

# **LAND DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR FLORIDA INTERCHANGE AREAS**

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Highway interchanges can have a substantial impact on the intensity of land development in the surrounding area. If land development and access are not properly managed, they can cause safety hazards and interfere with the efficient flow of traffic through the interchange. They also can disrupt traffic flow on the interstate and connecting roadways, and damage accessibility to businesses. Ultimately, these outcomes can harm economic development objectives and result in the need for costly retrofit projects.

Effective interchange management requires participation at the local level where land development decisions are made. This separation of jurisdiction has made it difficult for the Department to preserve the safety and efficiency of interchange areas. Research is needed to explore why it is important to manage development in interchange areas and how such management can be accomplished from a planning, design, and regulatory perspective.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives included evaluating state policies, studying case examples, and modeling strategies for interchange areas, in order to explore strategies for strengthening rules and regulations that support access management and that would have the potential to preserve interchange areas.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Interchanges affect land use, land values, development, employment opportunities, travel patterns, and taxes, in turn affecting local and state governments, private citizens, landowners, motorists, and other taxpayers. Therefore, everyone has a stake in improved management of interchange areas. Local governments may have the greatest control over initiating and maintaining interchange area management; and local communities may receive the greatest benefits.

Two basic opportunities exist for improved management of interchange area development. Local governments would benefit from the development of access management plans and regulations for interchange area access that address local street systems, access separation distances, and vehicular and pedestrian interconnection of interchange area development. The Florida Department of Transportation would benefit from greater attention to access management in the interchange justification review process.

Florida has been experiencing rapid population and development growth, and the Bureau of Economic and Business Research projects that this trend will continue. Since Florida is already feeling the effects of growth on its transportation system, it would be prudent to actively pursue regulations and strategies that would reduce congestion and the rate of needed capacity improvements. Strengthening rules and regulations that support access management is probably the most effective step toward preserving interchange areas.

This project sought to identify and summarize land development and access management strategies that local governments can apply to interchange areas to preserve the function of the interchange, and the safety and efficiency of the surrounding roadway system. Current state policies were assessed to identify changes necessary to facilitate local participation in managing interchange development.

Recommended changes to Chapter 163, F.S., included (1) requiring local governments to incorporate state access management regulations into their land development regulations for state highways in their jurisdictions, and (2) incorporating specific language regarding access management in interchange areas. Recommended changes to Rule 9J-5, F.A.C., included (1) identifying interchange areas and Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) facilities as a priority for controlling connections and access points; (2) identifying all interchange areas in the Intergovernmental Coordination Element of local comprehensive plans; and (3) seeking intergovernmental coordination of interchange areas through written comments during review of a plan (or plan update).

Several changes were recommended for FDOT Rules 14-96 and 14-97, which included (1) providing more specific direction and high minimum standards in its rules; (2) increasing the area for regulating minimum connections and median openings to ½ mile from an interchange area; (3) exercising on state roads within an interchange area the option to attach conditions to its Notice of Intent to Permit; and (4) requiring a pre-application conference when a request is made for a connection permit within an interchange area.

Recommendations were also made regarding the Interchange Request Development and Review Manual, other legislative actions, and local government planning and development actions.

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