Welcome

Thank you for visiting this Virtual Open House for the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor, part of the Florida Department of Transportation’s Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program. This online format is designed to accommodate those who cannot
attend the in-person Community Open House scheduled at the LaBelle Civic Center (481 SR 80, LaBelle, Florida) on August 27, 2020 from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm. Information presented on this website provides the same information shown at the in-person event in LaBelle.

This site will provide an overview of the M-CORES program as well as information shared with the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Task Force at their virtual meeting held on August 25, 2020.

Welcome Video

M-CORES Program
Program Goals

The M-CORES program is intended 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 objective of the program is to advance the construction of regional corridors intended to accommodate multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure. The program was signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis on May 17, 2019.
Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Project Area

The Southwest-Central Florida Corridor includes the following counties and extends from Collier County to Polk County.

- Polk
- Hardee
- DeSoto
- Highlands
- Charlotte
- Glades
- Lee
- Hendry
- Collier
M-CORES Process/Schedule

Per the M-CORES legislation, a Task Force was created for the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor. The Task Force, consisting of 47 members from state agencies, water management districts, local governments, regional planning councils, non-profit organizations, and environmental groups, is developing recommendations regarding the potential economic and environmental impacts of the corridor, as well as other factors specified in the M-CORES legislation. The Task Force is scheduled to submit a final report on the proposed Southwest-Central Florida Corridor to Governor Ron DeSantis and the Florida Legislature by November 15, 2020.

Click [here](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/db0b52bac61842beab8fabcc5f3fde25/print) to learn more about the Task Force and its activities to date.
Task Force Activities

Since August 2019, the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Task Force has held 5 in-person meetings, 3 webinars, 1 virtual meeting, and 2 hybrid (virtual/in-person) meetings to discuss the needs of the corridor and how the M-CORES program could help meet those needs. Earlier this year, the Task Force worked with FDOT to develop areas within the project area that should be avoided by the project, as well as areas that should “attract” the project.

These areas were compiled into an interactive geographic information system (GIS) web map and can be accessed here.

Guiding Principles

One of the primary components of the Task Force’s final report will be Guiding Principles, which the Task Force has been developing over the past year. The Florida Legislature charged each Task Force with providing recommendations and evaluations in a final report which will guide the FDOT in its subsequent study phases through the implementation of high-level needs, guiding principles and instructions.
regarding further development of the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor.

**Instruction Worksheet**

A copy of the most recent version of the Draft Guiding Principles presented at the August 25, 2020 Task Force meeting is displayed here as you scroll down.

**Consistency with Statewide, Regional, and Local Plans and Visions**

**Guiding Principle #1**

- Be consistent with statutorily required statewide, regional, and local plans.

**Draft Instructions For Project Development and Beyond**

- Be consistent with the vision, goals, and strategies of the Corporation's Strategic Plan (as updated).
- Be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and needs/strategies identified in local comprehensive plans.
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**Draft High-Level Needs**

- All Needs

**Draft Guiding Principles**

- All Needs

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https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/db0b52bac61842beab8fabcc5f3fde25/print
Maximizing Use of Existing Facilities

**Guiding Principle #2**

**Purpose**
- All Partners

**Draft High-Level Needs**
- All Needs

**Draft Guiding Principles**
- Evaluate potential alternatives for addressing statewide and interregional mobility and connectivity needs in this priority order:
  1. Make safety, operational, and capacity improvements to existing transportation facilities and right-of-way.
  2. Develop new transportation facilities.

**Draft Instructions**
- For Project Development and Beyond
  - Identify and advance safety and operational improvements to existing transportation facilities.
  - Evaluate potential capacity improvements to existing transportation facilities, including their impact on the surrounding environmental resources, land uses, and communities.
  - Evaluate opportunities for co-location of transportation facilities within or adjacent to existing utilities right-of-way, and other approaches to transforming existing facilities and right-of-way to accommodate additional modes, uses, and functions, including their impact on the surrounding environmental resources, land uses, and communities.
  - Assess connectivity gaps between existing transportation facilities and areas identified as priorities for attractions, and potential opportunities for closing those gaps.
  - Advance specific improvements that support a system meeting the long-term needs of interstate and interregional flow of people and freight.
### Social and Community Context

**Guiding Principle #3**

**Purpose**
- Enhance the quality of life and public safety

**Draft High-Level Needs**
- Support anticipated population growth in coastal communities and urban areas.
- Help increase economic activity and economic diversity throughout the region with emphasis on island and rural areas.
- Enhance access to jobs, workforce targets, recreation, living, and goods and services.
- Create employment opportunities, particularly to assist lower-income residents in the area.

**Draft Guiding Principles**
- Maintain and enhance community character and quality of life consistent with local and regional plans.

**Draft Instructions For Project Development and Beyond**
- Do not impact known wetlands.
- Do not impact wetlands (industrial use) and its necessary critical areas.
- Do not impact lands owned by known Native American Tribes and associated historical sites not covered by Native American rights.
- Do not place new corridor through National Register of Historic Places (HRH) based sites.
- Plan and develop transportation corridors in a manner that improves connectivity and enhances the quality of existing communities, while avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts on these communities and developments.
- Plan and design transportation corridors so that their purpose and scale is compatible with the communities that they serve.
- Consult with Native American Tribes to understand future plans and identify opportunities for enhanced connectivity.
- Consult with the agency to understand future plans and identify opportunities for enhanced connectivity.
- Plan transportation corridors to avoid wetland impacts to a 1/3 width.
In 1852, influential businessman and cotton grower Captain Stewart settled a townsite at Labelle, which was first granted as a town in 1859. Labelle became a center for commerce and civic development. A year after its founding, Labelle became the first town post office and, consequently, became Hendry County's first post office. In 1879, Hendry County was incorporated, and its center was initially located in Labelle. In 1903, Hendry County incorporated its schools, which led to the establishment of Labelle High School. The school is located on the corner of Railroad Avenue and Hendry Road, near the site of the historic Labelle High School, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.
Economic Development

Purpose
- Revitalize rural communities
- Provide regional connectivity
- Enhance the quality of life and public safety

High-Level Needs
- Help increase economic activity and economic diversity throughout the region with emphasis on rural and rural areas.
- Enhance access to jobs, workforce training, education, healthcare, and energy and services.
- Create employment opportunities, particularly to assist lower-income residents and help retain younger residents in the area.
- Improve access and transportation connectivity for residents, freight, and intercity between communities and markets.

Guiding Principles
- Advance economic development, business retention and expansion, job creation, and community development, with emphasis on rural areas of opportunity.

Instructions
- Work with economic development organizations to focus on retention and expansion of existing industries.
- Work with economic development organizations for opportunities to attract enterprise in the area.
- Enhance access to transportation facilities to serve economic activities dependent on interregional travel.
- Provide connectivity to medical facilities, colleges, universities, and workforce training sites.
### Agricultural Land Uses

#### Draft Guiding Principles

- **Purpose**: Meet the demand for food, fiber, and other agricultural products.
- **Draft High-Level Needs**: Support agriculture and resource-based industries as major economic drivers and areas of environmental concern.
- **Draft Guiding Principles**
  - Protect, enhance, and minimize impacts to productive agricultural lands and other productive lands with economic or environmental significance.
  - Improve connectivity and maintain access between working farms, other resource-based industries, and their supply chains.

#### Draft: For Project Development and Beyond

- Apply guiding principles to prime farmlands (MRCS determined), irrigated/implanted (non-irrigated agricultural areas) and timber lands, Florida Rural and Family Lands Protection Program lands, and Farmland/Agriculture Preservation (FAP) designated in local government comprehensive plans.
- Work with owners/operators of agricultural farms, including Century Farms, along with other resource-based industries, to understand their needs and plans to address soil and fragmentation, and to support effective management of agricultural properties.
- Work with economic development organizations and owners/operators of agricultural farms to understand needs and opportunities to support the agricultural industry.
- Improve transportation connectivity between working farms, other resource-based industries, and their supply chains.
- Improve broadband connectivity to promote and support efficiency, new and emerging technologies, and best practices.
Conservation Lands

- **Purpose**: Protect the Environment and Natural Resources
- **High-Level Needs**: Protect, connect, and enhance environmentally sensitive areas, ecosystems, water areas, and wildlife, including the Florida panther.
- **Guiding Principles**:
  - Apply the following priority order for existing managed conservation lands (including conservation easements and mitigation lands):
    1. Connect and enhance them;
    2. Avoid them; and
    3. Minimize and mitigate negative impacts to them.
- **Draft Instructions**
  - Do not place new corridor through Prescribed 2000 Lands, National Parks, State Parks, State Forests, State-owned mitigation banks, and Florida Forever Acquired Lands.
  - Leverage 338.227(1)(i) & (ii) E.S. acquisition authority and other conservation programs to identify and preserve additional land to accomplish multiple purposes, such as supporting planned and proposed conservation lands including those within the Florida Ecological Greenway Network Priorities 1 and 2.
  - Place a high priority on avoiding adverse impacts on Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL).
  - Coordinate with landowners to apply the guiding principle to non-state-owned conservation easements and mitigation lands to serve multiple purposes.
  - Work with management agencies to identify funding and to implement best management practices.
  - Coordinate with the Division of Forestry, Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services in preserving the ability to use prescribed fire on public and private managed lands.
Wildlife and Plant Habitats

**Purpose**
- Protect the Environment and Natural Resources

**Draft High-Level Needs**
- Protect, connect, and enhance environmentally sensitive areas, ecosystems, water resources, and habitat, including the Florida panther.

**Draft Guiding Principles**
- **Encourage biodiversity by applying the following priority order to habitats for all federally and state protected species, including the panther, other wildlife, and endemic plants:**
  1. Connect and enhance existing and adjacent habitats;
  2. Avoid these habitats; and
  3. Minimize/mitigate negative impacts to these habitats.

**Draft Instructions For Project Development and Beyond**
- Do not place new corridors through National Wildlife Refuges.
- Consult Section 10.23.b.1. of the 40 CFR, Voluntary Acquisition Authority and other programs to identify and preserve additional lands to achieve multiple purposes including improving wildlife connectivity through lands identified in the Florida Ecological Greenways Network Priority 1 and 2.
- Optimize transportation corridors to mitigate and provide wildlife and plant habitat connectivity through adding new wildlife crossings and properly placed wildlife corridors.
- Apply the guiding principle to priority Primary, Secondary, and Dispersal Zones.
- Enhance existing transportation corridors to address negative impacts of prior projects.
- Minimize fragmentation of large contiguous properties that function as wildlife corridors.
- Minimize conflict/limiting impacts on nearby wildlife habitats and communities.
- Place a high priority on avoiding adverse impacts to WILDS Management Areas.

Wildlife and Plant Habitats

Alligator Lily, Charlotte County
Water Resources

### Water Resources

#### Purpose
- Protect the Environment and Natural Resources
- Enhance the Quality of Life and Public Safety

#### Draft High-Level Needs
- Protect, connect, and enhance environmentally sensitive areas, ecosystems, water resources, and wildlife, including the Florida panther.

#### Draft Guiding Principles
- **Apply the following priority order for water resources:**
  1. Connect and enhance them;
  2. Avoid them; and
  3. Minimize and mitigate negative impacts to them.

#### Draft Instructions For Project Development and Beyond
- Direct impact springheads, lakes, and Everglades National Park.
- Leverage §338.32(7)(f)(i) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other programs to identify and preserve additional land to restore and enhance water quality, quantity, and flow.
- Design transportation corridors to connect and enhance water quality, quantity, and flow including possible design elements such as interlinked roadways and larger structures.
- Design transportation corridors to connect and enhance water quality, quantity, and flow including possible design elements such as interlinked roadways and larger structures.

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Water Resources

![Water Resources Image](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/db0b52bac61842beab8fabc5f3fd25/print)
Freight Mobility and Safety

Purpose:
- Provide Regional Connectivity
- Encourage Job Creation
- Enhance the Quality of Life and Public Safety

Draft High-Level Needs:
- Improve access and international connectivity for corridors, freight, and stations between communities and markets.
- Improve safety and mobility.

Draft Guiding Principles:
- Improve connectivity and safety for major freight flows to support economic development.

Draft Instructions:
- Do not place new corridors through airports.
- Improve connectivity to seaports, airports, and rail terminals.
- Implement solutions to improve safety, reduce congestion and address shifts in freight movements.

Freight Mobility and Safety

Infrastructure

Logistics

International Airports

Seaports

Land Use Planning
## Transportation Modes

### Guiding Principle #10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Draft High-Level Needs</th>
<th>Draft Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Draft Instructions For Project Development and Beyond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enhance the Quality of Life and Public Safety</td>
<td>• Expand transportation options, such as the existing intermodal trails, freight and passenger rail, and public transit.</td>
<td>• Support efficient and accessible transportation options and/or modes for people and goods.</td>
<td>• Enhance transportation conditions by supporting multiple modes including trails through maximizing co-location within existing and new facilities. • Incorporate any trails included in these corridors as a part of SWOT Trail system marketing. • Coordinate with local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, and freight and transit industry operators on opportunities to expand transportation options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Images:**
- Railway track
- Bus stop
- Park area with wooden structures
- Highway sign

[https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/db0b52bac61842beab8fabc5f3fde25/print](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/db0b52bac61842beab8fabc5f3fde25/print)
Connectivity to Regional and Local Transportation Network

**Purpose**
- Provide Regional Connectivity
- Revitalize Rural Communities

**Draft High-Level Needs**
- Improve access and interregional connectivity for residents, freight, and visitors between communities and markets.
- Help rural and underserved areas improve infrastructure for people, freight, and technology.
- Improve safety and mobility.

**Draft Guiding Principles**
- Identify opportunities and improve transportation connections between communities and the regional roadway network.

**Draft Instructions**
- Prioritize interchange locations for regional roads.
- Work with local and regional governments to identify opportunities to improve or create connections to communities, focusing on the regional roadway network, areas with compatible land uses, and areas targeted for growth in regional and local government comprehensive plans and economic development plans.
- Develop interchange management plans including appropriate land use and environmental resource protections for areas around proposed interchange locations.

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Connectivity to Regional and Local Transportation Network

![Image of a road sign and a road intersection]
Resilience

Resilience

Emergency Evacuation and Response

Emergency Evacuation and Response

Draft Instructions

Draft High-Level Needs

Draft High-Level Needs

Draft Guiding Principles

Draft Guiding Principles

Draft Instructions

Draft Instructions

Resilience Guiding Principle #12

Purpose

• All Purposes

Draft High-Level Needs

• All Needs

Draft Guiding Principles

• Plan and develop community and infrastructure development that is resilient, sustainable, and adaptable.

Draft Instructions

• Do not impact high-risk coastal zones (coastal barrier resources system).
• Build on the mission, goals, and strategies of the Florida Transportation Plan in addressing resilience, including sea-level rise.
• Develop local and regional plans that address seasonal rise and potential population migration/growth.

Purpose

• Enhance the Quality of Life and Public Safety

Draft High-Level Needs

• Strenthen disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Draft Guiding Principles

• Support local, regional, and statewide emergency management plans and actions.

Draft Instructions

• Do not place new corridor through Central Storm Surge zones.
• Provide study areas as part of the program consistent with s.338.276, F.S.
• Support statewide approach regarding the need to maintain evacuation times.
• Support statewide, regional, and local plans for sheltering as appropriate.
• Coordinate with state, regional, and local emergency management agencies.

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# Emergency Evacuation and Response

## Broadband and Other Utilities

### Guiding Principle #14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Draft High-Level Needs</th>
<th>Draft Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Draft Instructions For Project Development and Beyond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Provide Regional Connectivity &lt;br&gt; - Revitalize Rural Communities &lt;br&gt; - Encourage Job Creation &lt;br&gt; - Enhance the Quality of Life and Public Safety &lt;br&gt; - Encourage Technology</td>
<td>- Help rural and underserved areas improve infrastructure for people, freight, and technology. &lt;br&gt; - Enhance access to jobs, workforce training, education, healthcare, and goods and services. &lt;br&gt; - Help increase economic activity and economic diversification throughout the region with emphasis on inland and rural areas.</td>
<td>- Support expansion of rural utility infrastructure, including broadband, water, and sewer to enhance quality of life. &lt;br&gt; - Plan and design enhanced or new corridors to enable co-location of utility and broadband infrastructure in right-of-way.</td>
<td>- Enhance and integrate transportation and infrastructure planning processes. &lt;br&gt; - Maximize co-location opportunities (e.g., add conduit or “bundling”). &lt;br&gt; - Ensure broadband provider access to FDOT right-of-way is non-discriminatory and competitively neutral. &lt;br&gt; - Leverage partnerships with utility providers. &lt;br&gt; - Integrate connections to community anchor institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Technology

### Guiding Principle #15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Purpose</strong></th>
<th><strong>Draft High-Level Needs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Draft Guiding Principles</strong></th>
<th><strong>Draft Instructions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leverage Technology</td>
<td>All Needs</td>
<td>Implement infrastructure that supports current and emerging state-of-the-art vehicles, materials, data, and methodologies.</td>
<td>For Project Development and Beyond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Design in anticipation of connected and autonomous vehicles, travel, and other crises.
- Provide access to electric vehicle charging stations.
- Consider innovative uses of right-of-way for transportation, energy, and community purposes.
- Employ technologies that enhance infrastructure maintenance and repair efficiencies.
- Design, construct, and maintain the corridor utilizing resilient and energy efficient materials and methods of construction.
- Employ technologies for effective corridor management, such as avoiding wildlife collisions.
The Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Task Force will revise and ultimately finalize the Guiding Principles, which will help provide guidance for potential paths/courses for the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor. The paths/courses will be analyzed in further detail during the Planning phase (described below).

One of the first steps in identifying future paths/courses within the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor is to consider its southern and northern terminus, and how the project could maneuver environmental constraints throughout the study area. At the August 25, 2020 Task Force meeting, the graphics shown below were reviewed to specifically address potential termini locations at I-75 in Collier County to the south, as well as I-4 in Polk County to the north. Using the work of the Task Force and listening to the Task Force comments about maximizing use of existing facilities, the areas around the major north-south routes offer opportunities as potential illustrative paths/courses. As examples these would include US 27, US 17, planned portions of the Central Polk Parkway, SR 31, and SR 29. As the Task Force finishes its
work over the next few months, additional areas/considerations within the corridor, like that shown in green, will be reviewed and the paths/courses could be further updated.

Project Schedule
Where are we Now?

Task Force Phase

The Task Force is scheduled to meet in September and October 2020 to finalize Guiding Principles and the Task Force report, which is due to the Governor and Legislature by November 15, 2020. The Task Force phase will be completed with the submittal of the final report.
Project Development Process

**Task Force**
- Objectives
- Planning and Project Development
- Project Development & Environmental & Design
- Construction

**Objective**
- Project and Feasibility Study
- Environmental and Public Health Considerations
- Community Engagement
- Design Coordination and Public Involvement
- Traffic Analysis
- Public Involvement and Stakeholder Coordination

**Public Meetings**
- Project Team Meetings
- Community Engagement/Project
- Public Information Sessions
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Technical Workshops

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- Technical Workshops

2019
- Task Force
- Public Involvement

2030
- Task Force
- Public Involvement
What's Next?

Planning Phase

After the Task Force report is completed, the project will advance to the Planning phase. During this phase, potential Southwest-Central Florida Corridor paths/courses will be evaluated for consistency with the Guiding Principles and recommendations from the Task Force report. It is expected that this evaluation will lead to some paths/courses being eliminated and only viable options advanced to the next phase.
**Project Development & Environment Phase**

Once viable paths/courses are advanced from the Planning phase, the project will enter the Project Development & Environment (PD&E) phase, where potential roadway alignments will be developed within the paths/courses and evaluated against each other. The Guiding Principles from the Task Force’s report will continue to be utilized by FDOT to guide and inform the development of the project. This is also the phase where the no-build alternative is considered and evaluated against the build alternative(s). Consideration of the no-build alternative is reserved for this phase since FDOT will be able to compare the benefits and impacts of actual alternatives rather than general paths/courses. The outcome of the PD&E phase will be the selection of a build alternative or the no-build option.

At this time, it is undetermined if the corridor will be economically feasible. However, it is subject to the economic feasibility statement requirements in Florida Statute 338.223. There is a lot of work and many phases of work to be developed before the feasibility is known, including narrowing the potential paths/courses and developing access points to those paths/courses. That in turn helps develop an understanding of all costs that would apply to the project including the planning, engineering, right-of-way, construction, machinery/equipment, financing expenses and all costs of putting the project in operation. To issue revenue bonds for the project, estimated net revenues must be sufficient to meet all the statutory requirements. Revenues are primarily based on traffic numbers and those are not known either. Both the costs and revenues will be developed during the PD&E Studies.

During both Planning and PD&E phases, FDOT will continue to determine the economic and environmental feasibility of the project and seek public input and will
proactively coordinate with local governments within the project area. This will be done through hybrid meetings (virtual/in-person) with both the local governments and the general public throughout the corridor at key milestones during the Planning and PD&E process.

Comments/Questions

Input from the public is a critical part of the M-CORES program, and we want to hear from you. If you would like to
leave a comment regarding the Southwest-Central Florida Corridor, please do so in the section below.

If you need additional space to provide comments or prefer to submit your comments via email, please do so to FDOT.Listens@dot.state.fl.us.

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact Marlon Bizerra at (863) 519-2250 or via email at Marlon.Bizerra@dot.state.fl.us.