

## South County Transportation Plan

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Question #1: What is the purpose of the South County Transportation Plan?**

**Answer:** Currently, over 120,000 people live in South County. The number of people projected to live in South County by the year 2050 is expected to grow by 400,000 people to a total 520,000. In order to meet the growth demands within South County, additional transportation improvements are necessary. The various types of transportation improvements being recommended include widening of existing roads, new corridors, new interchanges and modification of existing interchanges along I-75, the bypass, new river crossings, commuter rail, and passenger ferry. All projects are conceptual and will be refined during the Preliminary Design & Engineering (PD&E) process. The PD&E process includes an extensive environmental analysis, additional public outreach, and design of the exact footprint of the project if indeed it is determined feasible.

#### **Question #2: What public involvement efforts have been conducted to date?**

**Answer:** A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) which consists of both citizens and developers met regularly throughout the study. Two public workshops were conducted in July 2007 to discuss the study and potential alternatives. Three public workshops are being held now in October and November to discuss the study recommendations. Additional public involvement opportunities will also be available through the comprehensive plan amendment process. The County website has been updated throughout the entire study with press releases, meeting notices and meeting materials, including plan recommendations.

#### **Question #3: Is the recommendation to extend John Moore Road to Apache Trail (project #62) going to remain on the South County Transportation Plan?**

**Answer:** No. The initial recommendation to extend John Moore Road to Apache Trail was to provide additional connectivity. A detailed environmental analysis would have been conducted during a future PD&E study to determine if the connection was feasible, and if so, where exactly it would be located. However, it was brought to our attention during the public involvement process that John Moore Road has a history of flooding. As a result, it is going to be removed from the South County Transportation Plan.

#### **Question #4: What is the status of the bypass?**

**Answer:** Currently, a conceptual alignment of the bypass is included in the MPO 2025 Needs Plan. However, recently, the Planning Commission recommended that staff remove the bypass out of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element. The final decision to remove the bypass from the Comprehensive Plan will be made by the BOCC as part of the comprehensive plan amendment process currently underway. Since the South County Transportation Plan is planning for the year 2050, a conceptual alignment of the bypass is included in the recommendations, as it is anticipated that some form of a bypass or beltway will be constructed by the year 2050 in order to reduce truck trips on I-75. Based on our technical analyses, the bypass reduces congestion on I-75 in South County by about 48,000 trips per day. The exact location and design of the bypass would not be decided until an extensive analysis is conducted during a PD&E study.

**Question #5: Why is a new interchange being recommended along I-75 at Apollo Beach Boulevard and not at 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue?**

**Answer:** The current MPO 2025 Needs Plan and County Corridor Preservation Plan include a new interchange at Apollo Beach Boulevard and not 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Our recommendations are consistent with these plans. We are not recommending a change to these plans for two primary reasons; 1) A minimum of two miles between interchanges in urbanized areas is required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The spacing between 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SR 674 is less than two miles, and 2) The interchange at Apollo Beach Boulevard is projected to be used significantly more in the year 2050 than at 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Approximately 27,000 - 35,000 trips per day are projected to use each of the ramps at Apollo Beach Boulevard, whereas only 3,000 - 8,000 trips per day are projected to use each of the ramps at 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue if it were constructed instead. However, it should be noted, that just like all other projects recommended in this plan, an extensive environmental and traffic analysis will be necessary during a future PD&E study. In addition, the County is not the decision-maker on the locations of new interchanges. The County is recommending that the findings in the South County Transportation Plan be considered by FDOT during the Interchange Justification Report (IJR) process required by FHWA for approval of new interchanges.

**Question #6: What bridges crossing the Alafia River are being recommended and why?**

**Answer:** Two bridges were initially recommended as part of the South County Transportation Plan. A four-lane bridge is being recommended along the 78<sup>th</sup> Street Extension (#73). This bridge will provide an alternate north-south route for US 41 and I-75 capturing 46,000 trips per day in the year 2050. An extensive environmental analysis, as well as determining the exact location of the bridge, will be conducted during a future PD&E study. A two-lane bridge was initially recommended to extend from Bloomingdale Avenue to approximately Valrie Lane (#74). This bridge would have provided an alternate north-south route for US 301 and Bell Shoals Road capturing 16,000 trips per day in the year 2050. However, the Valrie Lane Bridge is no longer being considered due to citizen opposition and environmental constraints.

**Question #7: Why are transportation projects being recommended outside the urban service area boundary?**

**Answer:** The urban service area boundary is for the year 2025 and is updated every few years. It is anticipated that by the year 2050, the urban service area will have expanded, as the amount of people living within South County will almost double between the years 2030 and 2050. There is not enough available land inside the current urban service area boundary to locate these additional people after the year 2030. As a result, transportation improvements outside the current urban service area will be necessary to meet the growth demands. However, it should be noted that the County will evaluate the phasing of the projects in order to construct transportation projects outside the urban service area after the year 2025.

**Question #8: What projects are no longer being considered?**

**Answer:** To date, due to citizen opposition and additional technical analysis, three projects are no longer being considered as follows:

- John Moore Road Extension (#62)
- Lithia Springs Road Extension (#63)
- Valrie Lane Bridge Crossing over the Alafia River (#74)