

For Immediate Release

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Tallahassee, Fla. – The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) today released the initial plan to enhance existing corridors and environmental features within the proposed Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) projects. The enhancement options incorporate environmental and corridor improvement opportunities based on initial input from each of the M-CORES task forces and the public.

“To strategically prepare for Florida’s future growth, enhancements to the state’s existing transportation system should always be a part of the plan,” said **Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, P.E.** “The initial enhancement options will help preserve our natural resources and better serve our residents and visitors. We look forward to additional input from the task forces as they work toward submitting their recommendations this October.”

The attached graphics highlight the existing roadways for potential enhancement and where the M-CORES projects could be co-located. Upon determining a proposed M-CORES corridor path/course, which could be located within existing corridors, the following enhancements will be further developed:

- Additional wildlife crossings and design elements to prevent wildlife conflicts
- Connecting and expanding wildlife corridors
- Connecting and expanding conservation lands
- Improved water flow and quality
- Connecting and expanding multi-use trails
- Providing and preserving right of way for utilities

Additionally, FDOT will ensure:

- Existing non-tolled corridors will provide both tolled and non-tolled options
- Adequate access to corridor for emergency response
- Local municipality preference for connecting areas of opportunity, such as bypasses and utilities, is acted upon
- Resources are provided to help craft and update local comprehensive plans

The enhancements above will continue to be refined and more may be added as the task forces continue their work. Until a consensus is developed by the task force as it relates to guiding principles, avoidance areas, and enhancement opportunities, any paths/courses produced will be very broad, completely undefined and should not be considered final in any way. As time progresses, the task force paths/courses will become more specific.

By October 2020, each M-CORES task force must evaluate the unique needs of each respective proposed project area, any economic and environmental impacts, hurricane evacuation impacts, land use impacts, and design features to protect or mitigate environmental impacts. To successfully complete their evaluation, each task force shall:

- Coordinate public and stakeholder involvement;
- Collect relevant data;
- Coordinate among agencies;
- Provide design recommendations;
- Submit Avoidance Minimization Mitigation & Enhancement (AMME) recommendations; and
- Develop guiding principles and recommendations.

Written public comments received by FDOT as of February 15, 2020, were provided to task force members in this week's Southwest-Central Florida Connector task force meeting and will be provided to the other corridor task force members at their upcoming March meetings.

Last month, FDOT released the initial M-CORES task force avoidance graphics for the proposed [Suncoast Connector](#), [Northern Turnpike Connector](#) and [Southwest-Central Florida Connector](#), which illustrated areas where there would be no or limited impact by the proposed corridors. The avoidance and enhancement graphics remain a draft until task forces reach consensus.

For more information regarding M-CORES, public meeting dates and locations, or to submit a comment related to the proposed projects, visit <http://FloridaMCORES.com>.

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