levels in Marion, Citrus, and Levy Counties fell below the statewide level of $50,070 for 2018³.

- Marion, Citrus, and Levy Counties experienced poverty rates² above the statewide average of 13.7 percent in 2018, with Levy County having the highest rate. Sumter County’s poverty rate is below the statewide average at 9.3 percent. The study area’s Bachelor’s degree attainment is also below the statewide average of 29 percent; Sumter County is the exception at 31 percent⁵.

- Within the study area, there are 127 buildings that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, there are seven historic bridges and several historic cemeteries and archaeological sites.

- The predominant land uses within the study area are agriculture, conservation lands, public institution, and residential. These land uses are consistent with the Regional Planning Council’s Strategic Regional Policy Plans, Metropolitan Planning Organizations’ Long Range Transportation Plans, and local government Comprehensive Plans.
- Future land use elements of the study area's local government Comprehensive Plans describe future development patterns such as corridor planning zones, economic activity centers, Urban Growth Boundaries, interchange management areas, conservation areas, spring protection zones, and Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs). Areas where growth is desired are near SR 44 and CR 486 in Citrus County; I-75, SR 200, US 301 and SR 35 in Marion County; and The Villages in Sumter County.

- Marion County has established Farmland Preservation Area in northwest Marion County (outside the Urban Growth Boundary) to manage growth and protect the area's valuable soils, water, and springsheds.

**ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

The economic characteristics of the study area demonstrate opportunities and challenges to enhancing the economic conditions and quality of life of the residents.

- The predominant industries in terms of employment in Levy, Sumter, Citrus and Marion Counties are trade, transportation and utilities; professional and business services;

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3 US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional Economic Measurement Division, Table CAINC1, released November 14, 2019
4 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)
construction and mining; education and services; leisure and hospitality; and financial services.

- Agriculture, forestry, and fishing are still significant as the study area is rich in timber and marine fishery resources. These resources also provide opportunities in the state’s growing agritourism and ecotourism industries.

- The study area has a small but relatively diverse and growing manufacturing industry. Manufacturing industry firms in the study area include Signature Brands for E-ONE, and Krausz Industries. Additionally, Auto Zone and FedEx Ground are among logistics and distribution companies that have facilities in Marion County. Additionally, CSX has designated the Ocala/Marion County Commerce Park in Ocala as a rail-served, ready-to-build location for industrial development and expansion.

- Employment centers are concentrated in urbanized areas because of population density, presence of a diverse workforce, and access to healthcare, entertainment, education, and communication services.

- Levy County is part of the North Central Rural Area of Opportunity, designated by Executive Order 11-81. Each county in the study area contains at least one economically distressed area that is designated as Opportunity Zones by the state of Florida.

**INFRASTRUCTURE CHARACTERISTICS**

The condition of infrastructure in the study area not only influences the quality of life for residents and visitors, it is also an important component of, and potential catalyst for, economic development.

- The main type of wastewater treatment in most of the study area is septic systems. The cumulative impact of septic systems has been linked to impaired waters in springs, rivers, and estuarine systems.
• Broadband coverage in the rural parts of the study area is very limited, resulting in many residents and businesses not having access to high-speed internet. Levy County has the fewest number of broadband service providers.

• Duke Energy and SECO Energy are the primary electric distribution companies in the study area. Sabal Trail and the Florida Gas Transmission Company operate the main gas transmission lines.

• Major roadways in the study area are I-75, US 301, US 441, US 41, SR 40, US 27, US 98, US 19, Florida’s Turnpike, Suncoast Parkway, SR 44, SR 200, and SR 50. These roads are also primary evacuation routes serving both local and regional evacuees.

• There are several county and city roads in the study area that connect to the major roadway system.

• I-75 corridor, a major north/south route for moving people and freight into and out of much of the central and western Florida peninsula, regularly experiences congestion. Additionally, sections of SR 44 and US 19/98 in Citrus County experience periodic congestion.

• Construction of the Suncoast Parkway Extension (Suncoast Parkway 2) is underway and upon completion in 2023 will provide direct access to Tampa from the center of Citrus County.

As part of the M-CORES Program, a separate Task Force is evaluating the extension of the

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6 Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
7 Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Rural Areas of Opportunity
Suncoast Corridor from Citrus County to I-10 in Jefferson and Madison Counties. The M-CORES statute directs the NTC corridor to end at the Suncoast, which could be along the Suncoast 2 or a future extension.

- The CSX Transportation “S” line, which traverses Sumter and Marion Counties, is a major North-South freight rail line in the state. The western branch line of the Florida Northern Railroad provides short line service to regional businesses. Passenger rail service was discontinued in the late 1980s. The Ocala Union Station once used by Amtrak passenger rail was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 and is currently used as a station for intercity and local bus services.

- The transportation network supports trade and logistics including air, rail, and truck freight, and related value-added services. I-75 in the study area is part of a network of highways identified as the most critical highway portions of the U.S. freight transportation system.

- There are no commercial airport, seaport, or rail terminals in the study area. People and freight moving between the study area and other parts of the state, country, or world typically need to connect to other regions via road or rail service and then connect to another mode. There are plans by Citrus County to revive establishment of Port Citrus, which would help to grow the economic vitality and quality of life in the area.

- There are about 75 miles of existing Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail (SUN Trail) and about 173 miles of identified SUN Trail gaps which are in various stages of planning, design and construction in the study area. The Cross Florida Greenway, Van Fleet State Trail, Withlacoochee State Trail, Dunnellon Trail, Nature Coast State Trail, Florida National Scenic Trail, and various other recreational trails are part of the Florida Greenways and Trails System, providing visitors and residents high-quality paved and unpaved multi-use trail experiences.

- The transit system consists of a limited number of buses on fixed routes and paratransit, which provides demand-response rides. Levy and Sumter Counties do not have urban fixed-route systems.

There are opportunities to improve infrastructure and connectivity in the region to enhance economic prosperity and quality of life.
RECOMMENDATIONS

FRAMEWORK

The Task Force developed recommendations in three areas:

- **High-Level Needs** - key regional opportunities and challenges corridor investments and related actions are intended to address. These can be transportation-specific needs and transportation-supported needs. The high-level needs are be informed by the six purposes and 13 potential benefits in s. 338.2278 (1), F.S. The high-level needs, along with the purpose, answer the question “why?”.

- **Guiding Principles** - a set of core values that guides decision making related to a transportation corridor or other type of project or program throughout the planning, development, and implementation process. These answer the question “how?”.

- **Instructions for Project Development and Beyond** - direction provided by the Task Force for future project development and implementation activities to ensure the Task Force’s guiding principles are applied to subsequent activities as intended. This direction could address corridor location and design, as well as strategies to be carried forward and refined during planning, project development, design, and other implementation phases. These answer the question “what’s next?”.

The guiding principles and instructions are intended to function as a set of directions to FDOT and other partners in implementing the Task Force’s recommendations as they carry out future planning, project development, and implementation activities related to the M-CORES program in s. 338.2278, F.S. The guiding principles provide a high-level statement of value and direction that is intended to apply in all decisions; the instructions detail specific commitments and actions. The Task Force recommendations are intended to supplement the requirements of current FDOT processes during planning, project development, design, and other implementation phases.
Section 338.2278 (3)(c)(6), F.S. states “To the maximum extent feasible, the department shall adhere to the recommendations of the task force created for each corridor in the design of the multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure associated with the corridor.” The Task Force views this statement as inclusive of both the guiding principles and the instructions and of the full range of planning, project development, and implementation activities. The Task Force also recognizes that as future work continues in the study area, additional information or changing conditions may provide insight about the feasibility and value of specific implementation steps that could warrant refinements to specific instructions; in these situations, the guiding principle and intent of the Task Force will guide any such refinements, in consultation with a corridor advisory group established following completion of the Task Force process.

HIGH-LEVEL NEEDS

High-level needs are key regional opportunities and challenges corridor investments and related actions are intended to address.

Florida Statute charged the Task Force to “evaluate the need for, and the economic and environmental impacts of, hurricane evacuation impacts of, and land use impacts of” the corridor on which the Task Force is focusing. Because the Task Force is in a pre-planning phase, high-level
needs were identified based on review of partner and public input, existing plans and studies, and available data and forecasts on trends and conditions in the study area.

The Task Force identified the following high-level needs for the Northern Turnpike Corridor study area, recognizing that additional evaluation will be required to develop more specific, quantifiable needs as part of future planning and project development:

- **Improve statewide and regional transportation mobility and connectivity for people and freight.** Trade, transportation, and utilities industry sectors employ approximately one-fifth of the workforce within the study area\(^8\). The agriculture, silviculture, manufacturing, distribution, and tourism and recreation industries in the regional also rely on the interregional multimodal transportation system that connects various destinations within the study area, provides mobility options, and enables interregional interactions that support both the local and state economy. I-75 within the study area experiences periodic congestion caused by increased demand, crashes and incidents; on average, an incident closes at least one lane or ramp every 16 hours\(^9\). Peak hour congestion has also been observed on other major roadways within population centers. If current trends continue, movement of and connectivity for people, goods, and services through the study area will be affected. Passenger, visitor, and freight traffic both in the study area and more broadly throughout central Florida would be served by connecting the Suncoast Parkway with Florida’s Turnpike to form a continuous high speed, high capacity limited access facility.

- **Address statewide and regional safety and mobility needs due to the growth in population and visitation.** Population in the study area grew from 280,000 in 1985 to 678,100 in 2019 (142 percent)\(^10\) and is projected to grow by an additional 217,000 (32 percent) by 2045\(^11\). The number of visitors to Florida has increased from 28.9 million in 1985 to 131 million in 2019 (353 percent)\(^12\). Review of 2018 traffic crash data showed that 10,327 crashes were reported in the study area which resulted to 165 fatalities and 8131 injuries.\(^13\)
The projected growth in population and visitors could lead to greater transportation demand, with increased congestion and safety concerns.

- **Provide a transportation network that revitalizes and enhances communities and industries.** There is a need to provide and maintain reliable and redundant transportation connectivity to important community resources and services such as healthcare and education. This is exhibited by the fact that Levy County does not have a hospital facility and access to this service is reliant on the regional roadway network. Protection of cropland, pastureland, and silviculture in the study area is also vital to supporting the community’s identity and Florida’s economy, as Florida’s agricultural exports are ranked third in the United States.

There is also a need to improve facilities to support alternative modes of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle modes. Metropolitan planning organization (MPO) long-range

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8. Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
9. I-75 Relief - Final Recommendations Report
10. Population Data Archive, Bureau of Economic and Business Research
11. Florida Population Projections, Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research
12. Florida Visitor Estimates, Visit Florida
transportation plans in the study area include a list of multi-use trail priorities and future opportunity trails defined by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

Study area residents living within one half-mile of a fixed-route public transportation is at 19 percent in Marion County, and 28 percent in Citrus County. Levy County and Sumter County do not have fixed-route public transportation\textsuperscript{14}. Additionally, local transit agencies have identified transit service expansions (existing route improvements) and new services in their Transit Development Plans (TDP). Citrus County has also identified a need for express bus transit that would provide inter-county connections between major activity centers within the study area.

- Strengthen emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery to enhance safety. There are 49 public shelters within study area, six of them are special needs shelter. Sumter County does not have special needs shelter. Recent evacuation studies indicate the time residents to safely evacuate to the public shelters are about 17 minutes in Citrus and Sumter Counties and 13 minutes in Levy and Marion Counties.

- In the event of a Category 5 storm, regional evacuation models show that more than one million vehicles would need to evacuate Tampa Bay and Central Florida regions through the study area, causing congestion on major roadways in Levy, Marion, Sumter, and Citrus Counties. Recent evacuation studies indicate the time necessary for people to safely evacuate out of their respective counties are 24 hours for Levy and Marion Counties, 30 hours for Sumter County, and 55 hours for Citrus County\textsuperscript{15}. Periodic congestion and lack of high-speed, high-capacity travel options between I-75 on the east and Suncoast Parkway or US 19/98 on the west of the study area generally limit evacuation and emergency response. Congestion on inadequate transportation facilities could impede emergency management activities and increase the time needed for safe evacuation and response.
- Support expansion of existing and new industries through enhanced access to jobs, education, and healthcare. Three out of four counties in the study area have higher poverty rates than the statewide average. The average household income is nearly $10,000 per year lower than the statewide average\textsuperscript{16}, and the unemployment rate is higher than the state average\textsuperscript{17}. Without access to essential services and local, high-skilled, and higher-wage jobs for residents in rural areas, these communities are likely to continue to lag behind on key statewide economic indicators.

- Enhance the local tourism, ecotourism, agritourism, and outdoor recreation economy. Local economies in the study area depend on tourism, ecotourism, agritourism, and outdoor recreation activities. Whether kayaking or fishing on the Withlacoochee River, hiking the Cross Florida Greenway or swimming in Rainbow Springs, there are a wide variety of nature-based recreation opportunities in the study area. There is a need to explore innovative ways to develop a transportation system that enhances livability and preserves attractions, cultural resources, and environmental assets that are essential to the economic viability of these industries.

\textsuperscript{14} 2019 Florida Transit Information and Performance Handbook
\textsuperscript{15} Regional Evacuation Studies, Florida Division of Emergency Management
\textsuperscript{16} Poverty Rate and Household Income by Florida County, Bureau of Economic and Business Research
\textsuperscript{17} 2019 Unemployment Rates by Florida County, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
• Expand rural utility infrastructure, including broadband, water, and sewer to enhance quality of life. The vast majority of the population in the four-county study area does not have access to fixed broadband service. Additionally, some of the surface water bodies in the study area do not currently meet water quality standards because of their close proximity to septic systems. Without expanded and upgraded utility infrastructure, rural areas could suffer from an economic competitiveness and quality of life perspective. While utility infrastructure is not dependent upon transportation infrastructure, there are opportunities to advance them together to achieve positive outcomes.

• Protect, restore, enhance, and connect public and private environmentally sensitive areas, conservation lands, threatened and endangered species habitats, key water quality resources, and ecosystems. The study area is rich in ecological diversity with an abundance of state parks, state forests, wildlife management areas, and conservation lands. There is a need to protect and enhance environmentally sensitive resources such as springs, wetlands, and floodplains to support regional and statewide habitat conservation and water quality goals. The M-CORES program offers unique opportunities to plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain transportation infrastructure in a way that protects the environment and restores past mistakes.
As input to project development, FDOT will conduct a robust evaluation of the existing and future transportation and related needs in the study area, building on the recommendations of the Task Force. This process should:

- Evaluate and distinguish between conventional safety, mobility, and connectivity needs, and broader regional needs or co-benefits related to transportation.

- Consider and document safety, mobility, and connectivity needs related to moving both people and freight.

- Consider and document mobility and connectivity needs related to both local/regional travel originating and terminating within the study area and statewide/interregional travel through the study area.

- Consider and document mobility and connectivity needs related to both routine daily traffic and special events traffic, such as evacuation and response to major emergencies and disasters.

- Use population and economic growth projected in local government comprehensive plans and/or the MPO long-range transportation plans and the Florida Transportation Plan as the basis for estimating future travel demand in the study area. Consider the potential for additional population and economic growth that could be generated by proposed land use and economic development changes in and surrounding the study area.

- Consider the mobility, economic, and fiscal impacts of potential shifts in economic activity from existing communities and corridors to the enhanced or new corridors, as well as potential net economic benefits to the state.

- Consider potential changes in travel demand related to recovery from COVID-19 and potential long-term changes in travel behavior, such as greater propensity for working from home,

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18 Fixed Broadband Deployment Interactive Map, Federal Communications Commission
increased home delivery of goods and services, and potential reluctance to use public transportation or shared mobility options.

- Consider potential changes in travel demand and transportation system capacity related to increased use of emerging technologies, such as automated and connected vehicles.

- Evaluate the ability of a full range of proposed alternatives for corridor improvements in the study area to accomplish the high-level needs, including the specific economic, environmental, land use, and emergency management impacts called for in s. 338.2278, F.S. These alternatives should consider operational and capacity improvements, existing and new facilities, multiple transportation modes, and a "no build" option.

- Evaluate the economic and financial feasibility of corridor alternatives, including whether they would meet statutory requirements for designation as part of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System and for financing as part of Florida's Turnpike system.

- Be supported by high-quality data and technical analyses; and

- Incorporate comprehensive public and agency involvement, including reporting of the results and how specific alternatives will be advanced into project development.

The Task Force believes that the formal determination of need and feasibility pursuant to statutory requirements and consistent with accepted statewide processes is an important milestone in corridor planning and development. The Task Force has developed a series of guiding principles and instructions for future planning and development of corridors for which high-level needs have been identified. While these determinations will be made after the Task Force has completed its deliberations, the guidance provided by the Task Force will instruct the evaluation process, and an ongoing corridor advisory group will review and provide feedback on the findings and conclusions of these analyses.
Questions?
Next Steps

Jared Perdue, Chair
Public Comments

Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Force Meeting #7
Public Comment Period

- Requests made online to provide comments virtually, received by **4:00 p.m. today**, or via speaker card at the public viewing locations will be addressed during the Public Comment Period.
- When your name is called, we will unmute your line in order for you to provide comment within your allotted time of 3 minutes.
- You will hear 2 tones during the countdown:
  - 30 seconds remaining
  - 3 minutes have concluded
- Only one person at a time will be unmuted; if you have self-muted please be sure to unmute before speaking
- After completion of the virtual public comments we will subsequently move to the public viewing locations
- If you did not submit your request in time to be able to speak today, please email your comments to **FDOT.Listens@dot.state.fl.us**