

NORTHERN TURNPIKE CONNECTOR TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT

November 15, 2020

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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

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

- Suncoast Corridor, extending from Citrus County to Jefferson County;
- Northern Turnpike Corridor, extending from the northern terminus of the Florida Turnpike northwest to the Suncoast Parkway; and
- Southwest-Central Florida Corridor, extending from Collier County to Polk County.

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 colocation 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;

- 1 • holding public meetings in each local government jurisdiction in which a project in the
2 identified corridor is being considered; and
- 3 • issuing its evaluations in a final report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the
4 Speaker of the House of Representatives.

5 This report summarizes the activities and recommendations of the Northern Turnpike Corridor Task
6 Force.

7 Due to the early stage of planning for this corridor and the limited data and analysis on potential need
8 and impacts available at this time, the Task Force was not able to fully address its charge of
9 evaluating the need for and impacts of the Northern Turnpike Corridor. The Task Force identified a
10 series of potential high-level needs for future evaluation by FDOT and developed recommendations
11 for how FDOT should assess the need for a corridor of the scale specified in statute. The Task Force
12 did not reach a conclusion based on the information available at this time that there is a specific need
13 for a completely new greenfield corridor on land through the study area to achieve the statutory
14 purpose. The Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or expansion of existing major
15 highway corridors or existing major linear utility corridors. The Task Force acknowledged the process
16 for FDOT to consider a “no build” alternative in future project development activities until a final
17 recommendation about each specific project is made. The Task Force developed guiding principles,
18 instructions, and an action plan as a set of recommendations to FDOT and other partners for future
19 planning, project development, and implementation activities related to the
20 M-CORES Program.

21 In completing this report, the Task Force’s intent is to provide consensus recommendations for how
22 FDOT can work with local governments and other agencies and partners to carry out the M-CORES
23 Program as specified in s. 338.2278, F.S. Consensus on the report does not constitute agreement by
24 all Task Force members that at this phase in program delivery, project-specific needs or
25 environmental and economic feasibility are fully developed. Rather, the report is intended to provide
26 consensus recommendations for how needs should be evaluated and how corridor development and
27 related activities should move forward to implement the statute and support the environment, quality
28 of life, and prosperity of the study area and the state.

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

1 TASK FORCE OVERVIEW

2 MEMBERSHIP

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

7 MEETINGS

8 The Task Force met 13 times between August
9 2019 and October 2020 through nine Task
10 Force meetings and four webinars or virtual
11 meetings. Over the course of 15 months, the
12 Task Force reviewed data, trends, and issues;
13 discussed key considerations for planning
14 transportation corridors, including specific
15 issues as identified in the Florida Statute (see
16 box); and received and reviewed public input.
17 Subject-matter experts joined the Task Force
18 meetings to provide information related to
19 specific aspects of the Task Force's charge,
20 including community planning, economic and
21 workforce development, agriculture,
22 environmental resources, broadband and
23 utilities, emerging technology, and emergency
24 management. The Task Force developed
25 specific recommendations related to
26 identifying and evaluating high-level needs
27 related to the statutory purpose, as well as
28 guiding principles and instructions for
29 advancing corridor development and related
30 activities to help address these needs, as
31 documented in subsequent sections of this
32 report. The Task Force also recommended an
33 action plan for moving forward.

34 In March 2020, some unique challenges arose
35 resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The
36 Task Force adapted meeting formats to
37 comply with the Governor's Executive Order
38 Number 20-122. The later Task Force
39 meetings were designed with a combination of
40 virtual and in-person locations for both Task
41 Force members and the public to participate
42 (see **Appendix B** for Work Plan and
43 **Appendix C** for Meeting Locations).

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.

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

5 DATA AND MAPPING TOOLS

6 FDOT staff developed and maintained a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool to provide the
7 Task Force access to a wide variety of data on existing demographic, economic, land use,
8 environmental, infrastructure, and other resources in the study area. This tool was specifically used to
9 help identify areas where direct impacts from corridors should be avoided, as well as areas where a
10 connection to a corridor may be appropriate for future evaluation. FDOT staff conducted one-on-one
11 technical briefings to provide Task Force members with a tutorial of the GIS tool and to discuss data-
12 related questions. The Task Force used the GIS tool to help understand the relationship between
13 draft guiding principles, draft instructions, and potential corridor location decisions. Task Force
14 members suggested that other data sources related to conservation lands, water resources, and
15 wildlife habitat be included in the tool as GIS layers for Task Force discussion to support development
16 of guiding principles and instructions.

17 The GIS tool served as a living instrument and was updated based on feedback and suggestions
18 from the Task Force members. The GIS tool remains publicly accessible at all times on the project
19 website (www.FloridaMCORES.com) and through a mobile-friendly format.

20 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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

26 Opportunities for public engagement were included at each Task Force meeting through a dedicated
27 public comment period, and comment stations were set up to receive written comments. In-person
28 Task Force meetings were held in Tampa (Hillsborough County), Lecanto (Citrus County), Ocala
29 (Marion County) and Fanning Springs (Levy County). All of the Task Force meetings and webinars
30 were broadcast live on The Florida Channel, and recordings were posted on the project website for
31 members of the public who could not attend in person. The public could also attend the webinars and
32 hybrid meetings virtually through the GoToWebinar platform. Overall, a total of # people attended the
33 in-person meetings and # people attended the webinars and meetings virtually. # people provided
34 public comments at Task Force meetings.

35 To further public engagement, seven Community Open Houses were held in Lecanto (Citrus County),
36 Wildwood (Sumter County), Chiefland (Levy County), Crystal River (Citrus County), and Bushnell
37 (Sumter County) to share information about the process and receive public input. Due to the COVID-
38 19 pandemic, the last three Community Open Houses were held in a combination of in-person and
39 virtual meetings. At the Community Open Houses, members of the public could directly ask questions
40 of FDOT staff, view informational material, and experience hands-on use of the GIS tool. A total of #
41 people participated in the seven open houses.

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

4 These comments varied from concerns over the development of these corridors due to their potential
5 environmental, community, and financial impacts to support for the corridors due to their potential
6 transportation, economic development, and quality of life benefits. In addition, there was significant
7 concern about the timing of this process given the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Force was
8 provided with periodic summaries of the comments received as well as copies of all comments, so
9 this public input could be considered in the development and refinement of the Task Force's
10 recommendations. The majority of the comments submitted through the various forms expressed
11 opposition or concern about the corridor. Common themes of the public comments received include:

- 12 • Environment and Land Conservation
 - 13 ○ Avoid habitat fragmentation by preserving habitat and wildlife corridors
 - 14 ○ Avoid action that can promulgate invasive species
 - 15 ○ Protect water resources including wetlands, aquifers, springsheds and watersheds
 - 16 ○ Avoid disturbing existing conservation lands and considering acquisition of lands
17 important to wildlife habitat, water resources, and ecological connectivity.
- 18 • Quality of Life and Economic Opportunity
 - 19 ○ Preserve rural and agricultural character
 - 20 ○ Balance rural character with the need for economic development
 - 21 ○ Support agricultural activities by considering productive agricultural lands as well
22 supply chain logistics
 - 23 ○ Do not promote urban sprawl
 - 24 ○ Protect, expand and promote ecotourism
- 25 • Corridor Considerations
 - 26 ○ Prioritize improvements to existing highways and interstates, co-locate with existing
27 highways and add capacity as needed, thoughtfully design corridors and interchanges
28 to minimize impacts.
 - 29 ○ Provide congestion relief during hurricane evacuation, assess existing road adequacy
30 for hurricane evacuation, support sheltering, and improve evacuation routes in the
31 center of the state.
 - 32 ○ Concern over equity impacts of tolling and support for tolling as an alternative to other
33 funding sources
 - 34 ○ Assist communities in securing high-speed internet and cellular coverage, expand
35 broadband without constructing a new road and support utility connection opportunities
36 for water and sewer

- 1 ○ Multi-modal transportation considerations which include high-speed rail and alternative
- 2 modes of transportation, expanding public transit services, impacts of connected and
- 3 autonomous vehicles, and improving bike and pedestrian safety.
- 4 ○ Consideration of no-build option to avoid potential impacts.

5 Comments specific to the Northern Turnpike Corridor were concerns about urban sprawl threatening
6 rural style and wildlife of the Nature Coast; need for accessible internet for regional communities;
7 limiting routes through central Florida; concerns that tolls will negatively impact local residents; need
8 to minimize impacts to the aquifer, Rainbow Springs watershed, and Outstanding Florida Springs;
9 and suggestion to co-locate the corridor along US 19/98 or US 41.

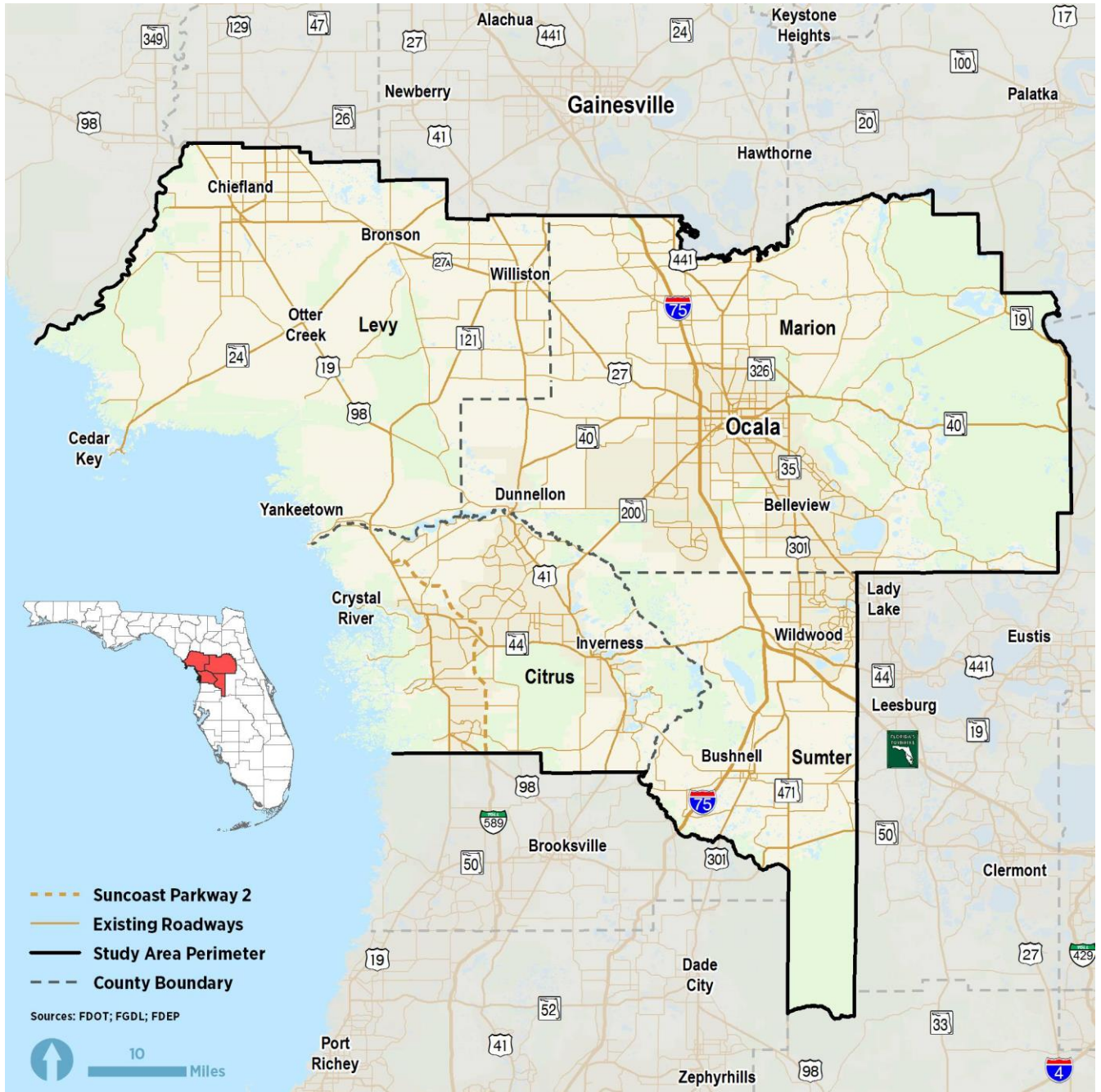
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11

12 The draft Task Force report was posted for a 15-day public comment period from September 19-
13 October 14, 2020. A total of # members of the public submitted a total of # comments during that
14 period. A copy of these comments and a summary of the key themes was provided to the Task Force
15 at its final meeting. Common themes of this round of comments included (to be provided at meeting
16 #9).

17 In addition to engaging the public, FDOT conducted active engagement with partners. FDOT gave #
18 presentations to interested agencies and organizations at their workshops, meetings, and
19 conferences. FDOT staff also attended metropolitan planning organization, regional planning council,
20 and local government board meetings to share updates on the Task Force’s process and answer
21 questions. The Task Force also considered board resolutions and letters from local governments and
22 MPOs. The Citrus County Board of County Commissioners and Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan
23 Planning Organization expressed general support for the M-CORES Program. The City of Cedar Key
24 expressed opposition to the M-CORES Program. The City of Dunnellon requested avoidance of the
25 city due to environmental concerns. The Levy County Board of County Commissioners requests
26 implementation of a no-build option for any portion of M-CORES that may be proposed in Levy
27 County. The Town of Yankeetown, City of Williston, Town of Bronson, and City of Chiefland all
28 requested support regarding economic development and access opportunities, and the desire for
29 future coordination.

1 **STUDY AREA OVERVIEW**

2 The Northern Turnpike Corridor extends from the northern terminus of the Florida's Turnpike in
3 Sumter County northwest to the Suncoast Parkway. The study area covers more than 3,800 square
4 miles encompassing all of Levy, Sumter, Citrus, and Marion Counties. Major population centers within
5 the study area include Ocala with over 60,000 residents, followed by Inverness, Wildwood, Crystal
6 River, and Dunnellon. **Figure 1** depicts the study area.



7 **Figure 1. Northern Turnpike Corridor Study Area**

1 ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

2 The study area is rich in natural land and water assets that support significant fish, wildlife, and plant
3 populations, many of which are endemic to Florida.

- 4 • Approximately 40 percent of the study area is held in public and private conservation,
5 according to data from Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI).¹ Major tracts of conservation
6 lands include Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve, Ross Prairie State Forest, Potts Preserve, Half
7 Moon Wildlife Management Area, Flying Eagle Preserve, Lake Panasoffkee Conservation
8 Tract, Goethe State Forest, Withlacoochee State Forest, Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve,
9 Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, Ocala National Forest, Cedar Key Scrub State
10 Reserve, Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park, Crystal River Preserve State Park, and
11 Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area.
- 12 • Thirty-five percent of the study area has been identified as critical linkages in the Florida
13 Ecological Greenways Network that connects conservation lands across the state and
14 provides opportunities to connect existing gaps in the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
- 15 • Agricultural lands in the study area are mainly used for cropland, nursery, greenhouse,
16 floriculture, pasture, rangeland, and woodland. Apart from agriculture operations, these lands
17 are important for protection of the ecological functions of various natural resources. Some
18 agricultural lands are preserved through the acquisition of permanent agricultural land
19 conservation easements under the Florida Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.
- 20 • Twenty-two percent of the study area is covered by coastal, freshwater, lake, and riverine
21 wetlands. For instance, the Cedar Key area has extensive wetland ecosystems and is part of
22 the northeast Gulf of Mexico shoreline, which contains about 60 percent of the coastal and
23 freshwater marshes in the United States.
- 24 • There are four aquatic preserves in the study area, including the Big Bend Seagrasses
25 Aquatic Preserve, which is the largest aquatic preserve and one of the most pristine places in
26 Florida.
- 27 • The study area has more than 200 springs that support diverse ecosystems, including Silver
28 Springs, Rainbow Springs, Kings Springs, Homosassa Springs and Chassahowitzka Springs,
29 which are classified as first magnitude springs, discharging at least 64 million gallons of water
30 per day.
- 31 • Parts of the study area serve as primary recharge areas for the Floridan Aquifer. There are
32 numerous rivers and lake systems, including the Withlacoochee River, which forms the
33 boundary between Citrus County and the other three counties in the study area.
- 34 • Notable federal and state-listed threatened and endangered species within the study area are
35 the West Indian manatee, eastern black rail, Florida scrub jay, gopher tortoise, eastern indigo
36 snake, and loggerhead sea turtle.

¹ https://www.fnai.org/pdf/MAxCounty_202003.pdf

1 COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

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

- 4 • The estimated total 2019 population of Levy, Sumter, Citrus and Marion Counties was
5 678,128. Projected population growth varies by county through 2045. Sumter County's
6 population is projected to grow at more than twice the statewide overall growth rate, while
7 Citrus, Levy, and Marion Counties are projected to grow below the statewide rate. **Table 1**
8 shows actual 2010, estimated 2019, projected 2020, and projected 2045 population for each
9 county using mid-range projections.

10 **Table 1. Existing and Projected Population**

County	Census 2010	Estimates 2019	Projections		Projected Growth 2019 - 2045
			2020	2045	
Citrus	141,236	147,744	149,400	177,300	20%
Levy	40,801	41,330	41,600	45,500	10%
Marion	331,298	360,421	365,900	460,800	28%
Sumter	93,420	128,633	132,300	211,500	64%
Florida	18,801,310	21,208,589	21,556,000	27,266,900	28%

11 Source: University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research²

- 12 • Per capita personal income levels in Marion, Citrus, and Levy Counties fell below the
13 statewide level of \$50,070 for 2018.³ Sumter County per capita personal income was above
14 the statewide level.
- 15 • Marion, Citrus, and Levy Counties experienced poverty rates above the statewide average of
16 13.7 percent in 2018, with Levy County having the highest rate in the study area. Sumter
17 County's poverty rate is below the statewide average at 9.3 percent.⁴
- 18 • The study area's Bachelor's degree attainment is also below the statewide average of 29
19 percent; Sumter County is the exception at 31 percent.⁵
- 20 • There are two public colleges in the study area. The College of Central Florida has campuses
21 in Citrus County, Levy County, and Marion County. Lake-Sumter State College has a campus
22 in Sumter County.
- 23 • Within the study area, there are 127 buildings that are listed or eligible for listing in the
24 National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, there are seven historic bridges and several
25 historic cemeteries and archaeological sites.
- 26 • The predominant land uses within the study area are agriculture, conservation lands, public
27 institution, and residential. These land uses are consistent with regional planning councils'

² [The University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Florida Population Studies, Volume 53, Bulletin 186, January 2020](#)

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 \(SAIPE\)](#)

⁵ [US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014-2018, Table S1501](#)

1 strategic regional policy plans, MPOs' long range transportation plans, and local government
2 comprehensive plans.

- 3 • Future land use elements of the study area's local government comprehensive plans describe
4 future development patterns such as corridor planning zones, economic activity centers, urban
5 growth boundaries, interchange management areas, conservation areas, spring protection
6 zones, and Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs). Areas where growth is desired are near
7 SR 44 and CR 486 in Citrus County; I-75, SR 200, US 301, and SR 35 in Marion County; and
8 The Villages in Sumter County.
- 9 • Marion County has established a Farmland Preservation Area in northwest Marion County
10 (outside the Urban Growth Boundary) to manage growth and protect the area's valuable soils,
11 water, and springsheds.

12 **ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

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

- 15 • The predominant industries in terms of employment in Levy, Sumter, Citrus, and Marion
16 Counties are trade, transportation, and utilities; professional and business services;
17 construction and mining; education and services; leisure and hospitality; and financial
18 services.⁶
- 19 • Agriculture, forestry, and fishing are significant as the study area is rich in timber and marine
20 fishery resources. These resources also provide opportunities in the state's growing
21 agritourism and ecotourism industries.
- 22 • Trade, transportation, and utilities industry sectors employ approximately one-fifth of the
23 workforce within the study area.⁷ The agriculture, silviculture, manufacturing, distribution, and
24 tourism and recreation industries in the region also rely on the interregional multimodal
25 transportation system that connects various destinations within the study area, provides
26 mobility options, and enables interregional interactions that support both the local and state
27 economy.
- 28 • A portion of the study area has a relatively diverse and growing manufacturing industry.
29 Manufacturing industry firms in the study area include Signature Brands for E-ONE and
30 Krausz Industries. AutoZone and FedEx Ground are among logistics and distribution
31 companies that have facilities in Marion County. Additionally, CSX has designated the
32 Ocala/Marion County Commerce Park in Ocala as a rail-served, ready-to-build location for
33 industrial development and expansion.
- 34 • Employment centers are concentrated in urbanized areas because of population density;
35 presence of a diverse workforce; and access to healthcare, entertainment, education, and
36 communication services.

⁶ [Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#)

⁷ [Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#)

- 1 • Levy County is part of the North Central Rural Area of Opportunity, designated by Executive
2 Order 11-81. Each county in the study area contains at least one economically distressed
3 area designated by the federal government as an Opportunity Zone.⁸
- 4 • Sumter County and Citrus County have a concentration of economic development activity
5 along SR 44 extending from The Villages and Wildwood on the east through Inverness to
6 Crystal River at US 19. There is also an Opportunity Zone and an extensive area of industrial
7 and commercial zoned land located off US 41, SR 200, and CR 491 west of Holder in Citrus
8 County.
- 9 • Many of the local economies in the study area depend on tourism, ecotourism, agritourism,
10 and outdoor recreation activities. Whether kayaking or fishing on the Withlacoochee River,
11 hiking the Cross Florida Greenway, or swimming in Rainbow Springs, there is a wide variety
12 of nature-based recreation opportunities in the study area.

13 **INFRASTRUCTURE CHARACTERISTICS**

14 The condition of infrastructure in the study area influences the quality of life for residents and visitors,
15 and is an important component of, and potential catalyst for, economic development.

- 16 • The main type of wastewater treatment in most of the study area is septic systems. The
17 cumulative impact of septic systems has been linked to impaired waters in springs, rivers, and
18 estuarine systems.
- 19 • Broadband coverage in the rural parts of the study area is limited, resulting in many residents
20 and businesses not having access to high-speed internet.⁹ Federal Communications
21 Commission data published in December 2018 show an estimated 66.5 percent of Levy
22 County’s urban area residents and 85.8 percent of Levy County’s rural area residents lack
23 access to high-speed internet.¹⁰
- 24 • Duke Energy and SECO Energy are the primary electric distribution companies in the study
25 area. Sabal Trail and the Florida Gas Transmission Company operate the main gas
26 transmission lines.
- 27 • Major roadways in the study area are I-75, US 301, US 441, US 41, SR 40, US 27, US 98,
28 US 19, Florida’s Turnpike, Suncoast Parkway, SR 44, SR 200, and SR 50. These roads are
29 also primary evacuation routes serving both local and regional evacuees.
- 30 • There are several county and city roads in the study area that connect to the major roadway
31 system. Some of the roads in the county and city road networks are designated evacuation
32 routes.
- 33 • There are 45 public evacuation shelters within study area, five of which are special needs
34 shelters, based on the most current information available.^{11,12,13,14}

⁸ [Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Rural Areas of Opportunity](#)

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](#)

- 1 • The I-75 corridor, a major north/south route for moving people and freight into and out of much
2 of the central and western Florida peninsula, regularly experiences congestion caused by
3 increased demand, crashes, and incidents; on average, an incident closes at least one lane or
4 ramp every 16 hours.¹⁵ Additionally, peak-hour congestion has been observed on other major
5 roadways within population centers—particularly sections of SR 44 and US 19/98 in Citrus
6 County.
- 7 • Periodic congestion and lack of high-speed, high-capacity travel options between I-75 on the
8 east and Suncoast Parkway or US 19/98 on the west of the study area generally limit
9 evacuation and emergency response.
- 10 • Construction of the Suncoast Parkway Extension (Suncoast Parkway, Phase 1), terminating at
11 SR 44 is underway and construction is estimated to be complete in 2022. An additional
12 section of Suncoast Parkway, Phase 2, is being designed for an extension between SR 44
13 and CR 486. That section is expected to let for construction in late 2022. This will provide
14 direct access to Tampa from the center of Citrus County. As part of the M-CORES Program, a
15 separate Task Force is evaluating the extension of the Suncoast Corridor from Citrus County
16 to I-10 in Jefferson County. The M-CORES statute directs the Northern Turnpike Corridor to
17 end at the Suncoast Parkway, which could be along the existing Suncoast Parkway; Suncoast
18 Parkway, Phase 1; Suncoast Parkway, Phase 2; or a future extension as part of the M-
19 CORES Program.
- 20 • The CSX Transportation “S” line, which traverses Sumter and Marion Counties, is a major
21 north-south freight rail line in the state. The western branch line of the Florida Northern
22 Railroad provides short line service to regional businesses. Passenger rail service was
23 discontinued in the late 1980s. The Ocala Union Station once used by Amtrak passenger rail
24 was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 and is currently used as a station
25 for intercity and local bus services.
- 26 • The transportation network supports trade and logistics, including air, rail, and truck freight,
27 and related value-added services. I-75 in the study area is part of a network of highways
28 identified as the most critical highway portions of the U.S. freight transportation system.
- 29 • There are no commercial airport, seaport, or rail terminals in the study area. People and
30 freight moving between the study area and other parts of the state, country, or world typically
31 need to connect to other regions via road or rail service and then connect to another mode.
32 There are plans by Citrus County to revive establishment of Port Citrus.
- 33 • There are about 75 miles of existing Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail (SUN Trail) and about
34 173 miles of identified SUN Trail segments in the study area, which are in various stages of
35 planning, design, and construction. The Cross Florida Greenway, Van Fleet State Trail,
36 Withlacoochee State Trail, Dunnellon Trail, Nature Coast State Trail, Florida National Scenic
37 Trail, and various other recreational trails are part of the Florida Greenways and Trails
38 System, providing visitors and residents high-quality paved and unpaved multi-use trail
39 experiences.
- 40 • The transit system consists of a limited number of buses on fixed routes and paratransit,
41 which provides demand-response rides. Study area residents living within one-half mile of a

¹⁵ [I-75 Relief Task Force - Final Recommendations Report](#)

1 fixed-route public transportation service is at 19 percent in Marion County, and 28 percent in
2 Citrus County. Levy County and Sumter County do not have fixed-route public transportation
3 service.¹⁶ Additionally, local transit agencies have identified transit service expansions
4 (existing route improvements) and new services in their Transit Development Plans (TDP).
5 Citrus County has identified a need for express bus transit that would provide inter-county
6 connections between major activity centers within the study area.

DRAFT

¹⁶ [2019 Florida Transit Information and Performance Handbook](#)

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

2 APPROACH AND FRAMEWORK

3 The Task Force recognized the scope of the M-CORES purpose and program, as well as the scale of
4 the corridors authorized in statute, and called for thoughtful decision making supported by the best
5 available data, analysis, and subject matter expertise and extensive public input. The Task Force
6 recognized decisions about where these corridors should be located and how they should be
7 developed, particularly in relation to environmental resources and existing communities, could have
8 transformational impacts not only on the study area but also on the state as a whole.

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

- 13 • **High-Level Needs** – The Task Force identified key regional opportunities and challenges
14 related to the six statutory purposes for M-CORES that should be priorities for the M-CORES
15 Program in the study area. The Task Force also developed guidance for how FDOT should
16 work with partners to evaluate these potential needs and form more specific purpose and
17 need statements for corridor improvements moving forward. The high-level needs, along with
18 the purpose, answer the question “*why?*”.
- 19 • **Guiding Principles** – The Task Force recommended a set of core values to guide decision-
20 making related to the M-CORES Program in the study area throughout the planning,
21 development, and implementation process. These answer the question “*how?*”.
- 22 • **Instructions for Project Development and Beyond** – The Task Force recommended
23 specific directions for future project development and implementation activities to ensure the
24 Task Force’s guiding principles are applied to subsequent activities as intended. These
25 answer the question “*what’s next?*”.

26 In completing this report, the Task Force’s intent is to provide these consensus recommendations for
27 how FDOT can work with other agencies and partners to effectively carry out the M-CORES Program
28 as specified in s. 338.2278, F.S. Consensus on the report does not constitute agreement by all Task
29 Force members that at this phase in program delivery, project-specific needs or environmental and
30 economic feasibility are fully developed. Rather, the report is intended to provide consensus
31 recommendations for how needs should be evaluated and how corridor development and related
32 activities should move forward to implement the statute and support the environment, quality of life,
33 and prosperity of the study area and the state.

34 Section 338.2278 (3)(c) 6, F.S. states “To the maximum extent feasible, the department shall adhere
35 to the recommendations of the task force created for each corridor in the design of the multiple
36 modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure associated with the corridor.” The Task
37 Force viewed this statement as inclusive of both the guiding principles and the instructions and of the
38 full range of planning, project development, and implementation activities. The Task Force also
39 recognized that as future work continues in the study area, additional information or changing
40 conditions may provide insight about the feasibility and value of specific implementation steps that
41 could warrant refinements to specific instructions; in these situations, the guiding principle and intent
42 of the Task Force will guide any such refinements.

1 HIGH-LEVEL NEEDS

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

7 Section 338.2278 (3) (c) 4, F.S., charged the Task Force to “evaluate the need for, and the economic
8 and environmental impacts of, hurricane evacuation impacts of, and land use impacts of” the corridor
9 on which the Task Force is focusing. The Task Force reviewed partner and public input, existing
10 plans and studies, and available data and forecasts on trends and conditions in the study area. FDOT
11 provided preliminary baseline forecasts for future population, employment, and traffic, but the amount
12 and precision of the information provided was not sufficient to define specific corridor needs at a level
13 of detail necessary to initiate project development. Based on the information provided, the Task Force
14 identified potential high-level needs for the corridor and developed recommendations for how FDOT
15 should assess the needs for a corridor of the scale specified in statute as part of future planning and
16 project development.

17 High-level needs are key regional opportunities and challenges the M-CORES Program, including
18 corridor investments and related actions, are intended to address. The high-level needs build on the
19 six purposes and 13 potential benefits in s. 338.2278 (1), F.S. The potential high-level needs include
20 conventional transportation needs such as safety, mobility, and connectivity, as well as broader
21 regional needs that could be supported through a transportation corridor, such as economic
22 development, environmental stewardship, and quality of life.

23 In general, the Task Force found significant needs in the study area related to the six statutory
24 purposes, including revitalizing rural communities, supporting economic development, enhancing
25 quality of life, and protecting the environment. The Task Force recognized general needs to enhance
26 transportation safety, mobility, and connectivity in the study area but did not identify a specific need
27 for a completely new greenfield corridor across the entire study area based on the available
28 information at this time. The Federal Highway Administration defines a greenfield corridor as a
29 corridor that is designed from the beginning with no constraints from the existence of prior facilities
30 that need to be modified or removed. The Task Force identified a series of potential high-level needs
31 for future evaluation by FDOT:

- 32 • **Address statewide and regional safety and mobility needs due to growth in population**
33 **and visitation.** Population in the study area grew from 345,850 in 1990 to 508,165 in 2019
34 (47 percent) and is projected to grow by an additional 386,935 (31percent) by 2045 assuming
35 mid-range growth.^{17,18} The number of visitors to Florida has increased from 28.9 million in
36 1985 to 131 million in 2019 (353 percent).¹⁹ Some of these visitors tour or pass through the
37 study area en route to their final destinations. The number of visitors declined in 2020 due to
38 the COVID-19 pandemic but it is too early to accurately predict future trends in visitor activity.

¹⁷ [Population Data Archive, Bureau of Economic and Business Research](#)

¹⁸ [The University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Florida Population Studies, Volume 53, Bulletin 186, January 2020](#)

¹⁹ [Florida Visitor Estimates, Visit Florida](#)

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

4 FDOT conducted a preliminary analysis of future traffic in the study area based on population
5 and employment growth projections from local government comprehensive plans. The
6 analysis showed the study area traffic volumes are projected to increase by 83 percent from
7 2018 to 2050. Based on improvements currently in the FDOT Adopted Work Program and
8 existing cost-feasible plans for the Strategic Intermodal System and MPO long range
9 transportation plans in the study area, this traffic growth could produce significant congestion
10 along the entire section of I-75 in the study area, and portions of SR 50, SR 471, US 301, SR
11 44, US 41, SR 200, US 27, SR 40, and SR 121 by the year 2050. I-75 within the study area is
12 projected to have Level of Service F by 2050 even with a 10-lane widening. The Task Force
13 recommended further refinement of these traffic projections, including evaluation of whether
14 the extension of the Northern Turnpike Corridor would relieve future traffic on I-75. The Task
15 Force also recommended that future analyses consider whether the extension the Suncoast
16 Parkway beyond Phase 2, which also is identified as a corridor for the M-CORES Program in
17 s. 338.2278, F.S., would impact traffic on the Northern Turnpike Corridor.

18 The Task Force recommended that the traffic analysis consider future demand for moving
19 both people and freight, as well as both local/regional travel originating and terminating within
20 the study area and statewide/interregional travel to, from, and through the study area. The
21 traffic analysis should also consider potential changes in travel demand related to the state's
22 recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and potential long-term changes in travel behavior,
23 such as greater propensity for working from home and increased home delivery of goods and
24 services. The analysis should consider potential changes in travel demand and transportation
25 system capacity related to increased use of emerging technologies, such as automated and
26 connected vehicles. Finally, the analysis should consider potential shifts in economic activity
27 that could be related to a significant industry expansion or recession in the study area during
28 the analysis period.

- 29 • **Improve statewide and regional transportation mobility and connectivity for people and**
30 **freight.** The Task Force discussed statewide and regional mobility and connectivity
31 challenges and opportunities facing the study area. The Task Force recommended that the
32 needs evaluation consider whether development of the Northern Turnpike Corridor would
33 provide relief to the congestion on the I-75 corridor, and is an economically and
34 environmentally feasible alternative for moving people and freight including during evacuation
35 and emergency response. The Task Force recommended that further planning for the
36 Northern Turnpike Corridor consider the recommendations of the I-75 Relief Task Force in its
37 2016 report.
- 38 • **Provide a transportation network that revitalizes and enhances communities and**
39 **industries.** The Task Force discussed various ways highway and other modes of
40 transportation could revitalize and enhance communities and local industries. The Task Force
41 recommended FDOT evaluate whether corridor improvements could impact local
42 communities, businesses, and industries including agriculture, manufacturing, financial and

²⁰ [Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Traffic Crash Report](#)

1 professional services, clean technology, and logistics and distribution by looking at
2 consistency with existing plans and community character.

- 3 • **Strengthen emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery to enhance**
4 **safety.** The Task Force reviewed data and discussed emergency needs and considerations in
5 the study area. The Task Force also discussed how congestion on various transportation
6 facilities impedes emergency management activities and increases the time needed for safe
7 evacuation and response. The Task Force recommended FDOT use the results of statewide
8 regional evacuation studies currently being updated by the Florida Division of Emergency
9 Management and the regional planning councils to understand Floridians' behavior, the
10 factors that influence their choices during emergencies, sheltering capacity, and evacuation
11 traffic capacity needs and clearance times in the region and state. The Task Force
12 recommended guiding principles and instructions for how the M-CORES Program could
13 support emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- 14 • **Support retention and expansion of existing and attraction of new industries through**
15 **enhanced access to jobs, education, and healthcare.** The Task Force discussed economic
16 and workforce development opportunities in the study area and the need for better access and
17 connectivity to help attract new industries and workers to the region. The Task Force advised
18 FDOT to consider both positive and negative mobility, economic, and fiscal impacts of
19 potential shifts in economic activity from existing communities and corridors to enhanced or
20 new corridors, as well as potential net economic benefits to the region and the state.
- 21 • **Strengthen the local tourism, ecotourism, agritourism, and outdoor recreation**
22 **economy.** The Task Force discussed the contribution of various types of tourism in the local
23 economies in the study area. The Task Force advised FDOT to protect valued historic,
24 cultural, and environmental assets that currently draw visitors to the study area. Additionally,
25 the Task Force recommended FDOT consider tourism and recreation travel needs in the
26 planning and design of corridor improvements by identifying potential areas of growth in
27 visitation and improving connections or access to existing tourism sites.
- 28 • **Expand rural utility infrastructure, including broadband, water, and sewer, to enhance**
29 **quality of life.** Large portions of the study area lack broadband or water/sewer service. The
30 Task Force reviewed data and discussed challenges in the study area and opportunities to
31 advance broadband, water, and sewer with transportation infrastructure to enhance quality of
32 life. The Task Force recognized that a new transportation corridor is not a prerequisite for
33 broadband deployment, however there are unique opportunities offered by a linear corridor
34 that bring value to expanding broadband connectivity statewide. The Task Force asked FDOT
35 to coordinate with local governments and utility and broadband service providers and include
36 space and provisions for utility accommodation and consider utility connectivity needs when
37 developing and designing corridors. The Task Force recommended that both transportation
38 and utility infrastructure expansion be consistent with growth strategies and existing policies
39 regarding urban sprawl included in local government comprehensive plans.
- 40 • **Protect, restore, enhance, and connect public and private environmentally sensitive**
41 **areas, conservation lands, threatened and endangered species habitats, key water**
42 **quality resources, and ecosystems.** The Task Force reviewed data and discussed the
43 unique characteristics of the study area's environmental resources, including springs, rivers,
44 aquifer recharge areas, agricultural land uses, and wildlife habitat. The Task Force also

1 determined a need to protect and enhance environmentally sensitive resources, such as
2 springs, wetlands, and floodplains, to support regional and statewide habitat conservation and
3 water quality goals. The Task Force recommended guiding principles and instructions for how
4 the M-CORES Program could help achieve environmental goals, including proactive
5 opportunities to restore, connect, and enhance environmental resources, in addition to the
6 standard Project Development and Environment (PD&E) process.

7 **NEEDS EVALUATION PROCESS**

8 As input to project development, FDOT will work with partners to conduct a robust evaluation of the
9 potential high-level needs in the study area, building on the recommendations of the Task Force. This
10 process should evaluate and distinguish between conventional safety, mobility, and connectivity
11 needs, and broader regional needs related to transportation that also are included in the statutory
12 purpose in s. 338.2278, F.S. Additional details on the needs evaluation process as well as the steps
13 involved in identifying and evaluating alternatives are specified in the Action Plan on page 24 of this
14 report.

15 The Task Force did not reach a conclusion based on the information available at this time that there
16 is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor through the study area to achieve the
17 purposes required by s. 338.2278, F.S. The Task Force expressed a preference for improvement or
18 expansion of existing major highway corridors or existing major linear utility corridors that already
19 have disturbed right of way.

20 The Task Force believes that the formal determination of need, economic feasibility, and
21 environmental feasibility pursuant to statutory requirements and consistent with accepted statewide
22 processes is an important milestone in the project development process. The Task Force developed
23 a series of guiding principles and instructions for future planning and development of corridors for
24 which high-level needs have been identified, including analysis of the “no build” option. While these
25 determinations will be made after the Task Force has completed its deliberations, the guidance
26 provided by the Task Force will instruct the evaluation process, and FDOT will create ongoing
27 opportunities for partners and the public to be engaged during the process.

28

1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND INSTRUCTIONS

2 The guiding principles and instructions are intended to function as a set of directions to FDOT and
3 other partners in implementing the Task Force’s recommendations as they carry out future planning,
4 project development, and implementation activities related to the M-CORES Program in s. 338.2278,
5 F.S. The guiding principles provide a high-level statement of value and direction that is intended to
6 apply in all decisions; the instructions detail specific commitments and actions. The Task Force
7 recommendations are intended to supplement the requirements of current FDOT processes during
8 planning, project development, design, and other implementation phases.

9 The Task Force developed 16 guiding principles and associated instructions. The text below lists the
10 specific guiding principles and instructions. The guiding principles function as an integrated set and
11 are not presented in a specific priority order. The first three guiding principles are intended as
12 overarching principles that support all other principles in this report.

13 CONSISTENCY WITH STATEWIDE, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL PLANS

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

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

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

22 **Instructions:**

- 23 • Be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and resources identified in local government
24 comprehensive plans (s. 163.3177, F.S. and s. 163.3178, F.S.), metropolitan long-range
25 transportation plans (s. 339.175, F.S.), and strategic regional policy plans (s. 186.507, F.S.),
26 placing emphasis on future land use maps and growth projections, as well as regional and
27 community visions as adopted into strategic regional policy plans and/or local government
28 comprehensive plans.
- 29 • Be consistent with the vision, goals, and strategies of the Florida Transportation Plan
30 (s. 339.155, F.S.).
- 31 • Coordinate among agencies to address differences among statutorily required state, regional,
32 and local plans related to transportation corridors and future growth and development
33 projections, including differences related to the timing and horizon years of plan updates as
34 well as the geographical areas covered by regional plans.
- 35 • Identify needs to update statutorily required plans to address Task Force recommendations,
36 such as designation and management of transportation corridors (s. 337.273, F.S.) and
37 consideration of whether areas around potential interchange locations contain appropriate
38 land use and environmental resource protections (s. 338.2278, F.S.), including resources
39 identified as significant in other guiding principles and instructions. Coordinate among local
40 governments, regional planning councils, metropolitan planning organizations, the Florida
41 Department of Economic Opportunity, and FDOT on plan updates.

- 1 • Support local governments in developing interchange management plans including
2 appropriate land use and environmental resource protections for areas around proposed
3 interchange locations.

4 **MAXIMIZING USE OF EXISTING FACILITIES**

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

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

11 **Guiding Principle #2:** Develop potential alternatives for addressing statewide and interregional
12 mobility and connectivity needs in this priority order:

- 13 i. Safety and operational improvements to existing transportation facilities;
- 14 ii. Then additional capacity in existing major transportation and utility facilities or right of way in
15 or near the study area including co-location of facilities within existing right of way and other
16 approaches to transforming existing facilities and right of way to accommodate additional
17 modes, uses, and functions;
- 18 iii. In circumstances where purpose and need and/or guiding principles cannot be addressed by
19 operational or existing facility/right of way improvements, then evaluation of new facilities.

20 **Instructions:**

- 21 • Identify and advance safety and operational improvements to existing transportation facilities.
- 22 • Evaluate potential capacity improvements to existing transportation facilities in or near the
23 study area, including their impact on the surrounding environment, land uses, and
24 communities.
- 25 • Evaluate opportunities for co-location within or adjacent to existing transportation or utility right
26 of way in or near the study area, including their impact on the surrounding environment, land
27 uses, and communities. Place a high priority on co-location opportunities within or adjacent to
28 existing major transportation and utility right of way.
- 29 • Assess connectivity gaps between existing major transportation facilities and areas identified
30 as priorities for attraction, and potential opportunities for closing those gaps.
- 31 • Evaluate opportunities to advance specific improvements, including those identified through
32 planning studies, PD&E studies, and long-range transportation plans, that support a system
33 meeting the long-term needs of statewide and interregional movements of people and freight
34 during future phases of project development. Collaborate with other state and regional
35 agencies and local governments to evaluate these improvements.
- 36 • Collaborate with local governments on operational improvements, existing facility
37 enhancements, and, if needed, interchange locations to ensure consistency with local
38 government comprehensive plans.

1 **TECHNOLOGY**

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

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

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

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

11 **Instructions:**

- 12 • Coordinate and partner with agencies and the private sector to leverage resources,
13 applications, and infrastructure.
- 14 • Plan and design corridors to accommodate technologies and applications, considering their
15 ability to evolve over time.
- 16 • Design, construct, and maintain corridors using state-of-the-art, resilient, and energy efficient
17 materials and methods of construction.
- 18 • Plan for and provide infrastructure for electric vehicle charging stations.
- 19 • Evaluate technology to limit impacts to wildlife including road kills and notifications of other
20 hazards such as smoke from prescribed and wildfires.

21 **COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

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

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

30 **Instructions:**

- 31 • Avoid and do not impact known cemeteries and historic markers, known cultural sites, and
32 sites currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- 33 • Avoid and do not impact Native American Tribal lands. Coordinate if historic properties of
34 religious or cultural significance to the Native American Tribes are discovered during project
35 development.
- 36 • Plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain corridors that recognize and incorporate the
37 surrounding community character while accommodating potential growth and development.
38 Balance the need to move vehicles safely and efficiently while preserving scenic, aesthetic,
39 historic, and environmental resources.

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

3 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

4 Economic development was another major focus area for the Task Force as it serves several
5 purposes including revitalization of rural communities, job creation, and enhancing the quality of life.
6 The following guiding principles and instructions were developed by the Task Force to address the
7 need to enhance economic and workforce development, access to education, and job creation in the
8 study area.

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

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

13 **Instructions:**

- 14 • Be consistent with economic development elements of local government comprehensive plans
15 (s. 163.3177, F.S. and s. 163.3178, F.S.), and comprehensive economic development
16 strategies developed by regional planning councils in their capacity as federal economic
17 development districts.
- 18 • Enhance economic development opportunities related to regional assets such as airports,
19 educational facilities, and healthcare facilities by improving access while avoiding direct
20 impacts.
- 21 • Provide support to local governments and economic development organizations to maximize
22 long-term economic benefits from corridor investments in the study area.
- 23 • Engage with agriculture, silviculture, manufacturing, logistics, and other industry stakeholders
24 to understand and incorporate their infrastructure needs.
- 25 • Plan for and design truck parking and rest area needs.
- 26 • Support the local tourism and recreation economy by providing opportunities for access and
27 connections to outdoor recreation areas such as recreational greenways, trails, and hunting
28 and fishing areas.
- 29 • Plan for and design infrastructure to protect access to existing businesses in rural
30 communities.

31 **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

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

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

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

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

24 **CONSERVATION LANDS**

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

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

- 28 i. Avoid negative impacts to, and fragmentation of, these lands.
- 29 ii. Restore, connect, and enhance these lands while continuing to avoid negative impacts.
- 30 iii. Minimize and mitigate negative impacts to these lands.

31 **Instructions:**

- 32 • Do not place new corridors through: state parks (preserve ability to traverse Cross Florida
33 Greenway with potential enhancement opportunities as discussed in the following instruction),
34 state forests, mitigation banks, existing managed conservation lands, wildlife refuges, and
35 Florida Forever acquired lands.
- 36 • Prioritize alternatives that do not traverse the Cross Florida Greenway. Consider impacts to
37 the Cross Florida Greenway only when other alternatives cannot adequately meet the purpose
38 and need of the corridor or project, while connecting the Northern Turnpike Corridor to the
39 Suncoast Corridor. Use special design features if traversing the Cross Florida Greenway to
40 minimize impacts and provide enhancements.
- 41 • Place a high priority on corridor alternatives that avoid impacts to conservation easements.

- 1 • Coordinate with agencies and partners early in the project development process to review
2 land acquisition plans and identify opportunities to advance and fund acquisition priorities
3 (including s. 338.2278 (3)(c)6 & 8, F.S.) as part of M-CORES projects. Coordinate with the
4 Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other agencies for Florida Forever
5 Program projects that are in the highest priority for acquisition, potential Water Management
6 District lands, and lands within the optimal boundaries of the adopted management plans for
7 regional, state and national parks, forests, refuges, and water management areas.
- 8 • Coordinate with regional planning councils to support Natural Resources of Regional
9 Significance outlined in their Strategic Regional Policy Plans.
- 10 • Coordinate with the Florida Forest Service to identify lands managed with prescribed or
11 controlled burns and their associated smokesheds and minimize impacts associated with
12 corridor location and operations.
- 13 • Use established procedures and analysis tools during project development to avoid, restore
14 and enhance, and minimize and mitigate impacts to wetland mitigation banks and regulatory
15 easements, swallets, Florida Communities Trust projects, Wildlife Management Areas, and
16 Rare Species Habitat Conservation Priorities.
- 17 • Reference the most current Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) version
18 priorities model during project development.

19 **WILDLIFE HABITATS AND CONNECTIVITY**

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

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

- 24 i. Avoid negative impacts to, and fragmentation, of these lands.
- 25 ii. Restore, connect, and enhance these lands while continuing to avoid negative impacts.
- 26 iii. Minimize and mitigate negative impacts to these lands.

27 **Instructions:**

- 28 • Coordinate with agencies and partners early in the project development process to review
29 land acquisition plans and identify opportunities to advance acquisition priorities to support the
30 completion of wildlife connectivity gaps (including s. 338.2278 (3)(c)6 & 8, F.S.). Coordinate
31 with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to enhance wildlife corridor
32 connectivity including lands identified as priority 1 and 2 in the most current Florida Ecological
33 Greenways Network. Place an emphasis on connectivity gaps and bottlenecks.
- 34 • Support a regional approach to enhanced wildlife connectivity, including restoration of fish and
35 wildlife habitat corridors.
- 36 • Coordinate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to determine optimal
37 wildlife crossing locations and maximize effectiveness of wildlife crossing design elements
38 based upon the best available data concerning wildlife movement patterns and adjacent land
39 uses.

- 1 • Minimize impacts of transportation lighting on nearby agricultural, environmental, and
2 conservation lands.
- 3 • Consult with state and federal agencies to identify and protect threatened and endangered
4 species (wildlife and plants) and their habitats.

5 **WATER RESOURCES**

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

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

- 10 i. Avoid negative impacts to water resources.
- 11 ii. Restore, connect, and enhance water resources while continuing to avoid negative impacts.
- 12 iii. Minimize and mitigate negative impacts to water resources.

13 **Instructions:**

- 14 • Avoid and do not impact springheads and lakes.
- 15 • Do not place new corridors through aquatic preserves.
- 16 • Coordinate with agencies and partners early in the project development process to identify
17 water supply and quality goals and identify opportunities to advance water resource
18 enhancements that will improve regional water quality (including s. 338.2278 (3)(c)6 & 8,
19 F.S.). Coordinate with Water Management Districts and the Florida Department of
20 Environmental Protection for projects in Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) for springs
21 and other surface water bodies and protection and enhancement of aquifer and groundwater
22 recharge areas, Outstanding Florida Waters, wetlands, floodplains, and other surface waters.
- 23 • Address both local and regional flooding problems by integrating stormwater and floodplain
24 management strategies where feasible.
- 25 • Place a high priority on retrofitting existing structures to improve hydrologic flows in cases of
26 co-location.
- 27 • Support a regional approach to stormwater system design with the goal of meeting and
28 exceeding Environmental Resource Permit requirements.
- 29 • Avoid placing transportation corridors and stormwater ponds in sinkholes and high-density
30 karst areas.
- 31 • Use established procedures and analysis tools during project development to avoid, minimize,
32 and mitigate impacts to Water Management District surface, groundwater, proposed well, and
33 atmospheric sites.

34 **AGRICULTURE**

35 The Task Force acknowledged its statutory direction to evaluate design features and the need for
36 acquisition of state conservation lands that mitigate the impact of project construction on agricultural
37 land uses. The Task Force emphasized the importance of protecting and enhancing the abundance

1 of productive agricultural lands (including silviculture) in the study area as they serve as fish and
2 wildlife habitat, support water supply and environmental needs, and serve as major economic drivers
3 for rural communities.

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

6 **Instructions:**

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

16 **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

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

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

23 **Instructions:**

- 24 • When developing, and evaluating corridors, place a high priority on the ability of existing, co-
25 located or new infrastructure to withstand and recover from risks such as storm surge (tropical
26 storm through category 5), inland flooding, extreme weather events, and climate trends.
- 27 • Avoid and do not impact high risk coastal areas consistent with local government
28 comprehensive plans.
- 29 • Coordinate with the Florida Division of Emergency Management Comprehensive Emergency
30 Management Plan and local comprehensive emergency management plans, including
31 evacuation and sheltering.
- 32 • Use data from the statewide regional evacuation studies being updated by Division of
33 Emergency Management and the regional planning councils.
- 34 • Provide opportunities for staging areas for emergencies (SAFE) as outlined in s. 338.236, F.S.
- 35 • Give high priority to native, storm resistant landscaping.

36 **INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

37 The Task Force emphasized the importance of ensuring the corridor supports the need to expand
38 broadband, water, sewer, electric, as gas services to the study area for the purposes of revitalizing

1 rural communities, encouraging job creation, and leveraging technology. The Task Force developed
2 the following guiding principles and instructions to address the need to expand rural broadband
3 infrastructure and access to broadband and other utility services in the study area.

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

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

8 **Instructions:**

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

23 **TRANSPORTATION NETWORK CONNECTIVITY**

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

30 **Guiding Principle #15:** Enhance interregional connectivity by providing direct connections between
31 major statewide corridors.

32 **Guiding Principle #16:** Plan interregional corridors to support the function of regional and local
33 networks.

34 **Instructions:**

- 35 • Plan corridor access and termini consistent with s. 338.2278 F.S., local and regional goals for
36 targeted growth or preservation areas, and in coordination with local governments.
- 37 • Seek opportunities to further trail improvements and access to existing and planned non-
38 motorized trail networks.
- 39 • Prioritize gaps on high priority segments on the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan.

- 1
 - Coordinate with MPOs and transit providers on transit needs and opportunities.

DRAFT

1 ACTION PLAN

2 In addition to the high-level needs, guiding principles, and instructions, FDOT commits to the
3 following actions to move forward with implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force’s
4 report, consistent with s. 338.2278, F.S.:

- 5 1. **Evaluate potential needs.** FDOT will work with partners to conduct a robust evaluation of
6 potential corridor needs, building on the Task Force’s recommendations on high-level needs.
7 This process will evaluate and distinguish between conventional safety, mobility, and
8 connectivity needs, and broader regional needs or co-benefits related to transportation, such
9 as economic development or environmental stewardship benefits. The needs evaluation will
10 include a detailed technical analysis of current and future traffic conditions in the study area
11 building on the guidance provided by the Task Force in this report. The needs evaluation will
12 include the best available data and most recent projections on travel demand and underlying
13 population and economic growth. This needs analysis will support development of a Purpose
14 and Need statement for potential corridor improvements.
- 15 2. **Identify and evaluate alternatives.** FDOT will conduct additional corridor planning activities,
16 including the Alternative Corridor Evaluation process, and initiate the Project Development
17 and Environment (PD&E) process to identify and evaluate a range of potential alternatives for
18 corridor improvements in or near the study area that could accomplish the Purpose and Need.

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

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

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

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

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

11 After the PD&E Study is completed, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection will
12 review the environmental feasibility of any projects proposed as part of Florida’s Turnpike
13 system and submit a statement of environmental feasibility to FDOT, consistent with s.
14 338.223, F.S.

- 15 **3. Support consistency review and update of local and regional plans.** FDOT will coordinate
16 early and often with local governments, MPOs, and regional planning councils to ensure
17 consistency with applicable local and regional plans throughout all activities. Consistent with s.
18 338.223, F.S. and with the Task Force’s recommendations, proposed corridor projects must
19 be consistent, to the maximum extent feasible, with applicable approved local government
20 comprehensive plans, included in the transportation improvement plan (TIP) of any affected
21 MPOs, and developed in accordance with the Florida Transportation Plan and FDOT’s Five
22 Year Work Program.

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

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

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

7 FDOT has committed that projects currently in its Five Year Work Program for Fiscal Years
8 2021-2025 will not be impacted by M-CORES funding needs. M-CORES Program costs that
9 are not covered through the dedicated funding sources identified in statute or through toll
10 revenues and associated Turnpike revenue bonds and other financing and partnerships would
11 need to be prioritized along with other needs for future Five Year Work Programs, working
12 through the standard process including the applicable MPO TIPs and rural transportation
13 planning processes. All M-CORES projects, regardless of funding source, will be included in
14 applicable MPO TIPs and long-range transportation plans, consistent with federal guidance for
15 projects of regional significance.

- 16 5. **Advance innovative land acquisition concepts.** FDOT, in consultation with the Florida
17 Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts, Florida Department of
18 Agriculture and Consumer Services (including Florida Forest Service), Florida Fish and
19 Wildlife Conservation Commission, and related federal agencies will advance the Task
20 Force’s recommendations for combining right of way acquisition with the acquisition of lands
21 or conservation easements to facilitate environmental mitigation or ecosystem, wildlife habitat,
22 or water quality protection or restoration. A key focus will be on how M-CORES Program
23 decisions can support broader regional or statewide conservation and environmental
24 stewardship goals such as priorities in the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. This
25 process will identify opportunities to advance specific land acquisition and related
26 recommendations prior to or in parallel with corridor construction. FDOT will determine how to
27 provide funding, in whole or part, for land acquisition projects consistent with its statutory
28 authority in s. 338.2278(3)(c) 6, F.S., with the expectation that FDOT funding supplements
29 and leverages other state, federal, local, private, and nonprofit sources. FDOT will work with
30 the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
31 Commission, Water Management Districts, and nongovernmental organizations to explore
32 potential indicators for setting and tracking progress toward land conservation goals.
- 33 6. **Advance multi-use opportunities.** FDOT will coordinate with local governments, RPCs,
34 other state agencies, and industry organizations to help advance multi-use opportunities for
35 the corridor as provided for in statute. An early emphasis will be on broadband and other utility
36 co-location opportunities, including coordination with DEO on the development of the
37 statewide broadband strategic plan. FDOT will determine how to provide funding, in whole or
38 part, for broadband consistent with its statutory authority in s. 339.0801, F.S., with the
39 expectation that FDOT funding supplements and leverages other state, federal, local, private,
40 and nonprofit funding sources.
- 41 7. **Continue robust partner and public engagement.** FDOT will continue robust coordination
42 with local governments; local, regional, state, and federal agencies; and environmental,
43 community, economic development, and other interest groups, with an intent of exceeding the
44 requirements of the PD&E process. FDOT will use the Efficient Transportation Decision

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

- 8 **8. Commit to transparency and process improvement.** Because of the scale and scope of
9 the M-CORES Program, FDOT will continue to place public engagement as a priority and will
10 continue to engage all stakeholders during M-CORES planning, project development, and
11 implementation, including key decision points. FDOT also will report on how decisions are
12 made, including a periodic report on the status of the specific guiding principles and
13 instructions committed to in this document. An annual M-CORES budget update will be made
14 publicly available as part of FDOT's annual work program presentation to the Legislature and
15 the Florida Transportation Commission.

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

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

Appendix A: Task Force Membership List

Organization	Member Name/Title
Florida Department of Transportation	Jared Perdue, District 5 Secretary
Florida Department of Transportation	Christina Colon, Director of Transportation Development, Florida Turnpike Enterprise
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	James R. Maher, Northeast District Assistant Director
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity	Mario Rubio, Director of Community Development
Florida Department of Education	Nancy Brown, Blind Services District Administrator, Division of Blind Services
Florida Department of Health	Michael Napier, Health Officer, Pasco County
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Chris Wynn, North Central Regional Director
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	The Hon. Matt Surrency, Mayor, City of Hawthorne
Florida Public Service Commission	Mark Futrell, Deputy Executive Director – Technical
Enterprise Florida	Eric Anderson, Director of Rural and Agriculture Development
Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation	Jim Patton, Regional Program Administrator
CareerSource Florida	Rusty Skinner, CEO, CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion
Volunteer Florida	Katie Troncoso, Grants Administrator
Suwannee River Water Management District	Warren Zwanka, Resource Management Division Director
Southwest Florida Water Management District	Jennette Seachrist, Resource Management Division Director
St. Johns River Water Management District	Jeff Prather, Director of Regulatory Services
Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization	The Hon. Jeff Kinnard, Chair <i>Chair, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners</i>
Ocala/Marion County Transportation Planning Organization	The Hon. Valerie Hanchar, Chair <i>Vice-Mayor, City of Dunnellon</i>
Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization	Mike Woods, Executive Director
East Central Florida Regional Planning Council	Hugh Harling, Executive Director
Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council	Sean Sullivan, Executive Director
North Central Florida Regional Planning Council	Scott Koons, Executive Director

Organization	Member Name/Title
Florida Chamber of Commerce	Pending
Florida Trucking Association	Philip Fulmer, CEO, Carroll Fulmer Logistics
Florida Rural Water Association	Christopher Saliba, VP of Operations & Maintenance for U.S. Water Services Corporation
Florida Internet & Television Association	Bill Ferry, Senior Director of External Affairs – Florida Region, Comcast
Florida Economic Development Council	Danielle Ruiz, Senior Manager of Economic Development, Duke Energy
Florida Farm Bureau Federation	Curt Williams, Assistant Director of Government & Community Affairs
College of Central Florida	Dr. Vernon Lawter, Vice President of Regional Campuses
Lake-Sumter State College	Dr. Stanley Sidor, President
1000 Friends of Florida	Paul Owens, President
Audubon Florida	Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy
Defenders of Wildlife	Kent Wimmer, Senior Northwest Florida Representative
The Nature Conservancy	Zachary Prusak, Florida Fire Manager and Central Florida Conservation Program Director
Florida Wildlife Corridor	Jason Lauritsen, Executive Director
Local governments in Sumter County	Bradley Arnold, County Administrator, Sumter County
Local governments in Citrus County	The Hon. Scott Carnahan, 2 nd Vice Chairman, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Levy County	The Hon. Russell “Rock” Meeks, Commissioner, Levy County Board of County Commissioners
Local governments in Marion County	The Hon. Kathy Bryant, Commissioner, Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Appendix B: Task Force Work Plan

Meeting	Objectives
<p>Task Force Meeting #1 August 27, 2019 Plenary session with breakouts for each Task Force</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide overview of legislation and M-CORES program • Review Task Force role and responsibilities • Provide briefing on Florida’s Government in the Sunshine Law and Public Records laws • Share background information on corridor planning and Task Force products • Identify potential considerations for future discussion at Task Force meetings • Develop Task Force consensus on work plan, meeting schedule, and overall outcomes
<p>Task Force Meeting #2 and Community Open House October 2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce approach for identifying Avoidance, Minimization, Mitigation, and Enhancement (AMME) considerations • Discuss avoidance and minimization considerations for developing corridor opportunities • Discuss potential guiding principles for avoidance and minimization • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Meeting #3 and Community Open House December 2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review M-CORES vision and Task Force goals • Highlight the data/fact sheets by various public agencies and organizational partners • Review corridor planning and project development process • Discuss purpose of the corridor • Discuss regional and local needs • Discuss the AMME considerations for community and economic resources • Receive public comment
<p>Community Open Houses January 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community open houses in each study area to share information about the process and gather public input about AMME considerations
<p>Task Force Meeting #4 February 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive public comment summary to date • Review economic and workforce development opportunities • Review regional and local plans and visions to identify considerations for corridor planning • Review corridor planning process • Discuss draft AMME guiding principles and identify avoidance areas • Receive public comment

Meeting	Objectives
<p>Task Force Meeting #5 March-April 2020 <i>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</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss corridor utility needs and opportunities • Discuss draft high-level needs summary • Review public engagement activities and public input received to date • Review additional data requested by Task Force and proposed Task Force avoidance comments • Discuss existing corridor enhancement opportunities • Refine draft AMME guiding principles • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Webinar #1 April 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive update on Task Force activities • Receive briefing on process for identifying avoidance and attraction areas as input to Task Force recommendations • Describe “homework” process for receiving Task Force member input prior to next in-person meeting • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Webinar #2 May 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive briefing on emerging technology trends and opportunities • Discuss implications of emerging technologies for corridor development • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Webinar #3 June 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive briefing on opportunities for coordination of broadband deployment with corridor development • Obtain Task Force member input on implications for high-level needs and guiding principles • Receive public comment
<p>Task Force Virtual Meeting June 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive update on Task Force work plan and recommendations framework • Receive update on avoidance and attraction layers • Begin to refine high-level needs and guiding principles and identify potential instructions for project development and beyond • Receive public comment
<p>By June 30, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDOT submits report on Construction Workforce Development Program to Governor and Legislature
<p>Task Force Meeting #6 and Community Open House July 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review public engagement activities • Establish initial consensus on high-level needs • Discuss and refine draft guiding principles • Discuss draft instructions for project development and beyond development and beyond • Review draft report outline and report drafting process • Review corridor planning activities • Receive public comment
<p>July 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida Transportation Commission presentation

Meeting	Objectives
Task Force Meeting #7 and Community Open House August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 September, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 to mid-October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment period on draft Task Force recommendations
Task Force Meeting #9 October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive public comment • Discuss revisions to final draft Task Force report • Adopt final Task Force report
By November 15, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Task Force report to Governor and Legislature

Appendix C: Meeting Schedule and Locations

Meeting	Location
Task Force Meeting #1 Tuesday, August 27, 2019	<i>Tampa</i> <i>Tampa Convention Center</i> <i>333 S Franklin Street, Tampa, FL 33602</i>
Task Force Meeting #2 Tuesday, October 22, 2019	<i>Citrus County</i> <i>College of Central Florida - Citrus Conference Center</i> <i>3800 S Lecanto Highway, Lecanto, FL 34461</i>
Community Open House Thursday, October 24, 2019	<i>Citrus County</i> <i>College of Central Florida - Citrus Conference Center</i> <i>3800 S Lecanto Highway, Lecanto, FL 34461</i>
Task Force Meeting #3 Wednesday, December 18, 2019	<i>Marion County</i> <i>Hilton Ocala</i> <i>3600 SW 36th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34474</i>
Community Open House Thursday, December 19, 2019	<i>Sumter County</i> <i>Wildwood Community Center</i> <i>6500 Powell Road</i> <i>Wildwood, FL 34785</i>
Community Open Houses January 2020	Tuesday, January 28, 2020 – (with Suncoast Corridor) <i>Levy County</i> <i>College of Central Florida</i> <i>15390 NW Hwy 19, Chiefland, FL 32626</i> Thursday, January 30, 2020 – (with Suncoast Corridor) <i>Citrus County</i> <i>Crystal River Armory</i> <i>8551 W. Venable Street, Crystal River, FL 34429</i>
Task Force Meeting #4 Wednesday, February 12, 2020	<i>Levy County</i> <i>Suwannee River Fair Pavilion</i> <i>17851 NW 90th Ave., Fanning Springs, FL 32693</i>
Task Force Meeting #5 April 2020	<i>Online Modules (review of presentations and materials)</i>

Meeting	Location	
Task Force Webinar Wednesday, April 29, 2020	<i>Webinar</i>	
Task Force Webinar #2 Thursday, May 14, 2020	<i>Webinar</i>	
Task Force Webinar #3 Wednesday, June 3, 2020	<i>Webinar</i>	
Task Force Virtual Meeting Thursday, June 25, 2020	<i>Virtual Meeting</i>	
Task Force Meeting #6 Wednesday, July 22	<i>Virtual Meeting</i>	
	<i>Public Viewing Location #1</i> Marion County Hilton Ocala 3600 SW 36th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34474	<i>Public Viewing Location #2</i> Citrus County Building Alliance Banquet Hall 1196 S Lecanto Highway Lecanto, Florida 34461
Task Force Meeting #7 Wednesday, August 26, 2020	<i>Virtual Meeting</i>	
	<i>Public Viewing Location #1</i> Sumter County Sumter County Fairgrounds 7620 State Road 471 Bushnell, FL 33513	<i>Public Viewing Location #1</i> Citrus County Plantation on Crystal River 9301 West Fort Island Trail Crystal River, FL 34429
Community Open House Thursday, August 27, 2020	Sumter County Sumter County Fairgrounds 7620 State Road 471 Bushnell, FL 33513 <i>Virtual Community Open House at FloridaMCORES.com</i>	

Meeting	Location	
Task Force Meeting #8 Tuesday, September 22, 2020	<i>Virtual Meeting</i>	
	<i>Public Viewing Location #1</i> Citrus County Plantation on Crystal River 9301 West Fort Island Trail Crystal River, FL 34429	<i>Public Viewing Location #2</i> Marion County Hilton Ocala 3600 SW 36th Avenue Ocala, FL34474
Community Open House Wednesday, September 23, 2020	Levy County Tommy Usher Community Center, 506 SW 4th Ave, Chiefland, FL 32626 <i>Virtual Community Open House at FloridaMCORES.com</i>	
September 29 - October 14, 2020	<i>Public comment period on draft Task Force report</i>	
Task Force Meeting #9 Wednesday, October 21, 2020	<i>Virtual Meeting</i>	
	<i>Public Viewing Location #1</i> Sumter County Sumter County Fairgrounds 7620 State Road 471 Bushnell, FL 33513	<i>Public Viewing Location #2</i> Citrus County Building Alliance Banquet Hall 1196 S Lecanto Highway Lecanto, Florida 34461
Community Open House Thursday, October 22, 2020	Citrus County Plantation on Crystal River 9301 West Fort Island Trail, Crystal River, FL 34429	
Task Force Report By November 15, 2020	<i>Submit Task Force Report to Governor and Legislature</i>	