

For Immediate Release

February 13, 2020

Contact: Beth Frady

(850) 491-7698

Beth.Frady@dot.state.fl.us**FDOT Releases Initial Southwest-Central Florida Connector Avoidance Graphic, Maintains Commitment to Preserving Florida's Most Precious Resources**

Tallahassee, Fla. – Today, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) released the initial avoidance graphic for the proposed Southwest-Central Florida Connector at the Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) task force meeting. Consistent with the task force guiding principles, the graphic illustrates where there will be no or limited impact by the proposed corridor as well as FDOT's commitment to preserving Florida's most precious environmental and historical resources.

"I am confident that the avoidance graphic articulates our promise to protect and preserve Florida's environment, while also planning for the state's inevitable future growth," said **Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, P.E.** "The department will continue to support task force members and provide any requested resources throughout this critical process as they work toward consensus on paths/courses for the proposed corridor."

The graphic notes that the path/course will **not** impact:

- Spring Heads
- Lakes
- Mitigation Banks
- High Risk Coastal Zones
- Cemeteries
- Native American Lands
- Airports
- Military Installations

Additionally, though an existing corridor may be enhanced, there will be **no new corridor through:**

- Resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
- Acquired Florida Forever Lands
- National Wildlife Refuges
 - Florida Panther
 - Lake Wales Ridge
 - Ten Thousand Islands
 - Everglades Headwaters
- National Parks
 - Everglades
 - Big Cypress National Preserve
- State Parks
- Coastal Area Storm Surge (CAT 2)

The graphic is the first of likely many visuals within the process and will continue to be refined as the task force continues its work. Until a consensus is met by the task force as it relates to guiding principles and avoidance areas, 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.

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>.

###