

SUNCOAST CONNECTOR TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT

November 15, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Section 338.2278, Florida Statute (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 with 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 comprised of representatives from state agencies, regional planning councils, metropolitan planning organizations, water management districts, local governments, environmental groups, and the community. Members of each Task Force were appointed by the FDOT Secretary.

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 Suncoast Corridor Task Force's activities and recommendations.

43 TASK FORCE OVERVIEW

44
45 In August 2019, FDOT convened the Suncoast Corridor Task Force with 41 members representing
46 state agencies, water management districts, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations,
47 regional planning councils, environmental groups, and community organizations (see **Appendix A** for
48 Membership List).

49
50 The Task Force met 13 times between August 2019 and October 2020 through nine Task Force
51 meetings and four webinars or virtual meetings. Over the course of 15 months, the Task Force
52 reviewed data, trends, and issues; discussed key considerations for planning transportation corridors;
53 received and reviewed public input; and developed high-level needs, guiding principles, and
54 instructions for project development and beyond. Subject matter experts joined the Task Force
55 members to provide information related to specific aspects of the Task Force's charge, including
56 community planning, economic and workforce development, agriculture, environmental resources,
57 broadband and utilities, emerging technology, and emergency management.

58
59 In March 2020, some unique challenges arose resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task
60 Force adapted meeting formats to comply with the Governor's Executive Orders. The later Task
61 Force meetings were designed with a combination of virtual and in-person ways for both Task Force
62 members and the public to participate (see **Appendix B** for Work Plan and **Appendix C** for Meeting
63 Locations – these will be updated prior to final publication).

64
65 FDOT staff developed and maintained a geographic information system (GIS) tool to provide the Task
66 Force with access to a wide variety of data on existing demographic, economic, land use,
67 environmental, infrastructure, and other resources in the study area. This tool was specifically used to
68 help identify areas where direct impacts from corridors should be avoided, as well as areas where a
69 connection to a corridor is desired. FDOT staff conducted one-on-one technical briefings to provide
70 Task Force members with a tutorial of the GIS tool and to discuss data-related questions. The Task
71 Force used the GIS tool to help understand the linkage between draft guiding principles and potential
72 corridor location decisions. The GIS tool served as a living tool and was updated based on feedback
73 and suggestions from the Task Force members. The GIS tool remains publicly accessible at all times
74 on the project website including through a mobile-friendly format.

75
76 During Task Force meetings, facilitators and staff supported the Task Force in effective discussion
77 and collaboration. Additional documentation of the Task Force activities including meeting agendas,
78 materials, and summaries, as well as the GIS tool, can be found on the project website
79 (Floridamcores.com).

80
81 Public engagement was a critical component of the Task Force process. Opportunities for public
82 engagement were included at each Task Force meeting through a dedicated public comment period
83 and comment stations were available to receive written comments. Meetings were broadcast live and
84 recordings were posted on the project website for members of the public who could not attend in
85 person. The public could also attend the webinars and hybrid meetings virtually through the
86 GoToWebinar platform. Overall, a total of # people attended the in-person meetings and # people
87 attended the webinars and meetings virtually.

88

89 To further public engagement, Community Open Houses were held in Old Town, Mayo, Perry,
90 Chiefland, Crystal River, and Monticello to share information about the process and receive public
91 input. *[Expand to cover future activities]* At the Community Open Houses, members of the public were
92 able to directly ask questions of FDOT staff, view informational material, and experience hands-on
93 use of the GIS tool. A total of # people participated in the six open houses.

94
95 Additionally, FDOT received communication 24/7 through the project website, FDOT Listens email
96 address, phone, social media, letters, newsletters, and more. In total, FDOT received # unique and #
97 form letter comments through these communication methods, which were shared with the Task
98 Force.

99
100 In addition to engaging the public, FDOT conducted active engagement with partners. FDOT
101 provided # presentations to interested agencies and organizations at their workshops, meetings, and
102 conferences. FDOT staff also attended metropolitan planning organization, regional planning council,
103 and local government board meetings to share updates on the Task Force's process and answer any
104 questions. The Task Force also considered resolutions adopted by the Board of County
105 Commissioners in Citrus County, Levy County, and Madison County; City Commissions in the City of
106 Cedar Key and the City of Chiefland; Town Council of the Town of Greenville; and the
107 Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Task Force also considered letters from the
108 City of Williston and the Town of Yankeetown. *[Expand to include others received before the date of*
109 *the final Task Force meeting]*

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111 The Task Force received the compiled and summarized written public comments. FDOT tracked
112 topics at a high level to ensure the Task Force discussed and considered those topics throughout the
113 process at their meetings. *[Public comment summary to be expanded at Meeting #8]*

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STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

The Suncoast Corridor study area is located along Florida’s Nature Coast through Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, and Taylor Counties and is home to more than 280,000 residents (**Figure 1**).

Environment

The predominately rural counties located within the Suncoast Corridor study area have been a draw to residents and year-round visitors for decades. This area has many unique features and natural resources including rivers, springs, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, coastal areas, conservation areas, state parks, and agricultural lands. Some notable resources include the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve, the Suwannee and Santa Fe Rivers, Blue Springs, Fanning Springs, Crystal River, and the Goethe State Forest. These areas support significant fish, wildlife, and plant populations including threatened and endangered species such as the West Indian Manatee, the Florida Scrub Jay, and the Gopher Tortoise. The study area also includes an abundance of prime farmlands and agricultural properties that serve both economic and environmental functions in addition to Spring Protection and Recharge Areas, Florida Forever Lands, and Florida Ecological Greenways Network critical linkages.

Community

The population of the eight-county study area is projected to increase approximately 15% by 2045, adding over 40,000 more residents to the area (**Table 1**).



Table 1. Existing and Projected Population¹

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

159 Citrus County currently contributes almost half the population of the study area and will account for the
 160 majority of population growth in the future. Citrus, Gilchrest, and Lafayette are projected to have the
 161 highest percentage of growth by 2045 (approximately 20%) with Dixie and Madison counties projected
 162 to have the lowest population growth (approximately 3%) during the same period. The state's projected
 163 population increase is approximately 29% during this same time period; nearly twice the growth rate of
 164 the overall study area. Population within the study area is mostly driven by domestic migration from
 165 other parts of the state. All of the counties in the study area, except Gilchrist, experienced more deaths
 166 than births over the last decade, reflecting an older population².

168 The study area is a blend of coastal and inland areas, which are mostly rural and agricultural with
 169 conservation areas and scattered suburban communities. Approximately 88% is in agricultural or
 170 recreation/park use, while residential use accounts for approximately 8% of the overall land use³. The
 171 remaining 4% of land uses are comprised of primarily industrial, institutional, and commercial
 172 development. While mostly rural in nature, there are 21 towns and cities within the study area with an
 173 abundance of community resources including schools, parks, places of worship, and downtown
 174 mainstreets. There are also several historic resources within the study area including the Monticello
 175 Historic District, the Crystal River Archaeological Site, and the Letchworth-Love Mounds Archaeological
 176 State Park.

178 As one of the more rural areas of the state, the study area has limited infrastructure and lower levels
 179 of adequate broadband internet access, sewer and water service, and transit than the rest of the state.
 180 In addition, all of the counties have limited access to fresh food (within ½ mile) and significantly lower
 181 access to healthcare (hospitals and physicians) than the rest of the state. Dixie, Gilchrest, Jefferson,
 182 and Lafayette counties do not have any hospital facilities and all of the counties (except for Citrus) have
 183 fewer than 10 licensed physicians⁴. These deficiencies affect the quality of life for residents in the study
 184 area and limit the ability to attract new residents and businesses. Future vision and land use plans for
 185 the counties in the study area generally focus on the need to protect and enhance the environment and
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¹ Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research. *Population Demographics 2019 Medium Projections*.

² US Census. *2013-2017 American Community Survey – 5 Year Estimates*.

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

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

187 quality of life for residents while providing economic opportunity and growth in an environmentally and
188 economically sustainable manner.

189

190 **Economy**

191 The local economy within the study area is primarily based on the trade, education and healthcare, and
192 construction industries⁵. In addition, all of the counties list government services as one of their top
193 employers with many residents working in the county government (administration and schools) and
194 state correctional institutions ⁵. Several counties also list agricultural businesses as some of their largest
195 employers. The presence of various natural resources also provides local economic benefits as the
196 area has a successful and growing nature-based and ecotourism industry.

197

198 All eight counties have a median household income below the 2017 state median income (\$50,833)
199 and all counties (except Jefferson County) have a poverty rate that exceeds the 2017 state poverty rate
200 (15.5%)⁵. In addition, educational attainment levels are lower in all eight study area counties than the
201 state average and the unemployment rate for counties within the study area have historically been near
202 or above the state unemployment average⁵. All of the counties, except for Citrus, have also been
203 designated as Rural Areas of Opportunity by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity in need
204 of expansion of economic development projects⁶. Specific areas targeted for economic development
205 include the City of Monticello, the City of Madison, the town of Greenville, the Town of Cross City,
206 northern Gilchrist County, northern Lafayette County, the City of Perry, and northeast Citrus County.

207

208 **Infrastructure**

209 The majority of the study area is served by state highways and county roads with varying speed limits
210 and partial or full access. There are no high speed, high capacity transportation facilities in the central
211 portion of the study area. There are two high speed, high capacity facilities within the study area at the
212 northern- and southern-most boundaries. The Suncoast Parkway (SR 589) is a toll road that runs north
213 out of Tampa Bay region in the southern portion of the study area and terminates in Citrus County. I-
214 10 runs east-west across the state at the northern portion of the study area through Jefferson and
215 Madison Counties. I-75, located east of the study area, is the only north-south high speed, high capacity
216 transportation facility serving this area. There is also freight rail located in the northern and southern
217 ends of the study area; however, there is no rail within the central portion of the study area.

218

219 Traffic data shows that approximately 60% of vehicular trips stay within the study area, 30% of the trips
220 are to and from the study area, and only 10% of the trips pass through the study area⁷. In addition,
221 future traffic conditions modeling based on population projections indicate that several roadways within
222 the study area will operate at a poor Level of Service (LOS) Level E or F with high to excessive levels
223 of delay at peak times⁸. These roadways include SR 44, US 41, and SR 200 in Citrus County and SR
224 121 in Levy County. In addition, I-75 (the primary north-south interstate east of the study area) currently
225 experiences delays and is projected to operate at LOS Level E or F by 2050⁸.

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227 **Appendix D** includes a complete demographic profile and overview of each county. **(To be updated**
228 **and included in final report)**

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

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

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

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

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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 that the corridor investments and related actions are intended to address.

271 Florida Statute charged the Task Force to “evaluate the need for, and the economic and environmental
272 impacts of, hurricane evacuation impacts of, and land use impacts of” the corridor on which the Task
273 Force is focusing. Because the Task Force is in a pre-planning phase, the high-level needs were
274 identified based on review of partner and public input, existing plans and studies, and available data
275 and forecasts on trends and conditions in the study area.
276

277 The Task Force has identified the following high-level needs for the study area, recognizing that
278 additional evaluation will be required to develop more specific, quantifiable needs as part of future
279 planning and project development. These needs are not presented in any priority order.
280

- 281 • **Support projected statewide and regional population and economic growth**

282 The eight-county study area population is projected to increase approximately 15% by 2045. While
283 this is lower than the overall state population increase of 29%; several counties (Citrus, Gilchrist,
284 and Lafayette) in the study area are projected to see population increases of approximately 20%
285 during this same time. As the number of residents, workers, and visitors to the region and the state
286 increases, demand for moving people and freight is anticipated to increase. Future traffic conditions
287 modeling based on population projections for the year 2050 indicate that several roadways within
288 the study area and I-75 will operate at a poor LOS with high to excessive levels of delay making the
289 existing roads less reliable. Additional transportation capacity is likely to be needed to accommodate
290 growth while also enhancing connectivity and access in underserved areas in need of economic
291 development.
292

- 293 • **Improve safety, mobility, and connectivity through access to a high speed, high capacity
294 transportation corridor for people and commercial goods**

295 The study area lacks a north-south high speed, high capacity transportation facility and the nearest
296 north-south interstate facility (I-75) is heavily traveled with increasing congestion and decreasing
297 reliability. Traffic data indicates that the majority of traffic (approximately 60%) is internal to the study
298 area. Interregional connectivity along high speed corridors is important for the efficient movement of
299 people and goods to and from external markets in a cost-effective manner. Projected traffic
300 conditions in the future with poor LOS along roadways within the study area and I-75, and limited
301 options for other high speed, high capacity corridors will lead to inefficient transportation of people
302 and goods within and outside of the study area. All of these conditions indicate that an additional
303 north-south corridor through the study area is needed to provide a link between the Suncoast
304 Parkway (SR 589) and I-10, an alternative to travel on I-75, and overall improved connectivity to,
305 from, and within the study area.
306

- 307 • **Protect, restore, enhance, and connect public and private environmentally sensitive areas
308 and ecosystems**

309 The study area contains a variety of environmental resources and vital ecosystems including aquifer
310 recharge areas, major watershed, springs, rivers, farmlands, and wetlands. The need for
311 transportation to accommodate growth and enhance communities must be balanced with the
312 protection and enhancement of the natural environment. Ensuring that growth is accommodated in
313 a sustainable, coordinated manner and that transportation facilities are developed and designed with
314 protection and enhancement of the environment in mind is a proactive approach that allows the
315 opportunity to improve the environment through infrastructure development. Avoidance of
316 environmental features; co-location and utilization of existing facilities; elevated roadway design;

317 provision of wildlife crossings and corridors; locations for water, sewer and other utilities in the right-
318 of-way; and establishing programs for the acquisition and protection of environmental lands are all
319 enhancement techniques that can be used to benefit the natural environment when developing
320 transportation corridors.

321
322 • **Enhance travel options and safety for all transportation users**
323 Approximately 3,800 vehicle crashes resulting in nearly 90 deaths occurred along roadways within
324 the study area in 2018. This was a 44% increase in total traffic fatalities from 2010 to 2018 in the
325 study area, compared to 28% statewide over the same period⁹. In addition, I-75, the primary north-
326 south high speed, high capacity transportation corridor serving the study area, also experiences
327 crashes above the state average. With increased demand on roadways in the study area and I-75,
328 those crash numbers are likely to rise. Mobility options are limited within the study area as most
329 existing roadways do not provide transit or safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Transportation
330 facilities that use innovative design and technology to improve automobile safety, reduce the number
331 of incidents, and accommodate multi-modal transportation, including multi-use trails separated from
332 the roadway, are needed to provide safe transportation options for all users within the study area.
333

334 • **Enhance emergency management at the local, regional, and state levels**
335 Five counties within the study area (Citrus, Levy, Dixie, Jefferson, and Taylor Counties) are coastal
336 counties susceptible to hurricanes and storm surge with designated emergency evacuation zones.
337 I-75 is the northern route out of the study area counties during an evacuation. I-75 also serves as a
338 primary evacuation route for large portions of central and southwest Florida in the event of a major
339 hurricane, including the heavily populated Tampa Bay region. Transportation corridors are vital to all
340 phases of emergency response planning in order to evacuate people out of harm's way and provide
341 recovery access to an area after a disaster. As growth within the study area and the state increases
342 there will be more people that will need safe and efficient evacuation routes to shelters or inland and
343 out of state areas. A centrally located high speed, high capacity transportation facility that could
344 provide an additional north-south access route out of the study area would give residents,
345 responders, and others more reliable and efficient transportation options during an emergency.
346

347 • **Improve access to ecotourism and recreational assets**
348 The study area contains a multitude of natural resources that serve as the basis of the ecotourism
349 and nature-based recreation industry with residents and visitors enjoying the beauty of the Nature
350 Coast's rivers, springs, trails, beaches, and state and local parks. These outdoor activities and
351 resources not only create economic development opportunities for local businesses but also provide
352 unique opportunities for recreation, the ability to view wildlife in their habitats, and the appreciation
353 of the natural environment. This exposure helps increase environmental education and awareness
354 on the need of conservation of these areas. Improved access to the resources is important to allow
355 visitors and customers to easily and safely reach them; however, it is also vital to protect the very
356 resources that serve as the basis for the industry. Land acquisition programs that increase the
357 amount of conservation areas for preservation would also provide additional opportunities to
358 enhance the ecotourism industry in the study area.
359
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⁹ Florida Dept. of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. *Traffic Crash 2018 Annual Report*.

- 361 • **Enhance economic and workforce development, access to education, and job creation**
362 All eight counties have a median household income below the state median income and all counties
363 (except Jefferson County) have a poverty rate that exceeds the state poverty rate. In addition, all of
364 the counties have populations with high school and college education levels below the state average.
365 The entire study area includes a total of four colleges; however, five of the eight counties have no
366 state colleges or post-secondary education facilities. These statistics indicate the need for increased
367 opportunities for educational attainment, job training, workforce development, and economic
368 development within the study area. In addition, several local economic development policies indicate
369 the need to grow and diversify the local and regional economy and add job opportunities to
370 accommodate population growth and improve the economic prosperity of the existing communities.
371 Seven of the counties have also been designated as Rural Areas of Opportunity by the Florida
372 Department of Economic Opportunity in need of expansion of economic development projects.
373 Infrastructure improvements (roadway, multi-modal, and communications) are key to creating a
374 competitive environment to attract businesses, investment, and talent to a region.
375
- 376 • **Improve connectivity to agricultural businesses, manufacturing, warehousing, freight**
377 **terminals, and intermodal logistics centers**
378 As previously noted, the study area has two high speed, high capacity transportation facilities at
379 each end of the study area (I-10 in north end and the Suncoast Parkway [SR 589] at the south end)
380 and the majority of trips (60%) stay within the study area. The lack of a centrally located high speed,
381 high capacity transportation facility though the study area limits logistics for the movements of
382 commercial goods and agricultural, forestry, and mining products. Freight transportation is often the
383 most vital component to ensure economic competitiveness of business as they rely on reduced and
384 reliable transport times for freight and improved access and connectivity to allow suppliers to access
385 larger market areas. The ability to move goods more efficiently not only enhances opportunities for
386 existing businesses but also can attract more industries to the area, resulting in additional job
387 creation.
388
- 389 • **Expand rural broadband infrastructure and access to broadband service**
390 Broadband access is crucial for education, employment, business operations, and access to
391 healthcare and has become part of a community’s critical infrastructure along with electricity, water,
392 sewer, and roads. As one of the more rural areas of the state, several counties with the study area
393 have limited access to adequate high-speed broadband services. According to the Federal
394 Communications Commission, all eight counties in the study area are below the Florida average
395 (96.2%) for access to fixed speed broadband internet. In addition, only 1% of residents in Dixie
396 County and less than 20% of residents in Levy County have access to the common standard of
397 broadband speed of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download¹⁰. The lack of access to
398 healthcare (physicians and hospitals) and college/technical schools within the rural study area
399 increases the need for improved broadband service for virtual healthcare and learning opportunities.
400 Since many industries rely on supply chain management for efficient movement of goods,
401 opportunities to bring improved broadband service to one of the most rural parts of the state is
402 needed to ensure quality of life and economic enhancements within the study area.
403
404

¹⁰ Federal Communications Commission. *Access to Fixed 25Mbps/3Mbps Broadband by County 2019*.

- 405 • **Preserve and improve the rural character and quality of communities**
406 The study area contains 21 individual municipalities and various communities, neighborhoods, and
407 rural residential developments with over 280,000 residents making this area their home. In addition
408 to the agricultural land uses that dominate the study area, there are a variety of community resources
409 located throughout the study area that serve to enhance the quality of life. While a key purpose of
410 M-CORES is to revitalize rural communities with additional infrastructure and economic development
411 opportunities, this must be done in a way that preserves the quality of life in these communities and
412 maintains or improves the character that made the residents want to live and raise their families
413 there. It is important to work with local communities, listen to their concerns, and understand their
414 goals and visions throughout the corridor development process. Minimization of negative impacts to
415 the human environment should be emphasized to ensure the project does not negatively impact the
416 very communities it was designed to improve. In addition, the project should seek opportunities to
417 provide positive impacts to these communities.
418

419 EVALUATION OF NEEDS MOVING FORWARD

420
421 As input to project development, FDOT will conduct a robust evaluation of the existing and future
422 transportation and related needs in the study area, building on the recommendations of the Task Force.
423 This process should:

- 424 • Evaluate and distinguish between conventional safety, mobility, and connectivity needs, and
425 broader regional needs or co-benefits related to transportation.
- 426 • Consider safety, mobility, and connectivity needs related to moving both people and freight.
- 427 • Consider and document mobility and connectivity needs related to both local/regional travel
428 originating and terminating within the study area and statewide/interregional travel through the
429 study area.
- 430 • Consider and document mobility and connectivity needs related to both routine daily traffic
431 and special event traffic such as evacuation and response to major emergencies and
432 disasters.
- 433 • Use population and economic growth projected in local government comprehensive plans
434 and/or the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) long-range transportation plans and the
435 Florida Transportation Plan as the basis for estimating future travel demand in the study area.
436 Consider the potential for additional population and economic growth that could be generated
437 by proposed land use and economic development changes in and surrounding the study area.
- 438 • Consider the mobility, economic, and fiscal impacts of potential shifts in economic activity from
439 existing communities and corridors to enhanced or new corridors, as well as potential net
440 economic benefits to the state.
- 441 • Consider potential changes in travel demand related to recovery from COVID-19 and potential
442 long-term changes in travel behavior, such as greater propensity for working from home,
443 increased home delivery of goods and services, and potential reluctance to use public
444 transportation or shared mobility options.
- 445 • Consider potential changes in travel demand and transportation system capacity related to
446 increased use of emerging technologies such as automated and connected vehicles.
- 447 • Evaluate the ability of a full range of proposed alternatives for corridor improvements in the
448 study area to accomplish the high-level needs, including the specific economic,
449 environmental, land use, and emergency management impacts called for in s. 338.2278, F.S.

- 450 These alternatives should consider operational and capacity improvements, existing and new
451 facilities, multiple transportation modes, and a “no build” option.
- 452 • Evaluate the economic and financial feasibility of corridor alternatives, including whether they
453 would meet statutory requirements for designation as part of Florida’s Strategic Intermodal
454 System and for financing as part of Florida’s Turnpike system.
 - 455 • Be supported by high quality data and technical analyses; and
 - 456 • Incorporate comprehensive public and agency involvement, including reporting of the results
457 and how specific alternatives will be advanced into project development.

458
459 The Task Force believes that the formal determination of need and feasibility pursuant to statutory
460 requirements and consistent with accepted statewide processes is an important milestone in
461 corridor planning and development. The Task Force has developed a series of guiding principles
462 and instructions for future planning and development of corridors for which high-level needs have
463 been identified. While these determinations will be made after the Task Force has completed its
464 deliberations, the guidance provided by the Task Force will instruct the evaluation process, and
465 an ongoing corridor advisory group will review and provide feedback on the findings and
466 conclusions of these analyses.

467

468 **GUIDING PRINCIPLES (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)**

- 469 • To be finalized at remaining Task Force meetings

470

471 **ACTION PLAN (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)**

- 472 • To be finalized at remaining Task Force meetings