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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 CONNECTOR**, extending from Citrus County to Jefferson County;
- **NORTHERN TURNPIKE CONNECTOR**, extending from the northern terminus of the Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway; and
- **SOUTHWEST-CENTRAL FLORIDA CONNECTOR**, extending from Collier County to Polk County.
The statute specifies these corridors as part of a broader program to address the complete statutory purpose of M-CORES, including revitalizing rural communities and enhancing economic development. The statute also provides FDOT with direction and tools to help advance other regional goals related to the statutory purpose, including enhancing quality of life and protecting the environment. The breadth of the program’s purpose, the scale of the identified corridors, and the additional tools provided to FDOT all point to the need for a thoughtful, collaborative approach to implementing the M-CORES program, analyzing corridor needs and alternatives, and building consensus around future actions among FDOT and a wide range of partners.

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 (RPC), metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), water management districts, local governments, environmental groups, and the community.

THE STATUTE CHARGED EACH TASK FORCE WITH:

- Coordinating with FDOT on pertinent aspects of corridor analysis, including accommodation or co-location of multiple types of infrastructure;
- Evaluating the need for, and the economic, environmental, hurricane evacuation, and land use impacts of, the specific corridor;
- Considering and recommending innovative concepts to combine right of way acquisition with the acquisition of lands or easements to facilitate environmental mitigation or ecosystem, wildlife habitat, or water quality protection or restoration;
- Addressing specific issues related to specific environmental resources and land uses identified in each study area;
- Holding public meetings in each local government jurisdiction in which a project in the identified corridor is being considered; and
- Issuing its evaluations in a final report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
Due to the early stage of planning for this corridor and the limited data and analysis on potential needs and impacts available at this time, the Task Force was not able to fully address its charge of evaluating the needs for and impacts of the Northern Turnpike Corridor. The Task Force directed FDOT to establish at least a preliminary determination of transportation need and initial financial feasibility before proceeding with the PD&E process. The Task Force built upon the purposes outlined in the statute to develop high-level needs that need further evaluation by FDOT. Recommendations including high-level needs, guiding principles, and instructions were developed by the Task Force for further evaluation by FDOT. The Task Force identified a series of potential high-level needs for future evaluation by FDOT and developed recommendations for how FDOT should assess the need for a corridor of the scale specified in statute. The Task Force did not reach a conclusion, based on the information available at this time, that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modifications of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose. Project-level needs will be evaluated consistent with the Task Force’s recommendations. If specific needs are identified, the Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or expansion of existing major highway corridors. The Task Force acknowledged the process for FDOT to consider a “no build” alternative in future project development activities until a final recommendation about each specific project is made. The Task Force also recommended guiding principles, instructions, and an action plan as a set of directions to FDOT and other partners for future planning, project development, and implementation activities related to the M-CORES Program.

In completing this report, the Task Force’s charge was to provide consensus recommendations for how FDOT can work with local governments and other agencies and partners to carry out the M-CORES Program as specified in s. 338.2278, F.S. These recommendations address how needs and feasibility should be evaluated and how corridor development and related activities should move forward to implement the statute and support the environment, quality of life, and prosperity of the study area and the state. Future activities related to project-specific needs, environmental, and economic feasibility will be fully developed by FDOT consistent with the Task Force’s recommendations.

The statute charges FDOT, to the maximum extent feasible, to adhere to the recommendations of each Task Force in the design of the multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure associated with the corridor. The Task Force recommended, and FDOT committed to, an action plan for future activities in this study area consistent with the guiding principles and instructions.
MEMBERSHIP
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).

MEETINGS
The Task Force met 12 times and had an online training between August 2019 and October 2020 through eight 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 potential transportation corridors, including specific issues as identified in the Florida Statute (see box); and received and reviewed public input. Subject-matter experts joined the Task Force meetings 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. The Task Force developed specific recommendations related to identifying and evaluating high-level needs related to the statutory purpose, as well as guiding principles and instructions for potential corridor development and related activities to help address these needs, as documented in subsequent sections of this report. The Task Force also recommended an action plan for moving forward.

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 Order Number 20-122. The later Task Force meetings were designed with a combination of virtual and in-person locations for both Task Force members and the public to participate (see Appendix B for Work Plan and Appendix C for Meeting Locations).

A facilitator and staff supported the Task Force meetings to assist with discussion, provide technical support, and document the Task Force’s deliberations and recommendations. Additional documentation of the Task Force activities, including meeting agendas, materials, and summaries, can be found on the project website (http://www.FloridaMCORES.com).

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY ALL M-CORES TASK FORCES
s. 338.2278 (1), Florida Statute
• Hurricane evacuation.
• Congestion mitigation.
• Trade and logistics.
• Broadband, water, and sewer connectivity
• Energy distribution.
• Autonomous, connected, shared, and electric vehicle technology.
• Other transportation modes, such as shared-use nonmotorized 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.
• Protection or enhancement of primary springs protection zones and farmland preservation areas designated within local comprehensive plans adopted under Chapter 163.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE NORTHERN TURNPIKE CORRIDOR TASK FORCE
s. 338.2278 (3) (c) 8, Florida Statute
• Evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction within the respective corridors on:
  a. The water quality and quantity of springs, rivers, and aquifer recharge areas;
  b. Agricultural land uses; and
  c. Wildlife habitat.
DATA AND MAPPING TOOLS

FDOT staff developed and maintained a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool to provide the Task Force and general public access to a wide variety of data on existing demographic, economic, land use, environmental, infrastructure, and other resources in the study area.

This tool was specifically used to help identify areas where direct impacts from corridors should be avoided, as well as areas where a connection to a corridor may be appropriate for future evaluation. 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, draft instructions, and potential corridor location decisions. Task Force members suggested that other data sources related to conservation lands, water resources, and wildlife habitat be included in the tool as GIS layers for Task Force discussion to support development of guiding principles and instructions.

The GIS tool served as a living instrument 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 (http://www.FloridaMCORES.com) and through a mobile-friendly format.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement was a critical component of the Task Force process. The public engagement process was designed to allow residents and visitors the ability to comment on all Task Force deliberations, reports, and products at any time through the 15-month period using a variety of mediums from in-person to online. The statutory charge to hold meetings in each local government jurisdiction in which a project is being considered in the study area was met as described below.

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. In-person Task Force meetings were held in Tampa (Hillsborough County), Lecanto (Citrus County), Ocala (Marion County), and Fanning Springs ( Levy County). All of the Task Force meetings and webinars were broadcast live on The Florida Channel (with the exception of Task Force Meeting #4 in Fanning Springs, which was streamed live on the M-CORES website), and recordings were posted on the project website for members of the public who could not attend in person. The public could also attend the webinars and hybrid meetings virtually through the GoToWebinar platform. Overall, a total of 534 people attended the in-person meetings and 1,553 people attended the webinars and meetings virtually. 163 people provided public comments at Task Force meetings.

To further public engagement, seven Community Open Houses were held in Lecanto (Citrus County), Wildwood (Sumter County), Chiefland ( Levy County), Crystal River (Citrus County), and Bushnell (Sumter County) to share information about the process and receive public input. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last three Community Open Houses were held in a combination of in-person and virtual meetings. 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 728 people participated in the seven open houses.

FDOT received communication 24/7 through the project website, the FDOT Listens email address, phone, social media, letters, newsletters, and more. In total, FDOT received 3,050 unique and 11,193 form letter comments through these communication methods, which were shared with the Task Force.

Table 1. Task Force and Community Open House Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>In Person Attendance</th>
<th>Virtual Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Force Meeting #</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1*</td>
<td>Tuesday, August 27, 2019</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 22, 2019</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wednesday, December 18, 2019</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wednesday, February 12, 2020</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online**</td>
<td>Friday, April 17, 2020</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar 1</td>
<td>Wednesday, April 29, 2020</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar 2</td>
<td>Thursday, May 14, 2020</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar 3</td>
<td>Wednesday, June 3, 2020</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Meeting 4</td>
<td>Thursday, June 25, 2020</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wednesday, July 22, 2020</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wednesday, August 26, 2020</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tuesday, September 22, 2020</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thursday, October 22, 2020</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Community Open House # | |         |                      |                    |
| 1     | Thursday, October 24, 2019 | In Person | 14  | NA |
| 2     | Thursday, December 19, 2019 | In Person | 10  | NA |
| 3     | Tuesday, January 28, 2020 | In Person | 172 | NA |
| 4     | Thursday, January 30, 2020 | In Person | 127 | NA |
| 5     | Thursday, August 27, 2020 | Hybrid  | 2    | 152 |
| 6     | Wednesday, September 23, 2020 | Hybrid | 16  | 160 |
| 7     | Thursday, October 22, 2020 | Hybrid  | 5    | 70 |

*Meeting was held jointly between all 3 corridors
**Task Force Meeting 5 was held via online training modules
These comments varied from concerns over the development of these corridors due to their potential environmental, community, and financial impacts to support for the corridors due to their potential transportation, economic development, and quality of life benefits. In addition, there was significant concern about the timing of this process given the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Force was provided with periodic summaries of the comments received as well as copies of all comments, so the public input could be considered in the development and refinement of the Task Force’s recommendations. The majority of the comments submitted through the various forms expressed opposition or concern about the corridor.

Common themes of the public comments received include:

Environment and Land Conservation:
- Avoid habitat fragmentation by preserving habitat and wildlife corridors.
- Avoid action that can promulgate invasive species.
- Protect water resources including wetlands, aquifers, springsheds and watersheds.
- Avoid disturbing existing conservation lands and considering acquisition of lands important to wildlife habitat, water resources, and ecological connectivity.

Quality of Life and Economic Opportunity:
- Preserve rural and agricultural character.
- Balance rural character with the need for economic development.
- Support agricultural activities by considering productive agricultural lands as well as supply chain logistics.
- Do not promote urban sprawl.
- Protect, expand and promote ecotourism.

Corridor Considerations:
- Prioritize improvements to existing highways and interstates, co-locate with existing highways and add capacity as needed, thoughtfully design corridors and interchanges to minimize impacts.
- Provide congestion relief during hurricane evacuation, assess existing road adequacy for hurricane evacuation, support sheltering, and improve evacuation routes in the center of the state.
- Concern over equity impacts of tolling and support for tolling as an alternative to other funding sources.
- Assist communities in securing high-speed internet and cellular coverage, expand broadband without constructing a new road, and support utility connection opportunities for water and sewer.
- Multi-modal transportation considerations which include high-speed rail and alternative modes of transportation, expanding public transit services, impacts of connected and autonomous vehicles, and improving bike and pedestrian safety.
- Consideration of no-build option to avoid potential impacts.

Comments specific to the Northern Turnpike Corridor were concerns about urban sprawl threatening rural lifestyle and wildlife of the Nature Coast; need for accessible internet for rural communities; limiting routes through Central Florida; concerns that tolls will negatively impact local residents; need to minimize impacts to the aquifer, Rainbow Springs watershed, and Outstanding Florida Springs; and a suggestion to co-locate the corridor along US 19/98 or US 41.
The draft Task Force report was posted for a 15-day public comment period from September 19 to October 14, 2020. A total of 242 members of the public submitted 381 comments during that period. A copy of these comments and a summary of the key themes were provided to the Task Force at its final meeting.

Common themes of the public comments from the public on the draft Task Force report are included below.

- Prioritize upgrading existing roadways and co-locate new roads with existing roads and utilities.
- Consider the no-build option to minimize impacts.
- Keep “The Task Force recognized the general need to enhance transportation safety, mobility, and connectivity in the study area but did not identify a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor across the entire study area based on the available information at this time” in the report.
- Funding for conservation land acquisitions to mitigate project activities and enhancements need to come from FDOT and not from other sources.
- Protect endangered wildlife and their habitats.
- Concern over corridor need and feasibility of the new toll road.
- Protect springs, wetlands, aquifer, floodplain and other water resources.
- Evaluate or include other transportation modes such as freight, transit, rail, and pedestrian and bicycle accommodation.
- Concerns over the cost to implement M-CORES projects.
- Protect against urban sprawl.

In addition to engaging the public, FDOT conducted active engagement with partners. FDOT gave 13 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 council and commission board meetings to share updates on the Task Force’s process and answer questions. The Task Force also considered 11 board resolutions and letters from local governments and MPOs. These resolutions and letters from municipalities are included in Appendix D.
STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

The Northern Turnpike Corridor extends from the northern terminus of 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% of the study area is held in public and private conservation, according to data from Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI). Major tracts of conservation lands include Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve, Ross Prairie State Forest, Potts Preserve, Half Moon Wildlife Management Area, Flying Eagle Preserve, Lake Panasoffkee Conservation Tract, Goethe State Forest, Withlacoочchee State Forest, Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve, 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. National Wildlife Refuges located within the study area include Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge, Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, and Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge.

- 35% 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% 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 Withlacoочchee River, which forms the boundary between Citrus County and the other three counties in the study area.

- Notable federal 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.

1 https://www.fnai.org/pdf/MAxCounty_202003.pdf
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 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 2 shows actual 2010, estimated 2019, projected 2020, and projected 2045 population for each county using mid-range projections.

- Per capita personal income levels in Marion, Citrus, and Levy Counties fell below the statewide level of $50,070 for 2018. Sumter County per capita personal income was above the statewide level.
- Marion, Citrus, and Levy Counties experienced poverty rates above the statewide average of 13.7% in 2018, with Levy County having the highest rate in the study area. Sumter County’s poverty rate is below the statewide average at 9.3%.
- The study area’s bachelor’s degree attainment is also below the statewide average of 29%; Sumter County is the exception at 31%.
- There are two public colleges in the study area. The College of Central Florida has campuses in Citrus County, Levy County, and Marion County. Lake-Sumter State College has a campus in Sumter County.
- 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 regional planning councils’ strategic regional policy plans, MPOs’ 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 (DRI). 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 a 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.


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)

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; construction and mining; education and services; leisure and hospitality; and financial services.

- Agriculture, forestry, and fishing are 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.

- Trade, transportation, and utilities industry sectors employ approximately one-fifth of the workforce within the study area. The agriculture, silviculture, manufacturing, distribution, and tourism and recreation industries in the region 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 local and state economies.

- A portion of the study area has a relatively diverse and growing manufacturing industry. Manufacturing industry firms in Marion County include Signature Brands for E-ONE and Krausz Industries. AutoZone 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. Firms in Citrus County include Sibex, Inc; Technology Conservation Group, Inc; and M&B Dairy. Manufacturing firm Charlotte Pipe is the largest private employer in Sumter County.

- 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 designated by the federal government as an Opportunity Zone.

- Sumter County has a concentration of economic development activity at the terminus of Florida’s Turnpike with I-75. West of the interchange activity areas, the properties are rural residential, preservation, and agriculture in use.

- Citrus County has a concentration of economic development activity along SR 44 from Inverness to Crystal River at US 19. There is also an Opportunity Zone and an extensive area of industrial and commercial zoned land located off US 41, SR 200, and CR 491 west of Holder in Citrus County.

- Many of the local economies in the study area depend on tourism, ecotourism, agritourism, and outdoor recreational activities. Whether kayaking or fishing on the Withlacoochee River, hiking the Cross Florida Greenway, or swimming in Rainbow Springs, there is a wide variety of nature-based recreational opportunities in the study area.

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6 Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
7 Ibid.
8 Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Rural Areas of Opportunity
INFRASTRUCTURE CHARACTERISTICS

The condition of infrastructure in the study area influences the quality of life for residents and visitors, and is 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 limited, resulting in many residents and businesses not having access to high-speed internet.\(^9\) Federal Communications Commission data published in December 2018 shows an estimated 66.5% of Levy County’s urban area residents and 85.8% of Levy County’s rural area residents lack access to high-speed internet.\(^10\)

- 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. Some of the roads in the county and city road networks are designated evacuation routes.

- There are 45 public evacuation shelters within study area, five of which are special needs shelters, based on the most current information available.\(^11, 12, 13, 14\)

- The 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 caused by increased demand, crashes, and incidents. On average, an incident closes at least one lane or ramp every 16 hours.\(^15\) Additionally, peak-hour congestion has been observed on other major roadways within population centers, particularly sections of SR 44 and US 19/98 in Citrus County.

- 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.

- Construction of the Suncoast Parkway Extension (Suncoast Parkway, Phase 1), terminating at SR 44 is underway, and construction is estimated to be complete in 2022. An additional section of Suncoast Parkway, Phase 2, is being designed for an extension between SR 44 and CR 486. That section is expected to let for construction in late 2022. This 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 Suncoast Corridor from Citrus County to I-10 in Jefferson County. The M-CORES statute directs the Northern Turnpike Corridor to end at the Suncoast Parkway, which could be along the existing Suncoast Parkway; Suncoast Parkway, Phase 1; Suncoast Parkway, Phase 2; or a future extension as part of the M-CORES Program.

- 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 2004. 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.

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\(^9\) Fixed Broadband Deployment Interactive Map, Federal Communications Commission

\(^10\) Broadband Availability in Different Areas

\(^11\) Citrus County Evacuation Levels and Shelters

\(^12\) Levy County Emergency Management

\(^13\) Marion County Public Schools

\(^14\) Sumter County Emergency Management

\(^15\) I-75 Relief Task Force - Final Recommendations Report
• 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 airports, seaports, 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 Port Citrus.
• There are about 75 miles of existing Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail (SUN Trail) and about 173 miles of identified SUN Trail segments in the study area, which are in various stages of planning, design, and construction. 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 provide demand-response rides. 19% of Marion County study area residents and 28% of Citrus County residents live within a half-mile of fixed-route public transportation service. Levy County and Sumter County do not have fixed-route public transportation service. Additionally, local transit agencies have identified transit service expansions (existing route improvements) and new services in their Transit Development Plans (TDP). Citrus County has identified a need for express bus transit that would provide inter-county connections between major activity centers within the study area.

16 2019 Florida Transit Information and Performance Handbook
RECOMMENDATIONS

High Level Needs (Why?)

Guiding Principles (How?)

Instructions for Project Development & Beyond (What’s Next?)
APPROACH AND FRAMEWORK
The Task Force recognized the scope of the M-CORES Program and purpose, as well as the scale of the corridors authorized in statute, and called for thoughtful decision making supported by the best available data, analysis, subject matter expertise, and extensive public input. The Task Force recognized that decisions about where these corridors should be located and how they should be developed, particularly in relation to environmental resources and existing communities, could have transformational impacts not only on the study area but also on the state as a whole.

Since the Task Force process was designed to occur prior to the corridor planning and development process, the Task Force did not review data on, nor to discuss every potential impact of the corridor in detail. The Task Force focused on developing recommendations for how FDOT and other agencies should implement the M-CORES Program in this study area in three areas:

High-Level Needs
The Task Force identified key regional opportunities and challenges related to the six statutory purposes for M-CORES that should be priorities for the M-CORES Program in the study area. The Task Force also developed guidance for how FDOT should work with partners to evaluate these potential needs and form more specific purpose and need statements for corridor improvements moving forward. The high-level needs, along with the purpose, answer the question “why?”.

Guiding Principles
The Task Force recommended a set of core values to guide decision making related to the M-CORES Program in the study area throughout the planning, development, and implementation process. These answer the question “how?”.

Instructions for Project Development and Beyond
The Task Force recommended specific directions for future project development and implementation activities to ensure the Task Force’s guiding principles are applied to subsequent activities as intended. These answer the question “what’s next?”.

In completing this report, the Task Force’s charge was to provide consensus recommendations for how FDOT can work with local governments and other agencies and partners to carry out the M-CORES Program as specified in s. 338.2278, F.S. These recommendations address how needs and feasibility should be evaluated and how corridor development and related activities should move forward to implement the statute and support the environment, quality of life, and prosperity of the study area and the state. Future activities related to project-specific needs, and environmental and economic feasibility will be fully developed by FDOT consistent with the Task Force’s recommendations.

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 viewed 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 recognized 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 principles and intent of the Task Force will guide any such refinements.
HIGH-LEVEL NEEDS

Development of major transportation projects typically begins with definition of a purpose and need for the project. The purpose identifies the primary goals of the project, and the need establishes the rationale for the project based on deficiencies, issues, and/or concerns that currently exist or are expected to occur within the study area. A need is typically a factual, objective description of the specific transportation problem supported by data and analysis.

Section 338.2278 (3) (c) 4, F.S., 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. The Task Force reviewed partner and public input, existing plans and studies, and available data and forecasts on trends and conditions in the study area. FDOT provided preliminary baseline forecasts for future population, employment, and traffic, but the amount and precision of the information provided was not sufficient to define specific corridor needs at a level of detail necessary to initiate project development. Based on the information provided, the Task Force identified potential high-level needs for the corridor and developed recommendations for how FDOT should assess the needs for a corridor of the scale specified in statute as part of future planning and project development.

High-level needs are key regional opportunities and challenges the M-CORES Program, including corridor investments and related actions, is intended to address.

The high-level needs build on the six purposes and 13 potential benefits in s. 338.2278 (1), F.S. The potential high-level needs include conventional transportation needs such as safety, mobility, and connectivity, as well as broader regional needs that could be supported through a transportation corridor, such as economic development, environmental stewardship, and quality of life.

In general, the Task Force found significant needs in the study area related to the six statutory purposes, including revitalizing rural communities, supporting economic development, enhancing quality of life, and protecting the environment. The Task Force did not reach a conclusion based on the information available at this time that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modifications of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose. Project-level needs will be evaluated consistent with the Task Force’s recommendations. If specific needs are identified, the Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or expansion of existing major highway corridors. The Federal Highway Administration defines a greenfield corridor as a corridor that is designed from the beginning with no constraints from the existence of prior facilities that need to be modified or removed.
The Task Force identified a series of potential high-level needs for future evaluation by FDOT:

**Address statewide and regional safety and mobility needs due to growth in population and visitation.**

Population in the study area grew from 345,850 in 1990 to 508,165 in 2019 (47%) and is projected to grow by an additional 386,935 (31%) by 2045 assuming mid-range growth. 17, 18 The number of visitors to Florida has increased from 28.9 million in 1985 to 131 million in 2019 (353%)19. Some of these visitors tour or pass through the study area en route to their final destinations. The number of visitors declined in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it is too early to accurately predict future trends in visitor activity.

Portions of I-75 and some portions of SR 44 and US 301 are currently operating at capacity. The review of 2018 traffic crash data showed that 10,327 crashes were reported in the study area, which resulted in 165 fatalities and 8,131 total injuries.20

FDOT conducted a preliminary analysis of future traffic in the study area based on population and employment growth projections from local government comprehensive plans. The analysis showed the study area traffic volumes are projected to increase by 83% from 2018 to 2050. Based on improvements currently in the FDOT Adopted Work Program and existing cost-feasible plans for the Strategic Intermodal System and MPO long-range transportation plans in the study area, this traffic growth could produce significant congestion along the entire section of I-75 in the study area, and portions of SR 50, SR 471, US 301, SR 44, US 41, SR 200, US 27, SR 40, and SR 121 by the year 2050. I-75 within the study area is projected to have Level of Service F by 2050 even with a 10-lane widening. The Task Force recommended further refinement of these traffic projections, including evaluation of whether the extension of the Northern Turnpike Corridor would relieve future traffic on I-75. The Task Force also recommended that future analyses consider whether the extension the Suncoast Parkway beyond Phase 2, which also is identified as a corridor for the M-CORES Program in s. 338.2278, F.S., would impact traffic on the Northern Turnpike Corridor.

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17 Population Data Archive, Bureau of Economic and Business Research
19 Florida Visitor Estimates, Visit Florida
20 Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Traffic Crash Report
The Task Force recommended that the traffic analysis consider future demand for moving both people and freight, as well as local and regional travel originating and terminating within the study area and statewide/interregional travel to, from, and through the study area. The traffic analysis should also consider potential changes in travel demand related to the state’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and potential long-term changes in travel behavior, such as greater propensity for working from home and increased home delivery of goods and services. The analysis should consider potential changes in travel demand and transportation system capacity related to increased use of emerging technologies, such as automated and connected vehicles. Finally, the analysis should consider potential shifts in economic activity that could be related to a significant industry expansion or recession in the study area during the analysis period.

**Improve statewide and regional transportation mobility and connectivity for people and freight.**
The Task Force discussed statewide and regional mobility and connectivity challenges and opportunities facing the study area. The Task Force recommended that the needs evaluation consider whether development of the Northern Turnpike Corridor would provide relief to the congestion on the I-75 corridor, and is an economically and environmentally feasible alternative for moving people and freight including during evacuation and emergency response. The Task Force recommended that further planning for the Northern Turnpike Corridor consider the recommendations of the I-75 Relief Task Force in its 2016 report.

**Provide a transportation network that revitalizes and enhances communities and industries.**
The Task Force discussed various ways highway and other modes of transportation could revitalize and enhance communities and local industries. The Task Force recommended FDOT evaluate whether corridor improvements could impact local communities, businesses, and industries including agriculture, ecotourism, manufacturing, financial and professional services, clean technology, and logistics and distribution, by looking at consistency with existing plans and community character.

**Strengthen emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery to enhance safety.**
The Task Force reviewed data and discussed emergency needs and considerations in the study area. The Task Force also discussed how congestion on various transportation facilities impede emergency management activities and increases the time needed for safe evacuation and emergency response. The Task Force recommended FDOT use the results of statewide regional evacuation studies currently being updated by the Florida Division of Emergency Management and the regional planning councils to understand Floridians’ behavior, the factors that influence their choices during emergencies, sheltering capacity, and evacuation traffic capacity needs and clearance times in the region and state. The Task Force recommended guiding principles and instructions for how the M-CORES Program could support emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

**Support retention and expansion of existing and attraction of new industries through enhanced access to jobs, education, and healthcare.**
The Task Force discussed economic and workforce development opportunities in the study area and the need for better access and connectivity to help attract new industries and workers to the region. The Task Force advised FDOT to consider both positive and negative mobility, economic, and fiscal impacts of potential shifts in economic activity from existing communities and corridors to enhanced or new corridors, as well as potential net economic benefits to the region and the state.

**Strengthen the local tourism, ecotourism, agritourism, and outdoor recreation economy.**
The Task Force discussed the contribution of various types of tourism to the local economies in the study area. The Task Force advised FDOT to protect valued historic, cultural, and environmental assets that currently draw visitors to the study area. Additionally, the Task Force recommended that FDOT consider tourism and recreational travel needs in the planning and design of corridor improvements by identifying potential areas of growth in visitation and improving connections or access to existing tourism sites.
Expand rural utility infrastructure, including broadband, water, and sewer, to enhance quality of life.

Large portions of the study area lack broadband or water/sewer service. The Task Force reviewed data and discussed challenges in the study area and opportunities to advance broadband, water, and sewer with transportation infrastructure to enhance quality of life. The Task Force recognized that a new transportation corridor is not a prerequisite for broadband deployment; however, there are unique opportunities offered by a linear corridor that bring value to expanding broadband connectivity statewide. The Task Force asked FDOT to coordinate with local governments, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and utility and broadband service providers and to include space and provisions for utility accommodation and consider utility connectivity needs when developing and designing corridors. The Task Force recommended that both transportation and utility infrastructure expansion be consistent with growth strategies and existing policies regarding urban sprawl included in local government comprehensive plans.

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 Task Force reviewed data and discussed the unique characteristics of the study area’s environmental resources, including springs, rivers, aquifer recharge areas, agricultural land uses, and wildlife habitat. The Task Force also determined 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 Task Force recommended guiding principles and instructions for how the M-CORES Program could help achieve environmental goals, including proactive opportunities to restore, connect, and enhance environmental resources, in addition to the standard Project Development and Environment (PD&E) process.

NEEDS EVALUATION PROCESS

As input to project development, FDOT will work with partners to conduct a robust evaluation of the potential high-level 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 related to transportation that are also included in the statutory purpose in s. 338.2278, F.S. Additional details on the needs evaluation process, as well as the steps involved in identifying and evaluating alternatives are specified in the Action Plan section of this report.

The Task Force did not reach a conclusion, based on the information available at this time, that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modifications of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose. Project-level needs will be evaluated consistent with the Task Force’s recommendations. If specific needs are identified, the Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or expansion of existing major highway corridors.

The Task Force believes that the determination of need, an initial financial feasibility assessment, and an initial environmental assessment is an essential prerequisite to the project development process (PD&E). The Task Force developed a series of guiding principles and instructions for future planning and development of corridors for which high-level needs have been identified, including analysis of the “no build” option. 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 FDOT will create ongoing opportunities for partners and the public to be engaged during the process.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND INSTRUCTIONS
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. The Task Force developed 16 guiding principles and associated instructions. The text below lists the specific guiding principles and instructions. The guiding principles function as an integrated set and are not presented in a specific priority order. The first three guiding principles are intended as overarching principles that support all other principles in this report.
CONSISTENCY WITH STATEWIDE, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL PLANS

This is a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.

The Task Force recognized that there are plans specifically called out in statute, where consistency is the standard by law or policy; these include the local government comprehensive plans, metropolitan long-range transportation plans, strategic regional policy plans, and the statewide Florida Transportation Plan (FTP). The Task Force developed the following guiding principle and instructions to address the consistency issue.

Guiding Principle #1: Be consistent with statutorily required statewide, regional, and local plans.

Instructions:

• Be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and resources identified in local government comprehensive plans (s. 163.3177, F.S. and s. 163.3178, F.S.), metropolitan long-range transportation plans (s. 339.175, F.S.), and strategic regional policy plans (s. 186.507, F.S.), placing emphasis on future land use maps and growth projections, as well as regional and community visions as adopted into strategic regional policy plans and/or local government comprehensive plans.

• Be consistent with the vision, goals, and strategies of the Florida Transportation Plan (s. 339.155, F.S.).

• Coordinate among agencies to address differences among statutorily required state, regional, and local plans related to transportation corridors and future growth and development projections, including differences related to the timing and horizon years of plan updates as well as the geographical areas covered by regional plans.

• Identify needs to update statutorily required plans to address Task Force recommendations, such as designation and management of transportation corridors (s. 337.273, F.S.), and consider whether areas around potential interchange locations contain appropriate land use and environmental resource protections (s. 338.2278, F.S.), including resources identified as significant in other guiding principles and instructions. Coordinate among local governments, regional planning councils, metropolitan planning organizations, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and FDOT on plan updates.

• Support local governments in developing interchange management plans including appropriate land use and environmental resource protections for areas around proposed interchange locations.
MAXIMIZING USE OF EXISTING FACILITIES

This is a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.

The Task Force emphasized the importance of examining the potential to upgrade or use existing transportation facilities or corridors to meet the purpose and need of the corridor or project before planning a new greenfield corridor in order to minimize project impacts. The Task Force developed the following guiding principle and instructions to address the use of existing facilities.

Guiding Principle #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 major transportation facilities or right of way in or near the study area including co-location of facilities within or adjacent to existing right of way and other approaches to transforming existing facilities and right of way to accommodate additional modes, uses, and functions;

iii. Then co-location within or adjacent to utilities facilities or right of way in or near the study area and other approaches to transforming existing facilities or right of way to accommodate additional modes, uses and functions; and

iv. In circumstances where purpose and need and/or guiding principles cannot be addressed by operational or existing facility/right of way improvements, then evaluation of new facilities.

Instructions:

• Identify and advance safety and operational improvements to existing transportation facilities.

• Evaluate potential capacity improvements to existing transportation facilities in or near the study area, including their impact on the surrounding environment, land uses, and communities.

• Evaluate opportunities for co-location, while considering potential impacts on the surrounding environment, land uses, and communities.

• Assess connectivity gaps between existing major transportation facilities and areas identified as priorities for attraction, and potential opportunities for closing those gaps.

• Evaluate opportunities to advance specific improvements, including those identified through planning studies, PD&E studies, and long-range transportation plans, that support a system meeting the long-term needs of statewide and interregional movements of people and freight during future phases of project development. Collaborate with other state and regional agencies and local governments to evaluate these improvements.

• Collaborate with local governments on operational improvements, existing facility enhancements, and, if needed, interchange locations to ensure consistency with local government comprehensive plans.
TECHNOLOGY

This is a cross-cutting guiding principle with associated instructions to serve all high-level needs and support all other guiding principles in this report.

The Task Force encouraged FDOT to explore ways for new and emerging technology to meet the needs of the corridor and potentially reduce impacts to the natural and human environment. The Task Force developed the following guiding principles and instructions to address technology.

Guiding Principle #3: Incorporate technology into corridor planning, design, construction, operations (including toll collection), and maintenance.

Guiding Principle #4: Accommodate emerging vehicle and information technologies, such as autonomous, connected, electric, and shared vehicles (ACES) and mobility as a service (MaaS).

Instructions:

• Coordinate and partner with agencies and the private sector to leverage resources, applications, and infrastructure.
• Plan and design corridors to accommodate technologies and applications, considering their ability to evolve over time.
• Design, construct, and maintain corridors using state-of-the-art, resilient, and energy-efficient materials and methods of construction.
• Plan for and provide infrastructure for electric vehicle charging stations.
• Incorporate emerging and available technology to limit impacts to wildlife including road kills. Prioritize locations to utilize technology such as smoke sensors that activate warning signs and alert law enforcement and FDOT offices of smoke situations to better facilitate prescribed fire management of conservation lands and provide notifications of other hazards, such as smoke from wildfires.
• Evaluate advanced electronic tolling and transponder systems that differentiate between locally generated traffic and long distance through traffic to avoid or reduce the necessity to construct duplicate toll-free lanes if an M-CORES facility is co-located with an existing highway. Consider implementing the use of such systems if legally and technologically practical.
COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The Task Force recognizes the social and cultural identity for each community is unique and should be protected. The Task Force emphasized the importance of public participation and coordination with local governments as they have the largest stake in planning when developing the corridors, including decisions about interchanges and access. The following guiding principle and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to preserve and improve the rural character and quality of communities in the study area.

Guiding Principle #5: Avoid or minimize impacts to communities and reinforce the unique character of each community.

Instructions:

• Avoid and do not impact known cemeteries and historic markers, known cultural sites, and sites currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

• Avoid and do not impact Native American Tribal lands. Coordinate if historic properties of religious or cultural significance to the Native American Tribes are discovered during project development.

• Plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain corridors that recognize and incorporate the surrounding community character while accommodating potential growth and development. Balance the need to move vehicles safely and efficiently while preserving scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources.

• Explore opportunities to view, understand, and access the environmental uniqueness of the Big Bend Ecosystem.

• Avoid to the greatest extent practicable any new corridor through historic African American communities or similar minority communities.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development was another major focus area for the Task Force as it serves several purposes, including revitalization of rural communities, job creation, and enhancing the quality of life.

The following guiding principles and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the need to enhance economic and workforce development, access to education, and job creation in the study area.

Guiding Principle #6: Develop infrastructure that avoids and minimizes adverse economic impacts to existing local businesses and enhances economic development and employment opportunities.

Guiding Principle #7: Avoid impacts to natural assets important to tourism, agritourism, ecotourism, and outdoor recreation.

Instructions:

• Be consistent with economic development elements of local government comprehensive plans (s. 163.3177, F.S. and s. 163.3178, F.S.), and comprehensive economic development strategies developed by regional planning councils in their capacity as federal economic development districts.

• Enhance economic development opportunities related to regional assets such as airports, educational facilities, and healthcare facilities, by improving access while avoiding direct impacts.

• Provide support to local governments and economic development organizations to maximize long-term economic benefits from corridor investments in the study area.

• Engage with agriculture, silviculture, manufacturing, logistics, and other industry stakeholders to understand and incorporate their infrastructure needs.

• Plan for and design truck parking and rest area needs.

• Support the local tourism and recreation economy by providing opportunities for access and connections to outdoor recreation areas such as recreational greenways, trails, and hunting and fishing areas.

• Plan for and design infrastructure to protect access to existing businesses in rural communities.
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Among the six statutory purposes for M-CORES, protecting the environment and natural resources was the focus of the greatest portion of the Task Force’s discussion time. The Task Force acknowledged its statutory direction to evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction on the water quality and quantity of springs, rivers, and aquifer recharge areas and on wildlife habitat. The Task Force also recognized the potential impacts of corridor development on significant environmental resources in the study area from direct impacts from corridor development and indirect impacts from future population and economic growth and land development that could occur in areas with greater transportation connectivity, particularly around interchanges.

The Task Force developed a series of three interrelated guiding principles to address environmental resources including conservation lands, wildlife and plant habitat, and water resources. Each of these three principles reflect a common priority order of first, avoiding negative impacts to resources; second, restoring, connecting, and enhancing resources; and third, minimizing and mitigating negative impacts. This order reflects the Task Force’s consensus that the optimal approach should be to avoid negative impacts to environmental resources, but that if an impact cannot be avoided, proactive efforts should be taken to provide net positive benefits to the resource.

To help implement this principle, FDOT identified and committed to specific environmental resources that will not be impacted by a corridor or where no new corridor will be placed through the resource, such as existing conservation lands or habitat already fragmented by existing transportation facilities. In these cases, the existing facilities or right of way could be improved, but steps should be taken to restore or enhance the environmental resource at the same time. In addition, the Task Force identified other important resources where avoidance is not explicitly defined at this time, but where great care should be taken to evaluate potential corridors and their impacts moving forward.

In addition, the Task Force recognized the opportunities to contribute toward broader regional and statewide environmental goals though the decisions made about corridor development as well as the abilities the statute provides to FDOT regarding right of way acquisition and other mitigation activities. The Task Force advised FDOT to use proactive right of way acquisition to acquire mitigation lands and conservation easements prior to or in parallel with corridor construction. The Task Force recommended that FDOT commit to working closely with other local, regional, state, and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations to advance key priorities such as high priority land conservation, habitat and water resource protection, and ecosystem connectivity initiatives developed by other partners.
CONSERVATION LANDS

The Task Force developed the following guiding principle and instructions focus on how to avoid, minimize, and offset environmental impacts to conservation lands.

Guiding Principle #8 Apply the following priority order for existing conservation lands:

i. Avoid negative impacts to, and fragmentation of, these lands.
ii. Restore, connect, and enhance these lands while continuing to avoid negative impacts.
iii. Fully optimize minimization then mitigate for any remaining unavoidable impacts.

Instructions:

• Do not place new corridors through: state parks (preserve ability to traverse Cross Florida Greenway with potential enhancement opportunities as discussed in the following instruction), state forests, mitigation banks, existing managed conservation lands, wildlife refuges, and Florida Forever acquired lands.

• Prioritize alternatives that do not traverse the Cross Florida Greenway. Traverse the Cross Florida Greenway only when other alternatives cannot adequately meet the purpose and need of the corridor or project, while connecting the Northern Turnpike Corridor to the Suncoast Corridor. If the Cross Florida Greenway is traversed, then FDOT commits to bridging the roadway within the limits of the Cross Florida Greenway.

• Do not traverse the Cross Florida Greenway within Marion County.

• Place a high priority on corridor alternatives that avoid impacts to conservation easements.

• Coordinate with agencies and partners early in the project development process to review land acquisition plans and identify opportunities to advance and fund acquisition priorities (including s. 338.2278 (3)(c)6 & 8, F.S.) as part of M-CORES projects. Coordinate with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other agencies for Florida Forever Program projects that are in the highest priority for acquisition, potential Water Management District lands, and lands within the optimal boundaries of the adopted management plans for regional, state and national parks, forests, refuges, and water management areas.

• Coordinate with regional planning councils to support Natural Resources of Regional Significance outlined in their Strategic Regional Policy Plans.

• Coordinate with the Florida Forest Service to identify lands managed with prescribed or controlled burns and their associated smokesheds and minimize impacts associated with corridor location and operations.

• Use established procedures, analysis tools, and the above Guiding Principles to analyze impacts to wetland mitigation banks and regulatory easements, swallets, Florida Communities Trust projects, Wildlife Management Areas, and Rare Species Habitat Conservation Priorities.

• Reference the most current Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) version priorities model during project development.

• Consider impacts to Florida Forever targeted lands when developing alternatives. If these lands are impacted, provide enhancements to the lands and give strong consideration to potential special design features.
WILDLIFE HABITATS AND CONNECTIVITY

This guiding principle and instructions focus on how to protect, restore, and enhance wildlife habitat connectivity. The Task Force recognized there are gaps in the Florida wildlife corridors that needs to be filled to improve connectivity of wildlife communities.

Guiding Principle #9: Apply the following priority order for existing wildlife habitats:

i. Avoid negative impacts to, and fragmentation of these lands.
ii. Restore, connect, and enhance these lands while continuing to avoid negative impacts.
iii. Fully optimize minimization then mitigate for any remaining unavoidable impacts.

Instructions:

• Coordinate with agencies and partners early in the project development process to review land acquisition plans and identify opportunities to advance acquisition priorities to support the completion of wildlife connectivity gaps (including s. 338.2278 (3)(c)6 & 8, F.S.). Coordinate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to enhance wildlife corridor connectivity including lands identified as priority 1 and 2 in the most current Florida Ecological Greenways Network. Place an emphasis on connectivity gaps and bottlenecks.

• Support a regional approach to enhanced wildlife connectivity, including restoration of fish and wildlife habitat corridors.

• Coordinate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and US Fish and Wildlife Service to determine optimal wildlife crossing locations and maximize effectiveness of wildlife crossing design elements based upon the best available data concerning wildlife movement patterns and adjacent land uses. In general, wildlife crossing designs developed during the PD&E and final design phase of the process should assure that publicly owned conservation lands sufficient to allow the passage of wildlife exist at both ends of a proposed crossing structure. The design of wildlife crossings intended for use by large mammals, or the design of crossings that include both upland and wetland habitats, should generally incorporate bridges.

• Minimize impacts of transportation lighting on nearby agricultural, environmental, and conservation lands.

• Consult with state and federal agencies to identify and protect threatened and endangered species (wildlife and plants) and their habitats.
WATER RESOURCES

This guiding principle and instructions focus on how to protect, restore, and enhance water resources which include lakes, rivers, streams, springs, floodplains, estuaries, wetlands, aquifers, and groundwater.

Guiding Principle #10: Apply the following priority order for existing water resources:

i. Avoid negative impacts to water resources.
ii. Restore, connect, and enhance water resources while continuing to avoid negative impacts.
iii. Fully optimize minimization then mitigate for any remaining unavoidable impacts.

Instructions:

• Avoid and do not impact springheads and lakes.
• Do not place new corridors through aquatic preserves.
• Coordinate with agencies and partners early in the project development process to identify water supply and quality goals and identify opportunities to advance water resource enhancements that will improve regional water quality (including s. 338.2278 (3)(c)6 & 8, F.S.). Coordinate with Water Management Districts and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for projects in Basin Management Action Plans (BMAP) for springs and other surface water bodies and protection and enhancement of aquifer and groundwater recharge areas, Outstanding Florida Waters, wetlands, floodplains, and other surface waters.
• Address both local and regional flooding problems by integrating stormwater and floodplain management strategies where feasible.
• Place a high priority on retrofitting existing structures to improve hydrologic flows in cases of co-location.
• Support a regional approach to stormwater system design with the goal of meeting and exceeding Environmental Resource Permit requirements.
• Avoid placing transportation corridors and stormwater ponds in sinkholes and high-density karst areas.
• Use established procedures and analysis tools during project development to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to Water Management District surface, groundwater, proposed well, and atmospheric sites.
AGRICULTURE
The Task Force acknowledged its statutory direction to evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction on agricultural land uses. The Task Force emphasized the importance of protecting and enhancing the abundance of productive agricultural lands (including silviculture) in the study area as they serve as fish and wildlife habitat, support water supply and environmental needs, and serve as major economic drivers for rural communities.

Guiding Principle #11: Avoid impacts to and fragmentation (of both tracts and operations) of farmlands, silviculture, equine industry, nurseries, aquaculture, and cattle ranches.

Instructions:
• Avoid and do not impact Farmland Preservation Areas identified in local government comprehensive plans.
• Recognize existing preservation areas of the Florida Rural and Family Lands Protection Program as well as those lands formally designated for future protection within this program.
• Plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain corridors that protect the region’s agricultural lands (including Century Pioneer Family Farms), avoid fragmentation of these lands, and facilitate connectivity to and between these lands.
• Work with owners/operators of farmlands, silviculture, equine industry, nurseries, aquaculture, and cattle ranches to understand their needs and plans.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
The Task Force emphasized the importance of ensuring the corridor supports existing emergency management and response plans and studies. The Task Force developed the following guiding principle and instructions to address the need to enhance emergency management at the local, regional, and state levels.

Guiding Principle #12: Plan, design, construct, operate and maintain resilient corridors that support state, regional, and local plans for emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Instructions:
• When developing, and evaluating corridors, place a high priority on the ability of existing, co-located or new infrastructure to withstand and recover from risks such as storm surge (tropical storm through category 5), inland flooding, extreme weather events, and climate trends.
• Avoid and do not impact high risk coastal areas consistent with local government comprehensive plans.
• Coordinate with the Florida Division of Emergency Management Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and local comprehensive emergency management plans, including evacuation and sheltering.
• Use data from the statewide regional evacuation studies being updated by Division of Emergency Management and the regional planning councils.
• Provide opportunities for staging areas for emergencies (SAFE) as outlined in s. 338.236, F.S.
• Give high priority to native, storm-resistant landscaping.
INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES
The Task Force emphasized the importance of ensuring the corridor supports the need to expand broadband, water, sewer, electric, and gas services to the study area for the purposes of revitalizing rural communities, encouraging job creation, and leveraging technology. The Task Force developed the following guiding principles and instructions to address the need to expand rural broadband infrastructure and access to broadband and other utility services in the study area.

Guiding Principle #13: Plan and design enhanced or new corridors to enable co-location of broadband and other utility infrastructure.

Guiding Principle #14: Coordinate utility investment with future land use, economic development, transportation, and water quality plans.

Instructions:
- Do not place new corridors through public or private wastewater facilities, public water supply facilities, and certified power plants.
- Support local governments and utility providers regarding existing and planned utility projects, including identifying opportunities within the study area to co-locate and/or extend utilities within and adjacent to transportation corridors.
- Collaborate with broadband providers, local governments, and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, leveraging funding allocations (s. 339.0801 F.S.) and guided by the statewide broadband strategic plan (s. 364.0135 F.S.) to integrate broadband into transportation corridors.
- Ensure broadband provider access to FDOT right of way is non-discriminatory, competitively neutral, and technology neutral. Coordinate spatial needs with each utility provider.
- Explore opportunities to coordinate with local governments and utilities for septic to sewer conversions to improve quality of life and water quality, with an emphasis on higher density communities and areas targeted in BMAPs.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK CONNECTIVITY
The Task Force emphasized the importance of examining opportunities to include other transportation modes, such as shared-use trails, freight and passenger rail, and public transit in the corridor. They encouraged FDOT to think beyond personal automobile travel to meet a variety of mobility needs and travel options. The Task Force developed the following guiding principles and instructions to address statewide and regional transportation mobility and connectivity for people and freight needs.

Guiding Principle #15: Enhance inter-regional connectivity by providing direct connections between major statewide corridors.

Guiding Principle #16: Plan inter-regional corridors to support the function of regional and local networks.

Instructions:
- Plan corridor access and termini consistent with s. 338.2278 F.S., local and regional goals for targeted growth or preservation areas, and in coordination with local governments.
- Seek opportunities to further trail improvements and access to existing and planned non-motorized trail networks.
- Prioritize gaps on high priority segments on the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan.
- Coordinate with MPOs and transit providers on transit needs and opportunities.
In addition to the high-level needs, guiding principles, and instructions, FDOT commits to the following actions to move forward with implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force’s report, consistent with s. 338.2278, F.S.
1. Evaluate potential needs.

FDOT will work with partners to conduct a robust evaluation of potential corridor needs, building on the Task Force’s recommendations on high-level needs. This process will evaluate and distinguish between conventional safety, mobility, and connectivity needs, and broader regional needs or co-benefits related to transportation, such as economic development or environmental stewardship benefits. The needs evaluation will include a detailed technical analysis of current and future traffic conditions in the study area building on the guidance provided by the Task Force in this report. The needs evaluation will include the best available data and most recent projections on travel demand and underlying population and economic growth. This needs analysis will support development of a Purpose and Need statement for potential corridor improvements.

2. Identify and evaluate alternatives.

FDOT will conduct additional corridor planning activities, including the Alternative Corridor Evaluation process, and initiate the PD&E process to identify and evaluate a range of potential alternatives for corridor improvements in or near the study area that could accomplish the Purpose and Need.

These alternatives, beginning at the northern terminus of the Florida’s Turnpike, will consider operational and capacity improvements, existing and new facilities including co-location options, and a “no build” option. Consideration will be given to multiple transportation modes and to application of emerging technologies. The alternatives will be consistent with the guiding principles and instructions developed by the Task Force.

The alternatives evaluation will include the specific economic, environmental, land use, and emergency management impacts required by s. 338.2278(3)(c)4, F.S. and the standard processes outlined in FDOT’s PD&E manual. The evaluation will be consistent with the guiding principles and instructions recommended by the Task Force. The evaluation will consider the best available data on the full range of potential impacts.

The Task Force discussed the importance of considering a “no build” option during all stages of PD&E. FDOT confirmed that, according to both state and federal law and established procedures, a “no build” is always an option in the planning and PD&E processes. In this context, “no build” would mean no major capacity investments beyond those already committed in FDOT’s Five Year Work Program, as well as no associated investments related to land acquisition, broadband and other utilities, and other statutory capabilities specific to M-CORES. FDOT would continue to maintain the safety and operation of the existing transportation system in this study area. During later phases as specific projects and segments are identified, “no build” would mean no capacity investments for that specific project area. The “no build” would remain an option throughout the PD&E process and be analyzed at the same level of detail as all “build” options, including consideration of economic, environmental, land use, and emergency management impacts, and consistency with the guiding principles and instructions. The analysis of the “no build” also must include impacts on the study area such as the potential for increased traffic on existing facilities, impacts to multimodal facilities, and impacts on emergency response times.

The planning process also will include initial, high-level consideration of potential costs and funding approaches based on reasonable assumptions at this early stage. It is not likely that any alternatives would be sufficiently defined at this stage to conduct detailed analysis of economic feasibility, but early identification of the order of magnitude of potential costs and funding sources can be used to support decision making on the range of alternatives including the “no build” option.

The planning and PD&E processes combined will narrow the range of alternatives and identify opportunities to segment corridor development into multiple projects. These processes also will produce more specific information about potential alignments, interchange locations, and other project features.

After the PD&E Study is completed, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection will review the environmental feasibility of any projects proposed as part of Florida’s Turnpike system and submit a statement of environmental feasibility to FDOT, consistent with s. 338.223, F.S.
3. Support consistency review and update of local and regional plans.

FDOT will coordinate early and often with local governments, MPOs, and regional planning councils to ensure consistency with applicable local and regional plans throughout all activities. Consistent with s. 338.223(1)(a), F.S. and with the Task Force’s recommendations, proposed corridor projects must be consistent, to the maximum extent feasible, with applicable approved local government comprehensive plans, included in the transportation improvement program (TIP) of any affected MPOs, and developed in accordance with the Florida Transportation Plan and FDOT’s Five Year Work Program.

As required by s. 338.2278(3)(c)10, F.S., FDOT will provide affected local governments with a copy of the Task Force report and project alignments identified through the PD&E process so each local government with one or more planned interchanges within its jurisdiction can meet the statutory requirement to review the Task Force report and local government comprehensive plan no later than December 31, 2023. Each local government will consider whether the area in and around the interchange contains appropriate land uses and environmental protections and whether its comprehensive plan should be amended to provide appropriate uses and protections. FDOT will coordinate with the local governments, RPCs, and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to assist with plan updates, including consideration of technical and financial support needs.

The Task Force urges FDOT to work with and assist local governments to prioritize protecting environmental resources through the interchange management process. FDOT will provide best practices to the local governments for interchange management plans. FDOT shall give a high priority to interchange locations that limit impact to important wildlife habitat and commit to working with local government and other partners with a goal of maximizing conservation lands around the interchanges. Before an interchange location is finalized, public engagement will take place and FDOT will review local government interchange management plans that include consideration of appropriate land uses and natural resource protections.

4. Assess economic feasibility and identify potential funding sources.

Following PD&E, FDOT will evaluate the economic feasibility of the corridor at the 30 percent design phase, when sufficient information is available to assess the ability to meet statutory requirements for projects as part of Florida’s Turnpike system consistent with s. 338.223, F.S. The economic feasibility will account for required costs to develop and implement the corridor, such as engineering, right of way, construction, mitigation, enhancement, and utility costs. These would include typical corridor costs plus FDOT’s contribution toward the additional corridor elements related to environmental enhancements or multi-use opportunities as envisioned in statute. This economic feasibility test will focus on specific corridor projects; additional analyses may be needed to examine the cost and funding of all M-CORES Program initiatives.

FDOT also will identify potential funding sources for preferred corridor alternatives identified during PD&E, including a combination of the specific sources allocated to the M-CORES Program in s. 338.2278, F.S.; toll revenues and associated Turnpike revenue bonds; right of way and bridge construction bonds or financing by the FDOT Financing Corporation; advances from the State Transportation Trust Fund; funds obtained through the creation of public-private partnerships; and other applicable state, local, and private revenue sources.

FDOT has committed that projects currently in its Five Year Work Program for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 will not be impacted by M-CORES funding needs. M-CORES Program costs that are not covered through the dedicated funding sources identified in statute or through toll revenues and associated Turnpike revenue bonds and other financing and partnerships would need to be prioritized along with other needs for future Five Year Work Programs, working through the standard process including the applicable MPO TIPs and rural transportation planning processes. All M-CORES projects, regardless of funding source, will be included in applicable MPO TIPs and long-range transportation plans, consistent with federal guidance for projects of regional significance.
5. Advance innovative land acquisition concepts.

FDOT, in consultation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (including Florida Forest Service), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and related federal agencies will advance the Task Force’s recommendations for combining right of way acquisition with the acquisition of lands or conservation easements to facilitate environmental mitigation or ecosystem, wildlife habitat, or water quality protection or restoration. A key focus will be on how M-CORES Program decisions can support broader regional or statewide conservation and environmental stewardship goals such as priorities in the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. FDOT will work with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Water Management Districts, and nongovernmental organizations to explore potential indicators for setting and tracking progress toward land conservation goals.

This process will include early identification of potential conservation land acquisition and protection opportunities during corridor planning; development of a corridor conservation land acquisition and easement plan as part of PD&E; and a process to complete or commit to specific acquisition and easements prior to or in parallel with corridor construction. FDOT shall prioritize planned conservation lands with willing sellers on agency priority lists within 10 miles of any transportation corridor development and areas needed to functionally close gaps in P1, P2, P3, and P4 priority wildlife corridors within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and Rural and Family Land Protection Projects, as part of the plan. The plan shall involve experts in various fields to evaluate the most environmentally positive resources to be protected, restored, or expanded.

FDOT will determine how to provide funding, in whole or part, for land acquisition projects consistent with its statutory authority in s. 338.2278(3)(c) 6, F.S., with the expectation that FDOT funding supplements and leverages other state, federal, local, private, and nonprofit sources. The land acquisition and easement plan will include indicators for tracking progress toward plan implementation.

6. Advance multi-use opportunities.

FDOT will coordinate with local governments, RPCs, other state agencies, and industry organizations to help advance multi-use opportunities for the corridor as provided for in statute.

An early emphasis will be on broadband and other utility co-location opportunities, including coordination with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity on the development of the statewide broadband strategic plan. FDOT will determine how to provide funding, in whole or part, for broadband consistent with its statutory authority in s. 339.0801, F.S., with the expectation that FDOT funding supplements and leverages other state, federal, local, private, and nonprofit funding sources. The land acquisition and easement plan will include indicators for tracking progress toward plan implementation.

7. Continue robust partner and public engagement.

FDOT will continue robust coordination with local governments; local, regional, state, and federal agencies; and environmental, community, economic development, and other interest groups, with an intent of exceeding the requirements of the PD&E process.

FDOT will use the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process to facilitate early and ongoing coordination with resource agencies. FDOT also will create ongoing opportunities for the range of organizations involved in the Task Force process to be informed about and provide input to subsequent planning and project development activities, such as periodic meetings to reconvene Task Force member organizations in an advisory role. FDOT also will create multiple ongoing opportunities for members of the public to be aware of and provide input to this process, with emphasis on direct engagement of the public in local communities.
8. Commit to transparency and process improvement.

Because of the scale and scope of the M-CORES Program, FDOT will continue to place public engagement as a priority and will continue to engage all stakeholders during M-CORES planning, project development, and implementation, including key decision points.

FDOT also will report on how decisions are made, including a periodic report on the status of the specific guiding principles and instructions committed to in this document. An annual M-CORES budget update will be made publicly available as part of FDOT’s Annual Work program presentation to the Legislature and the Florida Transportation Commission.

FDOT also recognizes the need for continued improvements to its planning, project development, and related processes to fully implement the M-CORES purpose and objective as identified in statute and the guiding principles and instructions as recommended by the Task Force. This may include the need for additional technical and financial support for the activities identified in this report for enhanced planning, collaboration, and public engagement.

The specific commitments in this Action Plan indicate how FDOT will work with local governments and other agencies and partners to carry out the Task Force’s recommendations for the M-CORES Program in the full study area, augmenting established statutory requirements and FDOT procedures. Specific corridor projects identified through this process will advance based on determination of need, environmental feasibility, economic feasibility, and consistency with applicable local government comprehensive plans and MPO TIPs.

The Task Force recognizes that the vision of M-CORES established by the Governor and Legislature in s. 338.2278, F.S. is ambitious and its implementation will require continued strong coordination among state agencies, local governments, MPOs, RPCs, water management districts, and other agencies. The Task Force also recognizes that the economic and fiscal outlook facing Florida has changed significantly since the legislation authorizing the M-CORES Program was signed in May 2019. Given the potential transformational impact of the M-CORES Program on the future of Florida, the Task Force respectfully requests the Governor and Legislature to consider adjusting or removing the deadlines for corridor construction and other milestones in statute to permit thorough analysis and additional thoughtful collaboration on all key decisions.
APPENDIX A

Task Force Membership List
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Member Name/Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Jared Perdue, District 5 Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Christina Colon, Director of Transportation Development, Florida Turnpike Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Environmental Protection</td>
<td>James R. Maher, Northeast District Assistant Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Economic Opportunity</td>
<td>Mario Rubio, Director of Community Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Education</td>
<td>Nancy Brown, Blind Services District Administrator, Division of Blind Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Health</td>
<td>Michael Napier, Health Officer, Pasco County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission</td>
<td>Chris Wynn, North Central Regional Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Matt Surrency, Mayor, City of Hawthorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Public Service Commission</td>
<td>Mark Futrell, Deputy Executive Director – Technical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterprise Florida</td>
<td>Eric Anderson, Director of Rural and Agriculture Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation</td>
<td>Jim Patton, Regional Program Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CareerSource Florida</td>
<td>Rusty Skinner, CEO, CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Florida</td>
<td>Katie Troncoso, Grants Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwannee River Water Management District</td>
<td>Warren Zwanka, Resource Management Division Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Florida Water Management District</td>
<td>Jennette Seachrist, Resource Management Division Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Johns River Water Management District</td>
<td>Jeff Prather, Director of Regulatory Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization</td>
<td>The Hon. Jeff Kinnard, Chair Chair, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocala/Marion County Transportation Planning Organization</td>
<td>The Hon. Valerie Hanchar, Chair Vice-Mayor, City of Dunnellon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization</td>
<td>Mike Woods, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central Florida Regional Planning Council</td>
<td>Hugh Harling, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council</td>
<td>Sean Sullivan, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Florida Regional Planning Council</td>
<td>Scott Koons, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Member Name/Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>VACANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Trucking Association</td>
<td>Philip Fulmer, CEO, Carroll Fulmer Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Rural Water Association</td>
<td>Christopher Saliba, VP of Operations &amp; Maintenance for U.S. Water Services Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Internet &amp; Television Association</td>
<td>Bill Ferry, Senior Director of External Affairs – Florida Region, Comcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Farm Bureau Federation</td>
<td>Curt Williams, Assistant Director of Government &amp; Community Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Central Florida</td>
<td>Dr. Vernon Lawter, Vice President of Regional Campuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake-Sumter State College</td>
<td>Dr. Stanley Sidor, President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 Friends of Florida</td>
<td>Paul Owens, President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audubon Florida</td>
<td>Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defenders of Wildlife</td>
<td>Kent Wimmer, Senior Northwest Florida Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nature Conservancy</td>
<td>Zachary Prusak, Florida Fire Manager and Central Florida Conservation Program Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Wildlife Corridor</td>
<td>Jason Lauritsen, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local governments in Sumter County</td>
<td>Bradley Arnold, County Administrator, Sumter County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local governments in Citrus County</td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Carnahan, 2nd Vice Chairman, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local governments in Levy County</td>
<td>The Hon. Russell “Rock” Meeks, Commissioner, Levy County Board of County Commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local governments in Marion County</td>
<td>The Hon. Kathy Bryant, Commissioner, Marion County Board of County Commissioners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Task Force Work Plan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #1</strong></td>
<td>• Provide overview of legislation and M-CORES program&lt;br&gt;• Review Task Force role and responsibilities&lt;br&gt;• Provide briefing on Florida’s Government in the Sunshine Law and Public Records laws&lt;br&gt;• Share background information on corridor planning and Task Force products&lt;br&gt;• Identify potential considerations for future discussion at Task Force meetings&lt;br&gt;• Develop Task Force consensus on work plan, meeting schedule, and overall outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 27, 2019</td>
<td>Plenary session with breakouts for each Task Force</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Task Force Meeting #2 and Community Open House** | • Introduce approach for identifying Avoidance, Minimization, Mitigation, and Enhancement (AMME) considerations<br>• Discuss avoidance and minimization considerations for developing corridor opportunities<br>• Discuss potential guiding principles for avoidance and minimization<br>• Receive public comment | October 2019
| **Task Force Meeting #3 and Community Open House** | • Review M-CORES vision and Task Force goals<br>• Highlight the data/fact sheets by various public agencies and organizational partners<br>• Review corridor planning and project development process<br>• Discuss purpose of the corridor<br>• Discuss regional and local needs<br>• Discuss the AMME considerations for community and economic resources<br>• Receive public comment | December 2019
| **Community Open Houses**     | • Community open houses in each study area to share information about the process and gather public input about AMME considerations                                                                     | January 2020
<p>| <strong>Task Force Meeting #4</strong>     | • Receive public comment summary to date&lt;br&gt;• Review economic and workforce development opportunities&lt;br&gt;• Review regional and local plans and visions to identify considerations for corridor planning&lt;br&gt;• Review corridor planning process&lt;br&gt;• Discuss draft AMME guiding principles and identify avoidance areas&lt;br&gt;• Receive public comment |
| February 2020                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #5</strong>&lt;br&gt;March-April 2020&lt;br&gt;Note: Task Force Meeting #5 conducted in person for Southwest-Central Florida Corridor Task Force and as a “virtual task force meeting” (distribution of presentations and materials) for Suncoast Corridor and Northern Turnpike Corridor Task Forces</td>
<td>• Discuss corridor utility needs and opportunities&lt;br&gt;• Discuss draft high-level needs summary&lt;br&gt;• Review public engagement activities and public input received to date&lt;br&gt;• Review additional data requested by Task Force and proposed Task Force avoidance comments&lt;br&gt;• Discuss existing corridor enhancement opportunities&lt;br&gt;• Refine draft AMME guiding principles&lt;br&gt;• Receive public comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Webinar #1</strong>&lt;br&gt;April 2020</td>
<td>• Receive update on Task Force activities&lt;br&gt;• Receive briefing on process for identifying avoidance and attraction areas as input to Task Force recommendations&lt;br&gt;• Describe “homework” process for receiving Task Force member input prior to next in-person meeting&lt;br&gt;• Receive public comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Webinar #2</strong>&lt;br&gt;May 2020</td>
<td>• Receive briefing on emerging technology trends and opportunities&lt;br&gt;• Discuss implications of emerging technologies for corridor development&lt;br&gt;• Receive public comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Webinar #3</strong>&lt;br&gt;June 2020</td>
<td>• Receive briefing on opportunities for coordination of broadband deployment with corridor development&lt;br&gt;• Obtain Task Force member input on implications for high-level needs and guiding principles&lt;br&gt;• Receive public comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Virtual Meeting #4</strong>&lt;br&gt;June 2020</td>
<td>• Receive update on Task Force work plan and recommendations framework&lt;br&gt;• Receive update on avoidance and attraction layers&lt;br&gt;• Refine high-level needs and guiding principles and identify potential instructions for project development and beyond&lt;br&gt;• Receive public comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By June 30, 2020</strong></td>
<td>• FDOT submits report on Construction Workforce Development Program to Governor and Legislature</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #6</strong>&lt;br&gt;July 2020</td>
<td>• Review public engagement activities&lt;br&gt;• Establish initial consensus on high-level needs&lt;br&gt;• Discuss and refine draft guiding principles&lt;br&gt;• Discuss draft instructions for project development and beyond&lt;br&gt;• Review draft report outline and report drafting process&lt;br&gt;• Review corridor planning activities&lt;br&gt;• Receive public comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>July 2020</strong></td>
<td>• Florida Transportation Commission presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
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| **Task Force Meeting #7 and Community Open House August 2020**          | • Discuss how Task Force recommendations will be used to identify and narrow paths/courses  
• Provide update on recommendations framework and work plan  
• Establish initial consensus on guiding principles  
• Discuss draft instructions for project development and beyond  
• Review draft Task Force report sections with focus on high-level needs  
• Receive public comment                                                                 |
| **Task Force Meeting #8 and Community Open House September 2020**       | • Provide update on public comments received to date  
• Discuss how Task Force recommendations will carry forward into planning and project development  
• Review draft Task Force recommendations and draft final report  
• Discuss draft plan for future FDOT activities  
• Discuss plans for Task Force and public comment on draft report  
• Receive public comment                                                                 |
| **September 29, 2020 – October 14, 2020**                              | • Public comment period on draft Task Force recommendations                                                                                                                                             |
| **Task Force Meeting #9 and Community Open House October 2020**         | • Receive public comments  
• Review summary of public comments on draft report  
• Discuss revisions to final draft Task Force report  
• Finalize Task Force report                                                                                                                |
| **By November 15, 2020**                                               | • Submit Task Force report to Governor and Legislature                                                                                                                                                |

Rev. 10/7/2020
APPENDIX C
Meeting Schedule and Locations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tampa</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Tampa Convention Center</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>333 S Franklin Street, Tampa, FL 33602</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, August 27, 2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Citrus County</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>College of Central Florida - Citrus Conference Center</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>3800 S Lecanto Highway, Lecanto, FL 34461</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 22, 2019</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Open House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Citrus County</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>College of Central Florida - Citrus Conference Center</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>3800 S Lecanto Highway, Lecanto, FL 34461</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 24, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Marion County</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Hilton Ocala</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>3600 SW 36th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34474</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 18, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Open House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sumter County</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Wildwood Community Center</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>6500 Powell Road, Wildwood, FL 34785</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 19, 2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Open Houses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, January 28, 2020 – (with Suncoast Corridor)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Levy County</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>College of Central Florida</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>15390 NW Hwy 19, Chiefland, FL 32626</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Open Houses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thursday, January 30, 2020 – (with Suncoast Corridor)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Citrus County Crystal River Armory</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>8551 W. Venable Street, Crystal River, FL 34429</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Levy County</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Suwannee River Fair Pavilion</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>17851 NW 90th Ave., Fanning Springs, FL 32693</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, February 12, 2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Online Modules (review of presentations and materials)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2020</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Webinar</strong></td>
<td><strong>Webinar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, April 29, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Webinar #2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Webinar</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, May 14, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Webinar #3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Webinar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 3, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force Virtual Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, June 25, 2020</td>
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<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virtual Meeting</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, July 22</td>
<td><strong>Public Viewing Location #1</strong></td>
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<td>Hilton Ocala</td>
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<td><strong>Public Viewing Location #2</strong></td>
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<td>Citrus County</td>
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<td>Building Alliance Banquet Hall</td>
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<td>1196 S Lecanto Highway, Lecanto, Florida 34461</td>
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<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virtual Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>Wednesday, August 26, 2020</td>
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<td>Sumter County Fairgrounds</td>
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<td>7620 State Road 471, Bushnell, FL 33513</td>
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<td>Crystal River, FL 34429</td>
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<td><strong>Community Open House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virtual Community Open House at FloridaMCORES.com</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #8</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, September 22, 2020</td>
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<td><strong>Community Open House</strong></td>
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<td>Wednesday, September 23, 2020</td>
<td><strong>Public comment period on draft Task Force report</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Task Force Meeting #9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virtual Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>Wednesday, October 21, 2020</td>
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<td>Crystal River, FL 34429</td>
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<td><strong>Task Force Report</strong></td>
<td><strong>Submit Task Force Report to Governor and Legislature</strong></td>
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<td>By November 15, 2020</td>
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Map showing the Northern Turnpike Meeting locations.

FloridaMCORES.com

Contact Information
Northern Turnpike Corridor Production Lead:
Jennifer Stults at Jennifer.Stults@dot.state.fl.us or (407) 264-3808
APPENDIX D
Board Resolutions and Letters from Municipalities
RESOLUTION NO. 2019-D14

A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA SUPPORTING THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SUNCOAST PARKWAY PROPOSED EXTENSION TO GEORGIA

WHEREAS, the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners is in support of the creation of three new multi-use corridors; the proposed Suncoast Parkway extension to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County and the Northern Turnpike Connector (Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway),

WHEREAS, these extensions of our existing infrastructure have been under consideration by the Department of Transportation and advocated by leaders of business and industry for many years,

WHEREAS, the Suncoast Parkway construction is currently underway in Citrus County. Work on the $134.6 million project began in April 2018 and is expected to wrap up in 2022 to State Road 44,

WHEREAS, the state is committing $86.6 million to design, buy rights of way, and build the additional 3 miles between State Road 44 and C.R. 486. That work could start in 2024,

WHEREAS, the possible extension of the Florida Turnpike northwest from Interstate 75 to the Suncoast Parkway,

WHEREAS, recognizing that the State population is predicted to increase by 6 million residents in ten years,

WHEREAS, recognizing the need for infrastructure, access to historic rural communities for revitalization and prosperity, and strategic planning for future population growth,

WHEREAS, recognizing the need to protect significant natural resources of the County, have the least impact on real estate owners in Citrus County, and preserves quality of life,

WHEREAS, recognizing the need for safe and expanded Evacuation Routes, as part of a holistic view of hardening our existing infrastructure,

WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of a comprehensive plan, set time schedule, consensus and partnership is vital to this important multi-county project,

WHEREAS, to ensure this plan takes a much broader approach by identifying management actions and input from a wide variety of stakeholders;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED- by the Board of County Commissioners of Citrus County, Florida in regular session this 12th day of February,
2019, as follows:

1. It is the intent of the Board of County Commissioners to support the proposed extension of the Suncoast Parkway to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County and the Northern Turnpike Connector (Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway).

2. Coordinate their efforts and resources to minimize congestion and backups on U.S. 19 and U.S. 41 with the extension of the Suncoast Parkway to the northern terminus of Citrus County and beyond to Georgia.

3. The Board does hereby request the support of the Governor Ron DeSantis, President of the Senate Bill Galvano, Speaker of the House Jose’ Oliva, Senator Wilton Simpson, Representative Ralph Massullo, Turnpike Authority and Transportation Secretary for the continuation of the Suncoast Parkway north through Citrus County, and beyond to Georgia.

4. The Clerk of the Board is hereby directed to forward a certified copy of this Resolution to Governor Ron DeSantis, President of the Senate Bill Galvano, Speaker of the House Jose’ Oliva, Senator Wilton Simpson, Representative Ralph Massullo, Turnpike Authority and Transportation Secretary.

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA
BY:

JEFF KINNARD, D.C., CHAIRMAN
BRIAN COLEMAN, 1st VICECHAIR
SCOTT CARNAHAN, 2nd VICECHAIR
JIMMIE T. SMITH
RONALD E. KITCHEN JR

APPROVED AS TO FORM FOR THE RELIANCE OF CITRUS COUNTY

DENISE A. DYMOND LYN
COUNTY ATTORNEY
March 1, 2019

Representative Dr. Ralph Masullo
4067 N. Lecanto Hwy
Beverly Hills, FL 34465

Enclosed is a certified copy of Resolution Number 2019-014 adopted by the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners at their meeting held on February 12, 2019, supporting the Florida Department of Transportation Suncoast Parkway proposed extension to Georgia.

Respectfully,

Angela Vick, Clerk

By: Amy Charley, Deputy Clerk

Enclosure
RESOLUTION
2020-022

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA, REQUESTING THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR RON DESANTIS AND THE SECRETARY OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT TO ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT A "NO BUILD" OPTION FOR THE PORTIONS OF THE MULTI-USE CORRIDORS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE KNOWN AS THE SUNCOAST CONNECTOR AND THE NORTHERN TURNPIKE CONNECTOR THAT MAY BE PROPOSED THROUGH LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA.

WHEREAS, in its 2019 session, the Florida legislature passed Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 7068, which was signed into law by Governor DeSantis on May 17, 2019, the text of which is reflected in several sections of the Florida Statutes, primarily Section 338.2278, Fla. Stat., and which created the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance ("M-CORES") Program within the Florida Department of Transportation ("FDOT"); and

WHEREAS, the stated purpose of the M-CORES Program "is to revitalize rural communities, encourage job creation, and provide regional connectivity while leveraging technology, enhancing quality of life and public safety, and protecting the environment and natural resources"; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES Program proposes to extend certain transportation corridors within the State as tolled facilities and approved turnpike projects as part of the FDOT turnpike system in order to fulfill its stated purpose, which corridors include the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector; and

WHEREAS, Levy County is among the counties included in the proposed extension areas of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES Program requires the use of a Task Force for each corridor as part of an inclusive, consensus-building mechanism for design of the corridors, and for each Task Force to conduct public meetings and prepare a report to present to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives with its evaluations on environmental and economic
impacts, hurricane evacuation impacts and land use impacts of the Task Force's respective corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Suncoast Connector and Northern Turnpike Connector Task Forces, each of which contain a Levy County Commissioner as a member, are also tasked with evaluating design features of their respective corridors and the need for acquiring state lands for mitigation related to water quality/quantity of certain water bodies, agricultural land uses and wildlife habitat, and to include those evaluations in their respective reports; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES Program contains deadlines for start of construction and for opening of the M-CORES corridors, which deadlines do not require FDOT to complete design of corridor routes or construction design for the corridors in sufficient time for those designs to be considered by the Task Forces in their respective reports; and

WHEREAS, the process and timelines for design and construction for the proposed M-CORES corridor extensions do not follow or take into account established and publicly transparent processes normally used for design and construction of FDOT projects of this magnitude, and do not provide adequate opportunity for public input through the Task Force public meetings on precise routes or construction design for the corridor extensions, since those routes and designs will not be established in time to be considered in the Task Force public meetings and reports; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Levy County and the Board of County Commissioners (the “Board”) value the environmental assets in the County, including Manatee Springs, Fanning Springs, the Suwannee River and other water bodies, and the Goethe Forest, the Lower Suwannee Wildlife Refuge, the Cedar Key State Preserve and Waccasassa Bay State Preserve, all of which provide valuable habitat to plants and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Levy County and the Board also value the agricultural assets in the County, including the expanses of rural land put to work in the agriculture industry, which land is worked hard by farmers and ranchers in the timber, peanut, watermelon, cattle and other agricultural commodities industries, without which Levy County would lose a valuable part of its culture and heritage; and

WHEREAS, without provision for adequate public input in the M-CORES Program process, and without adequate timing of deadlines for design of routes and construction for the corridors, the Board is not able to fully consider the wishes of the citizens of Levy County or to effectively provide recommendations or review of the proposed extensions of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector through Levy County, either as an independent body or through its members that sit on those corridors’ Task Forces; and
impacts, hurricane evacuation impacts and land use impacts of the Task Force’s respective corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Suncoast Connector and Northern Turnpike Connector Task Forces, each of which contain a Levy County Commissioner as a member, are also tasked with evaluating design features of their respective corridors and the need for acquiring state lands for mitigation related to water quality/quantity of certain water bodies, agricultural land uses and wildlife habitat, and to include those evaluations in their respective reports; and

WHEREAS, the M-CORES Program contains deadlines for start of construction and for opening of the M-CORES corridors, which deadlines do not require FDOT to complete design of corridor routes or construction design for the corridors in sufficient time for those designs to be considered by the Task Forces in their respective reports; and

WHEREAS, the process and timelines for design and construction for the proposed M-CORES corridor extensions do not follow or take into account established and publicly transparent processes normally used for design and construction of FDOT projects of this magnitude, and do not provide adequate opportunity for public input through the Task Force public meetings on precise routes or construction design for the corridor extensions, since those routes and designs will not be established in time to be considered in the Task Force public meetings and reports; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Levy County and the Board of County Commissioners (the “Board”) value the environmental assets in the County, including Manatee Springs, Fanning Springs, the Suwannee River and other water bodies, and the Goethe Forest, the Lower Suwannee Wildlife Refuge, the Cedar Key State Preserve and Waccasassa Bay State Preserve, all of which provide valuable habitat to plants and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Levy County and the Board also value the agricultural assets in the County, including the expanse of rural land put to work in the agriculture industry, which land is worked hard by farmers and ranchers in the timber, peanut, watermelon, cattle and other agricultural commodities industries, without which Levy County would lose a valuable part of its culture and heritage; and

WHEREAS, without provision for adequate public input in the M-CORES Program process, and without adequate timing of deadlines for design of routes and construction for the corridors, the Board is not able to fully consider the wishes of the citizens of Levy County or to effectively provide recommendations or review of the proposed extensions of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector through Levy County, either as an independent body or through its members that sit on those corridors’ Task Forces; and
CITY OF CEDAR KEY
RESOLUTION NUMBER 436

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CEDAR KEY, FLORIDA, OPPOSING THE M-CORES PROPOSAL

WHEREAS, on May 17, 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill (SB) 7068 into law, redirecting nearly $100 million each year from the General Purpose Fund, and borrowing billions of dollars more in creating the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) Program within the FDOT, with the stated purpose of advancing construction of regional corridors that will accommodate multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure to accommodate population growth; and

WHEREAS, one component of the M-CORES proposal is the Suncoast Connector constructing an additional tollroad connecting the Suncoast Parkway in Citrus County to the Georgia border in Jefferson County while bisecting Levy County.

WHEREAS, the City of Cedar Key recognizes the resultant negative impact on the important rural agricultural and natural lands which are essential to a long-term sustainable employment economy and preservation of the unique sociological culture along the Nature Coast.

WHEREAS, the City of Cedar Key recognizes the resultant negative impacts this unwarranted development would inflict on the aquifer recharge areas and coastal water quality crucial to our aquaculture industry.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission of the City of Cedar Key, Florida does formally oppose the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance proposal, by a vote of 4 in favor and 1 against.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 21 day of JANUARY, 2020.

ATTEST:
Crystal Sharp, City Clerk

LEGAL REVIEW:
Norm D. Fugate, City Attorney

CITY OF CEDAR KEY, FLORIDA,
Heath Davis, Mayor
July 13, 2020

Florida Department of Transportation
M-CORES Northern Turnpike Connector Task Force
605 Suwannee Street, MS 54
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Turnpike Connector

The Dunnellon City Council would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to the M-CORES Task Force for the time and effort you have placed in evaluating the need for the Northern Turnpike Connector corridor and its potential economic and environmental impacts.

The task force was specifically charged with studying how project design and land acquisition can mitigate the impact of construction on the water quality and quantity of springs, rivers and aquifer recharge areas; agricultural land uses; and wildlife habitat.

Please accept this letter as a reminder that the City of Dunnellon and its greater outlying areas is not a viable option for any toll road or turnpike connector.

The Dunnellon area is completely surrounded by the Rainbow River, a spring fed river and Outstanding Water Way, the Withiacocchee River, and a natural habitat and sanctuary for an abundance of many species of wildlife.

Any such consideration will jeopardize this natural spring shed area and be detrimental to our aquifer recharge areas.

Please protect this pristine southwest area of Marion County and do not allow the destruction or degradation of our natural resources and wildlife.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dale Burns
Mayor
May 04, 2020

Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS 54
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Suncoast Highway

To whom it may concern:

The Town of Yankeetown has a vested interest in the extension of the Suncoast extension. The Town’s opinion is that all facts and information is critical for us to fully understand the impact. While Levy County has expressed by Resolution their feelings, as a Municipality we do not at this time share the same sentiment. If the Suncoast Extension becomes a reality the Town Council would want to share its desires and request assistance that will come from the economic development requirements that would most likely affect the Town and Southern Levy County. It is for this reason the Town Council voted and approved the following economic development projects for consideration.

- Construct access and exit ramps and to have proper signage to provide travelers access and direction to the Town and the Gulf access points and to Yankeetown Commercial and business district, as well as its Boat Ramps and ECO-Tourism locations.

- Acquisition of land for the development of additional Town Parking lots to eliminate on street parking.

- Additional assistance in grant finding outside of normal channels for a Regional Sewer and Waste Water Treatment Plant serving not only Yankeetown but also Inglis and parts of Southern Levy County.

- Funding for water quality improvements including pump out stations at marinas in the Town, and assistance in additional funding to replace aged water mains in the town consisting of Asbestos and Cast Iron.

- Enhance existing roadways in the Town and improve storm water drainage issues on County Road 40.

On behalf of the entire Town Council, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to voice and express our opinions and future needs as this Suncoast Connector project moves forward.
Please contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Jack H. Schofield, II
Mayor, Town of Yankeetown

Cc: Levy County Administrator
   Levy County Commissioner District 1
   Levy County Commissioner District 2
   Levy County Commissioner District 3
   Levy County Commissioner District 4
   M. Cores
May 21, 2020

Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS 54
Tallahassee, Fl. 32399

RE: Suncoast Connector

To Whom It May Concern,

If the final route for the Suncoast Connector toll road is in Levy County, it will greatly affect Williston with an increase of traffic flow. The City Council has agreed the need for assistance for the following economic development projects for your consideration. The City Council hereby requests further discussion should the following economic development projects be considered.

1. A traffic bypass, especially for the larger trucks, around the City that would allow for safe pedestrian traffic within the City.

2. The need for new infrastructure under Noble Ave., Hwy 27/41, due to probable increased deterioration because of increased traffic under the existing road.

3. Re-design of the intersection at Noble Ave. and Main Street which would also allow for safer pedestrian traffic within the City.

On behalf of the Williston City Council, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to voice our concerns regarding the increased traffic probability within the City.

Sincerely,

Jerry Robinson, Mayor

The mission of the City of Williston is to offer an efficient affordable and safe place to live, work and play.

Mayor -- JERRY ROBINSON / President -- CHARLES GOODMAN
Vice President -- JUSTIN HEAD
Council members / DEBRA F. JONES -- MARGUERITE ROBINSON -- ELIHU ROSS
City Manager -- SCOTT L. LIPPMAN / City Clerk -- LATRICIA WRIGHT
July 7, 2020

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
605 SUWANEE STREET, MS5
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, 32399

RE: SUNCOAST CONNECTOR INQUIRY

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Town of Bronson is in receipt of your notification regarding possible state road routes and invitation to provide local perspective relating thereto. They have directed me, as Town Attorney, to forward this response.

In general, Bronson is hopeful and optimistic about potential improved access. We are a small municipality, but the seat of Levy County, strategically located and interested in orderly, measured, constructive and controlled growth. It is Bronson's feeling that upgraded road service, properly located and designed with appropriate exit and entry points, could be a boon.

If this should come to pass, here are the things that would be factors in maximizing the value, convenience and public advantage to be achieved and where State assistance would be a critical factor:

- A configuration that would allow the road to serve its connecting function without significantly impeding or obstructing local vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- The acquisition of land and any related infrastructure for the creation of a regional industrial park facility to spur local activity and employment prospects.
- Assistance with improvements to our water and sewer facilities so that they have clear capacity to serve controlled growth.
- The availability of support for continuing moderate growth and expansion consistent with improved access and calculated to serve the best interests of the community and the region.
It is our conviction that the overall logistical interest would be served by a correction of the drainage problem that was caused by the expansion of US Alt 27 in the early 2000's. We would propose concrete channeling and a retention area as is done in other cases.

Another item raised by Bronson's Town Council is the specific location of on and off ramps with a view to annexation of the adjacent areas and the tax benefits that would yield.

We thank you for the opportunity to have input in this process and look forward to further exchanges of information and advice.

Respectfully,

STEVEN WARM, ESQUIRE
SW:mol
April 28, 2020

Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS 54
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Suncoast Connector

To Whom It May Concern;

If the final route for the Suncoast Connector toll road is located in or near Chiefland it will greatly affect the City and it is for this reason the City Commission voted unanimously on the following economic development projects for consideration.

- Construct access and exit ramps to provide travelers access to Chiefland's Commercial and Industrial business district.
- Acquisition of land for the development of an Industrial/Business Park with direct access to US 19/SR 55.
- Acquisition of 100+ acres of land for expansion of the City wastewater infrastructure system in North Chiefland.
- Enhance existing roadways in the City.

On behalf of the entire City Commission, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to voice our future needs as this Suncoast Connector project moves forward.

Please contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Chris Jones
Mayor-Commissioner

214 East Park Avenue, Chiefland, Florida 32626 * (352) 493-6711 * Facsimile (352) 493-6714 * cityhall@chieflandfla.com
RESOLUTION 2019-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE HERNANDO/CITRUS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING THE CREATION OF THREE NEW MULTI-USE CORRIDORS TO SERVE RURAL AREAS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA

WHEREAS, the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has consistently expressed the importance of extending the Suncoast Parkway to the north beyond Citrus County; and,

WHEREAS, On December 12, 2018, the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) reiterated to the Florida Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) the importance of a future continuation of the Suncoast Parkway to the north; and,

WHEREAS, terminating the Suncoast Parkway at the planned extension to CR 486 would create significant traffic increases in Citrus County; and,

WHEREAS, the Federally required safety and travel time reliability performance measures are key to accomplishing economic development and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of Hernando and Citrus Counties; and,

WHEREAS, on January 30, 2019, Senator Bill Galvano, President of the Florida Senate, issued a memorandum advocating for critical infrastructure enhancements to assist in revitalizing rural communities, and enhancing public safety; and,

WHEREAS, Senator Galvano identified the need to create three new multi-use corridors in rural areas of regional economic significance to include the extension of the Suncoast Parkway to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County, and the Northern Turnpike Connector.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization Board, duly assembled in regular session on this 19th day of February 2019, as follows:

1. The MPO Board supports the proposed extension of the Suncoast Parkway to Georgia, Polk County to Collier County, and the Northern Turnpike Connector (Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway).
2. The Clerk of the MPO Board is hereby directed to forward an executed copy of this Resolution to Governor Ron DeSantis and President of the Senate Bill Galvano.

HERNANDO/CITRUS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Attest:

(SIGNATURE)

Hernando/Citrus MPO Chairman

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY

BY

MPO Attorney
October 21, 2020

Jennifer Stults, AICP CTP, CPM, FCCM
Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise
(407) 264-3808
Jennifer.Stults@dot.state.fl.us

RE: Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES)

Dear Ms. Stults:

The City of Inverness received a presentation from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) at the October 20, 2020 meeting of City Council regarding the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program put forth by the State Legislature. We understand the importance of long-range transportation planning exercises such as the (M-CORES). Though the City of Inverness does not have direct representation on the task force, we appreciate the opportunity to engage in the process by way of the aforementioned presentation and the receiving of the City Council’s and Mayor’s public comments therein.

The M-CORES task force has developed certain guidelines and suggest that a corridor be considered sharing the FDOT facility known as Highway 44 through the heart of the City of Inverness. The City of Inverness enjoys many accolades, recognitions, and awards for its efforts in redevelopment of the downtown and associated Highway 44 corridor therein. This was a direct result of previous expansion by the FDOT of Highway 44 some 30 years prior that brought about great impact to the economic viability of the City. Today we are a “Small Town Done Right” and seek to only further our mission to maintain the high quality of life and economic well-being of good planning and smart growth.

Respectfully, please allow this letter to serve as the City’s official opposition to any further consideration of a future regional corridor expansion sharing the Highway 44 facility as a limited access or toll road type facility through the City of Inverness. Whereas we understand the need to look at all variables, the City cannot support any corridors through the City that bring about repeat circumstance of potential economic, environmental, and quality of life harm to its residents, businesses, and patronage. However, we do look forward to the opportunity to review and support alternative corridors, brought forward as part of the M-CORES program, for the proper economic uplift and smart growth principles within the four-county study area.
We trust that this correspondence will be made part of any final report and/or findings of the M-CORES program. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Eric C. Williams, GISP
City Manager

Cc: City Council and Mayor of Inverness
Citrus County Board of County Commissioners
Jeff Arms, HDR / FDOT Consultant
Sam Wagoner, Sunshine Consulting Group
Shawn Foster, Sunshine Consulting Group
November 3, 2020

Jared Perdue, Chair and District 5 Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation
719 S. Woodland Blvd
DeLand, FL 32720

RE: M-CORES Northern Turnpike Connector

Dear Mr. Perdue:

As the M-CORES Northern Turnpike Connector Task Force effort comes to a close and the Final Report is prepared for delivery to Governor DeSantis, Senate President Galvano and Representative Oliva, it is important for Marion County to reiterate our position regarding a Multi-use Corridor of Regional Economic Significance (F.S. 338.2278) in our community.

As Marion County was not to be part of the Northern Turnpike Extension’s original study area, our request to participate in the Task Force should not be perceived as a request to be included in the study area, but instead as engaged, informed and protective of our community’s best interest. It is imperative that the Turnpike extension not disturb Florida’s vitally significant resources in our community, Marion County wants to continue to be involved in any and all decisions related to this important initiative by the state.

During the course of our participation, I hope that it has been made clear that our resources to Florida’s citizens are more significant than just being a hub to major transportation corridors. Our Farmland Preservation Area is truly unique. Soils within this area are essential to our continued ability to represent the state as the “Horse Capital of the World.” We are home to three First-magnitude springs and countless other springs that have a worldwide reputation. These springs brought many of Florida’s first visitors and their source provides drinking water for millions of residents today. Lastly, the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway (Greenway) stretches through Marion County providing an excellent wildlife corridor and numerous recreational uses. Marion County is the Florida we all remember and the Florida we want to keep.

We appreciate having a seat on the Task Force and being a party to the conversations and consensus building that the Florida Department of Transportation has worked diligently to achieve. COVID-19 has made it a challenging year to maintain business in a manner viewed by all as open, accessible and timely. I commend you and your staff for upholding the public process and providing avenues that allowed for continued engagement. I particularly appreciate that we met the original timeline to deliver a document that can be vetted further.
As I stated in the Northern Turnpike Connector Task Force Meeting #9, I would like for this letter to be included in Appendix D in the M-Cores Northern Turnpike Final Task Force Report.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and Marion County’s position on protection of our resources.

Sincerely,

Kathy Bryant, Chairman
Marion County Board of County Commissioners

c: Jeff Gold, Vice Chairman
    David Moore, Commissioner
    Carl Zalak III, Commissioner
    Michelle Stone, Commissioner
    Mounir Bouyounes, PE, County Administrator
    Tracy Straub, PE, County Engineer