



Meeting Summary

Task Force Meeting #6

June 24, 2016, 9:00 AM
 The Williston Crossings RV Resort (Clubhouse)
 410 NE 5th Street
 Williston, FL 32696

Task Force Members or designees present (in alphabetical order by last name)

Task Force Member, Organization	Designee (if applicable)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Byron, Assistant Secretary for Intermodal Systems Development, Florida Department of Transportation (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carmen Monroy, FDOT alternate
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jane Adams, Vice President for University Relations, University of Florida	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Honorable Scott Adams, Citrus County Commissioner	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Bays, Owner, Insurance Resources and Risk Management	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Bowman, Director of Legislative Policy & Strategies, The Nature Conservancy – Florida Chapter	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Honorable Garry Breeden, Sumter County Commissioner	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Honorable Charles Chestnut, Alachua County Commissioner	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gary Clark, Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation, Florida Department of Environmental Protection	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hugh Harling, Executive Director, East Central Florida Regional Planning Council	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thomas Hawkins, Policy Director, 1000 Friends of Florida	
<input type="checkbox"/> Scott Koons, Executive Director, North Central Florida Regional Planning Council	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy, Audubon Florida	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Honorable Stan McClain, Marion County Commissioner	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Honorable John Meeks, Levy County Commissioner	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Honorable Nick Nicholson, Hernando County Commissioner	
<input type="checkbox"/> Kevin T. Sheilley, President & CEO, Ocala/Marion County Chamber and Economic Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Parsons
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Sizemore, Citizen	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sean Sullivan, Executive Director, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Honorable Matt Surrency, Mayor, City of Hawthorne	
<input type="checkbox"/> Taylor Teepell, Director, Community Development, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Teeple, Executive Director, Northeast Florida Regional Council	





Staff: FDOT Central Office, District 2, District 5, District 7, and Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise Staff and Consultant teams

Number of Other Agency Representatives in Attendance: 10 (Refer to Attached Sign-In Sheets)

Number of Other Interested Individuals in Attendance: 143 (Refer to Attached Sign-In Sheets)



Meeting Highlights

Note: All Task Force Binder contents and meeting materials referenced (including presentations) are available for downloading at the I-75 Relief project website at www.i75relief.com.

Welcome and Introductions, Tom Byron, FDOT (Chair) – 9:05 AM

Tom Byron, Chairman of the I-75 Relief Task Force called the meeting to order and welcomed the Task Force members to the sixth meeting of the I-75 Relief Task Force. Chairman Byron noted that this meeting is being live-streamed by The Florida Channel and thanked them for their partnership. The Chairman then asked the Task Force members to introduce themselves and the interest that they are representing.

Chairman Byron explained that in addition to the public comment period noted at the end of the agenda, there would also be a time allotted for public comment for 30 minutes at the beginning of the agenda.

- Charles Lee (Audubon Florida) stressed his desire for all of the public comments to be heard prior to the Task Force coming to any final decisions, and stated that he would like any agency representatives presenting during the public comment period to be allowed more leeway in the time allotment.
 - Chairman Byron responded that he felt it was important to allow enough time for discussion among the Task Force, and he reminded the Task Force that the commissioners of each county serve on the Task Force to represent the views and concerns of the local residents.

The Chairman provided a recap of the background behind the formation of the Task Force as well as the Task Force's work to date, reading excerpts of both the I-75 Relief Task Force Purpose and Charge and the 2013 Tampa Bay to Northeast Florida Concept Report. The Chairman reminded the Task Force that Florida is growing by approximately 1,000 residents a day and there were over 105 million visitors to Florida last year, half of whom traveled to Florida by car. He explained that the charge of the Task Force was to make high level recommendations that would be further evaluated in future feasibility studies, and therefore detailed data analysis and cost projections have not yet been developed for the ideas that the Task Force has been discussing. The Chairman said that only two parts of the charge remained for detailed Task Force discussion, which would be the focus of today's meeting:

(1) recommend corridors (study areas) to be incorporated into regional and local long-range plans and to be advanced to future phases of project development, and

(2) recommend a proposed implementation plan for moving the recommended corridors forward, including potential actions by FDOT, other state agencies, local governments, and other partners.

The Chairman then introduced the meeting facilitator, Shelley Lauten, to cover the agenda and housekeeping items.

Overview of Meeting #6 and Prior Action Items – 9:10 AM

Review Meeting Agenda and Objectives, Shelley Lauten, triSect, LLC

Ms. Lauten reviewed the meeting objectives, the contents and structure of the Task Force binders, and the meeting agenda (Task Force Binder, Tab 1). Ms. Lauten explained that reaching consensus on the draft recommendations for the evaluation approach and the framework for enhanced and new transportation corridors would be the focus of the meeting, and that the draft report sections would be reviewed if time allowed at the end of the meeting. Ms. Lauten asked if there were any questions from the Task Force members.



- Mr. Lee asked if the focus of the agenda would be on discussion of the potential recommendations among the Task Force members rather than presentations by staff.
 - Ms. Lauten responded that this was the intent of the agenda for today's meeting, with only brief presentations to assist the discussions of the Task Force.

Meeting Objectives

- Reach consensus on the draft recommendations including the refined evaluation approach and framework for enhanced and new high speed, high capacity transportation corridors in the study area based on public/agency input
- Discuss implementation plan
- Review draft Task Force report sections and provide guidance for completion of report
- Identify action items and next steps

Ms. Lauten then reminded attendees to sign in at the registration desk and reminded Task Force members to fill out an evaluation form at the end of the meeting. She briefly addressed logistics about the facilities and asked members of the public to fill out an appearance card if they wished to speak during the comment period.

Approval of Meeting #5 Summary, Tom Byron, FDOT – 9:15 AM

Chairman Byron called for the approval of the Meeting #5 Summary (Task Force Binder, Tab 2). The Task Force Meeting #5 Summary was approved with no objections.

Alachua County Board of County Commissioners Resolution

Chairman Byron invited Commissioner Charles Chestnut (Alachua County) to present a letter from the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners.

Commissioner Chestnut shared that Alachua County held a public meeting regarding the work of the I-75 Relief Task Force on June 21, 2016 to hear public input. At the conclusion of this public meeting, the Commission drafted a position letter which they all signed, and Commissioner Chestnut was directed to share with the I-75 Relief Task Force at this meeting. Commissioner Chestnut then read the letter, which reads:

“Dear Chair Byron:

Thank you for providing Alachua County the opportunity to participate in the I-75 Relief Task Force process. The County Commission is pleased to have had our official Task Force representative, Commissioner Charles Chestnut, IV, and our staff, participate in this crucial infrastructure planning process. The County Commission has previously communicated our issues and concerns to the Task Force in letters dated February 2nd, 2016 and March 15th, 2016. Please consider this letter as the official position of the County Commission on the options that are currently under consideration by the Task Force based on the information that has been presented to date.

Alachua County supports the goals of the I-75 Relief Task Force aimed at improving safety and reliability along the I-75 corridor. To this end, Alachua County has written a letter of support for the 2016 Advanced Transportation Congestion Management Technology Deployment (ATCMTD) grant application submitted



by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for the I-75 Integrated Corridor Congestion Relief Technology Deployment project. Additionally, the County along with the City of Gainesville and our Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) partners in Marion County have a pending application for TRIP funding of the SW 62nd Blvd. extension within the City of Gainesville to help remove local traffic from the through lanes of I-75. The SW 62nd Blvd. project is the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) for the Gainesville Urbanized Area's top ranked priority for Surface Transportation Funding in the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.

Alachua County's position is that the Task Force should recommend to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) that any transportation capacity, operational or safety deficiencies within the region's transportation system should be met by improvements to existing transportation corridors. New transportation corridors should only be considered as alternatives once significant improvements have been planned and programmed to existing corridors. In addition to limiting impacts to the region's ecological resources and aquifer recharge areas, focusing on existing corridors avoids the risk of the premature induced conversion of Alachua County's rural landscapes to urban uses. Additionally, any new limited access transportation corridors would likely fragment the existing transportation network within Alachua County and serve to separate communities and further limit mobility within the County. Alachua County continues to incur significant expense mitigating the local and regional transportation connectivity impacts of the original construction of I-75, with one overpass currently under construction and two additional grade-separated crossing improvements identified in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

In light of the above, the County does not believe sufficient data has been presented during this process to justify the continued study of the Northern or Central "Areas of Opportunity" at this time. These corridors should be considered "Alternatives Considered but Eliminated" in future alternatives analyses aimed at resolving the purpose and need under consideration by the Task Force.

The County feels strongly that any new freight and other transportation capacity needs between Northeast Florida and Tampa should be met through the expansion of freight through rail and passenger traffic through expansion of existing corridors. Multimodalism is a hallmark of Alachua County's approach to transportation and land use planning. Non-automotive modes of transportation should be the primary consideration of the FDOT in providing additional mobility within and between these two regions.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to participate in the I-75 Relief Task Force process. Alachua County looks forward to continuing our cooperation with the FDOT in the future in order to provide mobility and economic opportunity to the State's residents, visitors and industries while preserving the unique communities, natural resources and rural landscapes of North Central Florida."

Commissioner Chestnut explained that he had additional details on revisions to some of the bullet points within the framework document which he plans to share at the appropriate point in the meeting agenda.

Chairman Byron asked if the Task Force had any questions or comments for Commissioner Chestnut.

The following questions/ comments were offered:

- Mayor Matthew Surrency (Hawthorne) asked for clarification regarding the Alachua County's position, wondering whether they are opposed to new highways only, or if they would also be opposed to improvements on U.S. 41, as that is within the northern area of opportunity and had previously been discussed as an opportunity.



- Commissioner Chestnut responded that the expansion of U.S. 41 was not discussed by the Commission, and that the northern area of opportunity was considered by the Commission as a proposed new corridor.
- Mr. Lee commented that he believes looking at improvements to U.S. 41 is reasonable, and would most likely be considered through the regular MPO process. He continued by explaining that those types of improvements would not likely cause a large diversion of traffic off of I-75. Mr. Lee said that any transformation of function to U.S. 41 that would serve as a diversion of traffic from I-75 would require U.S. 41 to look something like U.S. 19 in Tarpon Springs, and explained that he does not believe that fits within the vision of the communities along the corridor.
- Commissioner Scott Adams (Citrus County) reminded the Task Force that his personal opinion, while it differed from the majority opinion of the Citrus County Commission, was more in line with the position of the Alachua County Commission.
- Commissioner Garry Breeden (Sumter County) asked Commissioner Chestnut to clarify whether the word “corridors” in the position letter was referring to the two areas of opportunity also known as the “swaths”.
 - Commissioner Chestnut said yes.

Public Comment Period – 9:40 AM

Chairman Byron announced the first public comment period, with the reminder that another comment period would follow at the end of the agenda. Shelley Lauten reminded the speakers that there is a two minute time limit on comments, due to the large number of speakers.

- James Dick, Alachua County resident, said that he believes this is the last meeting of significance, as the Task Force members are coming to final decisions, even though all of the public’s questions have gone unanswered. Mr. Dick said that the dream for the Port of Jacksonville will never become a reality, and that the Task Force was never given the traffic data they were promised in the beginning, and the numbers that have been shown do not justify a need for anything. Mr. Dick said that during this process there has been discussion of need; however development has not been a part of that discussion. Mr. Dick then summarized an excerpt from page 6 of the Tampa Bay to Northeast Florida Concept Report Summary Report, which reads *“Improved access from rural areas to regional employment centers and external markets. Seven counties in the study area are classified as Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern due to historically high levels of poverty and unemployment: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Levy, Suwannee, and Union. There is potential for a significant acceleration of population and employment growth if economic development initiatives are successful, with the higher rates of growth most likely in rural counties that border established urban areas and those that serve as regional employment centers. The potential development of large tracts of land under single ownership, including those owned by Plum Creek Timber; Rayonier, Inc.; Foley Land and Timber Company; and Bascom Southern across a band of counties from the Gulf Coast to the Atlantic Coast could be a game changer for rural North Central Florida. Most of this region is not well connected to the rest of the state today.”* Mr. Dick emphasized Plum Creek and Foley Timber, commenting that he disagrees with the statement that the area is not well connected. He concluded by questioning who this “significant acceleration of population” and “game-changing” growth is for, as it is certainly not for the members of the public in the audience. He asked that the real reasons behind this process be clear and defined, as FDOT knew this from day one, since it is stated in the 2013 report.
- Lee McSherry introduced himself as the owner of a 760 acre farm in southwest Alachua County, which he has farmed for 42 years and explained he plans to farm for 42 more years. Mr. McSherry stated that he does not like the northern area of opportunity. Mr. McSherry said that when you draw a line on the map, you immediately



Other major discussion points regarding the mid-term set of options (above) included:

- Discussion by Charles Lee (Audubon Florida), Thomas Hawkins (1000 Friends of Florida), Janet Bowman (The Nature Conservancy), and Mayor Matt Surrency (Hawthorne) on adding the word “primary” to the first bullet point about I-75 strategies and/or moving this bullet point to the top of the framework in its own section to make this recommendation stand out in the Task Force Report as the first and primary recommendation to FDOT. Mr. Lee explained that the current location within the framework “muddies” the message that it is the Task Force’s primary focus and recommendation.
 - Mr. Kaliski stated that the implementation plan within the Final Report could be an alternative place to highlight that major capacity improvements to I-75 be the first step and immediate focus of the FDOT following the conclusion of the Task Force. He said that staff will work on options for emphasizing the importance of the I-75 recommendation in the final report.
- Mike Sizemore (Citizen Representative) said that he has concerns with including the phrase “*tolled* express lanes,” as tolls disproportionately affect low income families and the choices of travel, and he would not like to limit the language to such an option for future funding.
- Mr. Lee noted his opposition for the inclusion of the second bullet pertaining to improvements on U.S. 41 in the framework.
- Ms. Bowman requested that the second bullet be revised to discuss other regional roads in general, including U.S. 41.
 - Mr. Wood said that the language supporting improvements to other regional roads that have been previously discussed by the Task Force, and a list of these roads, is within the draft Task Force report but not in the framework document itself, as requested by the Task Force at prior meetings.
- Mr. Lee said that he would like to ensure that when evaluating possible passenger rail services, any historic rail line that has since been converted to recreational trails is precluded from consideration.
- Commissioner Stan McClain (Marion County), as well as Commissioner Scott Adams (Citrus County), noted their concerns over whether passenger rail would ever be considered “feasible” in the mid-term in this area of the state. However, they were not opposed to leaving these recommendations within the framework.
- Mayor Surrency suggested that opportunities for innovative storm water enhancements and partnerships possibly be noted in this section.
 - Mr. Wood ensured that this recommendation would be noted in the final Task Force Report, in the section regarding recommendations for enhancing conservation, where regional mitigation and other environmental strategies will be discussed as well.

On the third, long-term set of options, consensus was reached on revisions to the section heading as reflected below, excluding the support of Commissioner Chestnut as directed by the Alachua County Commission resolution.

Evaluate potential areas of opportunity for new multimodal, multiuse corridors after evaluation of I-75 and other I-75 connector roads enhancements and determination of need

- Evaluate long-term opportunities to create a **reliever corridor to the west of I-75**, including but not limited to a corridor from the northern terminus of the Suncoast Parkway 2 at S.R. 44 to I-75, considering use of existing regional roads and limited access toll segments, as well as multiple modes and purposes
- Evaluate long-term opportunities for providing a high-speed, high-capacity **multimodal/multiuse corridor between Tampa Bay and Northeast Florida**, building on options identified in the Initial Focus Area

Major discussion points regarding the long-term set of options (above) included:

- Commissioner McClain noted that, while he can live with the revised language of the section heading, he does not feel the addition is necessary, given that this approach reflects standard planning practices.
- Commissioner Chestnut explained that he must oppose any language in the third section based on the Alachua County Commission's position statement prior to today's meeting.
- Mr. Hawkins said that when he reviewed the Task Force charge in preparation for today's meeting, his interpretation of the charge for looking at options for new corridors in the long-term means that new rail corridors should hold no less weight than new highway corridors. However, the only options for new corridors currently being discussed are for the extension of the Suncoast Parkway. Therefore, he opposes the two bullets in the long-term section as well as the two areas of opportunity on the map, because they do not hold true to the charge of providing multi-modal options, and he would like those areas of opportunity removed.
 - Mayor Surrency noted his concern with Mr. Hawkins' recommendation, explaining that it leaves the location of any new multimodal and multiuse corridor completely open-ended for future studies, including the potential to study options that many Task Force members specifically oppose. He suggested that the northern area of opportunity be shortened to a connection between Suncoast Parkway 2 and U.S. 41, and that the Central Area of Opportunity be eliminated except for the small portion connecting I-75 and U.S. 301. He suggested that the language in the first bullet, "including but not limited to" be eliminated, and language be added to the report that specifically explains which options the Task Force has looked at and is not recommending for further evaluation.
 - Chairman Byron agreed that this recommendation seems to eliminate any strategic recommendation from the Task Force, and it leaves the potential location of a Suncoast Parkway extension open in future evaluations.
 - William Parsons (Ocala/Marion County Chamber and Economic Partnership) shared his concern that removing the two bullets, or either of the two areas of opportunity, would negatively impact economic development opportunities at a regional scale and hinder the future enhanced connection between Tampa Bay and Northeast Florida.
- Mr. Lee asked for clarification on the first bullet, asking if that statement is specifically referring to the two areas of opportunity as reflected on the areas of opportunity map. He expressed his concern that these areas of opportunity are not explicitly called out. He also explained his concerns that any detailed recommendations related to evaluation criteria and recommendations for avoidance areas for any potential new corridor are



currently being deferred to future evaluation studies. Mr. Lee cited the success of the incorporation of specific land use and environmental considerations during the planning of the Wekiva Parkway, including a requirement for all local governments' land use plans be amended to ensure that the rural character adjacent to the Parkway be maintained. Mr. Lee suggested that specific language be included in the recommendations to the state that would require a restriction on land use changes in the vicinity of any new corridor, and an enhanced land acquisition program for the natural lands along the corridor, modeled after the efforts of the Wekiva Parkway. He explained that if this language was included, and the language "including but not limited to" was removed, then he would be comfortable with the recommendation of the first bullet.

- Chairman Byron agreed that the intent of the language can be added to the report text such as either in the evaluation approach or the implementation plan sections and FDOT could coordinate with Charles on the exact language at a later date.
- Ten of 17 Task Force members indicated that they were comfortable with the recommendations detailed in both bullet points as is, with the addition of Mr. Lee's recommended language.
- Mayor Surrency requested a vote be taken on the removal of the Central Area of Opportunity for further consideration or study, of which 7 Task Force members supported this proposal.

Other key comments made during the discussion, which did not fit within the current framework for enhanced and new transportation corridors, and on which consensus was not reached, included:

- A three-part motion made by Mr. Lee to (1) recommend major improvements to existing I-75 infrastructure including dedicated truck lanes and tolled express lanes as the primary strategy for I-75 relief; (2) remove the northern and central areas of opportunity from further consideration; and (3) recommend to FDOT that the right of way acquisition and contracting for the Suncoast Parkway 2 project be terminated and that the Suncoast Parkway project permanently end at U.S. 98. Mr. Lee further clarified that he is not against improvements to U.S. 41 or U.S. 301, but wants to focus the main recommendation of the Task Force on improving I-75. There was lengthy discussion among the Task Force regarding the motion and the Task Force consensus was that the draft framework established by the Task Force should be the subject of consensus recommendations rather than the motion. Items 1 and 2 were revisited in later discussions documented in this summary as they related to the framework.
- A recommendation by Ms. Bowman for an additional, new category to be added in between the mid and long-term groupings (2 and 3), in the framework, as shown below. This language also was supported by Mayor Surrency, Commissioner Chestnut, and Mr. Hawkins:

Analyze Effectiveness of Optimization of Existing Corridors and Enhancements to Existing Transportation Corridors

Evaluate effectiveness of existing corridor improvements that are implemented within X year period.

Evaluate effectiveness of enhancements to existing transportation corridors that are implemented within x year period.

Evaluate how opening of Suncoast II changes regional traffic patterns.

Evaluate effect of Freight patterns change post Panamax.

Evaluate need for Tampa to Northeast Florida corridor.

Determine whether need for a new I-75 reliever corridor.

- Mr. Lee offered further revisions to this language that would further clarify and ensure opportunities for new corridors would not be considered or evaluated any further until the previous recommended improvements for existing corridors were fully *implemented*, noting the vast amount of concerns heard from the public to date as part of his reasoning.
- Mr. Wood expressed his concern that these recommendations do not reflect good planning practices, as the recommendations as they are suggested would potentially stall even the initial consideration of potential ideas and opportunities to address the future long-term transportation needs of the region for upwards of 20 years, giving the timeline for the I-4 Ultimate Project from planning to construction as an example.
- Several Task Force members noted their concern that these proposed recommendations circumvent the entire Future Corridors Planning Process, and the charge of the Task Force to look at possible future connections between Tampa Bay and Northeast Florida, which is the reason why the Task Force was formed.
 - Commissioner Nick Nicholson (Hernando County) noted that recommending that FDOT wait 20 years is not a responsible decision of the Task Force on behalf of communities they represent, and that when further studies are conducted, if specific improvements are not justified, that is the appropriate time to decide that they should not be carried forward.
 - Jane Adams (University of Florida) noted her concern that if planning is held off and a new corridor is determined to be needed in 25-plus years, the proper planning would not be in place to move construction of such a corridor forward, and the outcome would be less proactive due to the rushed decisions at that point.
 - Rebecca Bays (Insurance Resources and Risk Management) echoed Ms. Adams' concerns and questioned why members of the Task Force were second guessing the transportation professionals that have said there is a safety and congestion problem and that solutions are needed. She worried that the results would mean reactive solutions in the future rather than taking proactive solutions now.



- Ms. Bowman suggested that her bullets could be further re-worded to simply ensure that after a certain number of years, the feasibility of new corridors is *re-evaluated* to take into consideration the improvements that have been made up to that date, before moving forward with the implementation of a new corridor.
- Mr. Kaliski and Chairman Byron explained that further explanation of the Task Force’s discussion regarding the relative sequencing of implementation and the re-evaluation of need for a new corridor given improvements to existing corridors would be included in the implementation plan portion of the report.

Public Comment Period – 1:30 PM

Chairman Byron announced the second public comment period.

- Bruce Morgan said that there is absolutely no need for this entire project, and instead, the Task Force was created to hide an important agenda of sprawled growth by lobbyists and political interests. Mr. Morgan said this not about safety, because you cannot prevent accidents from happening, nor is it about congestion. Mr. Morgan said that the simple solution to those problems is to lower speed limits and have traffic slow down. Mr. Morgan insisted that the goal of the Governor and the I-75 Relief Task Force is to bring the sprawled development of South Florida to the rest of the state. He said that FDOT should focus all of its resources on maintaining the existing infrastructure and to provide for public transportation.
- Sally Ann Collins introduced herself as a 25-year resident of Levy County. She explained that she regularly travels between Coral Gables and Levy County, and while she has been told that she will be gone before any of this plan is constructed she believes that progress was made during the discussions today. Ms. Collins said U.S. 41 is not the answer and metered ramps are not the answer. She concluded that she does not support any new roads.
- John Wade said the level of service on I-75 between the Georgia line and I-275 in Tampa is a level of service B and C, except for the area around the Turnpike and I-75 interchange in Wildwood, where it is a level of service D. However, he said that this interchange is already being improved and will soon function at a level of service B or C as well. He said that no Interstate south of this region in the state operates at this good of a level of service. Therefore, he concluded that I-75 does not need an expensive reliever road to simply create a bypass. Mr. Wade said that those funds would be better used to improve I-75 and existing local roads to help remove local traffic from I-75. Citing the recent article on toll roads published in the Tampa Bay Times, Mr. Wade said that the justification for toll roads has been proven to be based on fraudulent projections, and that he does not believe the future projected traffic counts for I-75. Mr. Wade said that the need for this new toll road could be determined based on the number of trucks which would divert to use this new road, and he suggests this could be calculated by determining the number of freight trucks currently using the Suncoast Parkway. Therefore, he requests to know the current percentage of truck traffic using the Suncoast Parkway.
- Kathy Hall said that she had one thing to say when she came to the meeting today, and it involved her concerns of the environmental impacts of these proposals. She explained that after watching the deliberations of the Task Force, she realized that the Task Force is allowing the growth of South Florida to travel to North Florida communities, which are unwanted by these communities. She said that the communities have specified this in so many ways, and she does not understand why we are trying to make it easier for people to come to Florida. Instead, we need to preserve what we have and keep it the way it is. Ms. Hall said that the people in Tampa Bay and Northeast Florida need to realize that they are sacrificing clean water for the sake of getting “stuff” to them faster. Ms. Hall told a story of what she has seen in Costa Rica and the destruction of the natural environment that



accompanies the construction of large highways. Ms. Hall stressed her disbelief that 1,000 people a day are moving to Florida, saying that this problem is the issue that Florida should be tackling, rather than encouraging people to move here and ruin the quality of life for the people currently living in North Florida communities. She concluded that FDOT should look at air travel and other technologies as a better solution to transportation congestion.

- Darlene Wessner introduced herself as a Marion County resident and said that she is experiencing déjà vu from 25 years ago when the Jacksonville to Tampa road, the Turnpike extension through the Nature Coast, and the Gainesville to Orlando road were all being proposed. She said that at that time, the residents of this area said no to these plans for the sake of the environment and the water quality of the area. Ms. Wessner warned of climate change and the risk for salt water intrusion if the water table is disrupted. Ms. Wessner said that we can do without another road, however we cannot survive without our fresh water. She described a potential solution using an “auto train” which could transport passengers, vehicles, and freight through one corridor. Ms. Wessner stressed the importance of the “water spine of Florida” to preserve the water supply for the rest of the state.
- Dr. Burt Eno introduced himself as a retired University of Central Florida professor and a current resident of Rainbow Springs Villages. He explained that he is now the president of the Rainbow River Conservation as well as the president of the Property Owners Association for the Villages of Rainbow Springs. Dr. Eno said that he believed that the central area of opportunity would have been dropped by now, because it is logically an insult to the environment, and additionally splits the Dunnellon and the Rainbow River Springs communities in half. He explained that this area is becoming the center for the state’s cross-Florida trail system, which has led to an increase in the ecotourism experienced in this area in recent years. Dr. Eno said that if a highway were to run through this area it would ruin the economy of this area. Dr. Eno said that he thinks the Task Force should back off the efforts of extending the Suncoast Parkway, focus on improving existing roads, and rethink the impacts to the environment.
- Julie Castle introduced herself as an owner of a property in Archer, which is surrounded by blueberry and pine tree farms, as well as of a property in Marion County on Orange Lake. Ms. Castle stressed the beauty and uniqueness of the natural areas of North Florida and that she does not want them to change. Ms. Castle provided a statistic which states that there are more visitors to and more money spent at eco-tourism destinations, such as in National Parks, rather than Disney World. Ms. Castle shared her opposition to the northern area of opportunity due to the environmentally significant lands in that area, and explained that her position is no new corridors, and any option besides improving I-75 is unethical.
- Jill Yelberton, shared that her concern is regarding the FDOT’s application for NEPA delegation from the federal government. She explained that she is concerned at the relative weighting given to certain species for mitigation, and she questioned how objectively the state can determine its own environmental impacts with no other oversight.
- Michelle Shearer introduced herself as a Marion County resident, president of the Shady Greenway Conservation Alliance, and a member of the Ocala/Marion Transportation Planning Organization’s Citizen Advisory Committee. Ms. Shearer explained that she believes that the crash data need to be analyzed in the areas of highest occurrence to find out why crashes are happening before building any new roads. Ms. Shearer expressed her support for truck-only and express lanes on I-75. She said that we do not need roads to get our children to stay in the area; she said that children should graduate and see the world, and then return to North Florida to raise their families here because of the great trail system and the natural amenities. Ms. Shearer voiced her support for the land use provisions as described by Task Force member Charles Lee.



- Judy Etzler said that the Task Force has said they would listen to the public, yet the public has said over and over again that they do not want new roads. Ms. Etzler said that the community values the rural nature of the area, the protection of the aquifer, springs, and recharge area. She said that the Task Force has heard that new roads would be tolled, yet the truck industry as well as residents of this area, herself included, would not use toll roads are they cannot afford them.
- Lee McSherry expressed his appreciation for those Task Force members who worked today to eliminate the options for new roads. Mr. McSherry explained that he viewed the conclusion of today's meeting to mean that the communities in the northern area of opportunity have been sacrificed for someone else's vision. He indicated that the communities will oppose these recommendations.
- Bruce Borders thanked the Task Force for their time, and asked that Commissioner McClain ensure that what happened today will not happen at the next and final meeting on August 12th in Ocala. Mr. Borders noted his opinion that all members of the public are against this plan and said that with all the money spent on the Task Force, all kinds of local roads could have been improved.

Task Force Member Closing Remarks – 2:00 PM

- Mike Sizemore (Citizen Representative) clarified that he is not in favor of new roads but is in favor of the final recommendation to allow for the opportunity for evaluation of expanded mass transportation options.
- Commissioner Scott Adams (Citrus County) said that he appreciated what Commissioner Chestnut and Alachua County had to say.
- Commissioner John Meeks (Levy County) thanked everyone for coming to Levy County today and said that he thought the work of the Task Force is moving the future of this region in a positive direction.
- Mayor Matt Surrency (Hawthorne) said that he wanted to readdress the objectives of today's meeting and the definition of "consensus" established for the Task Force, which was to seek *consensus recommendations, which* was partially defined in the [Consensus Decision-Making Process](#) as a "*participatory process whereby, on matters of substance, the Task Force members strive for agreements that all members can accept, support, live with, or agree not to oppose...*" Mayor Surrency concluded that any recommendations on which consensus was not reached should be eliminated.
- William Parsons (Ocala/Marion County Chamber and Economic Partnership) thanked staff and members of the Task Force.
- Charles Lee (Audubon Florida) said that the outcome of today's meeting was much better from when the meeting started and explained that he is still concerned about the environmental effects of a new road. Mr. Lee said that his advice for those opposed to the idea of a new road is to get organized and reach out to County Commissions and legislators. He said that their involvement and concerns should not end at the conclusion of the Task Force, but that they should continue to follow the process. Mr. Lee concluded that what could be derived from today's meeting is that I-75 needs priority attention and should be delivered by FDOT.
- Hugh Harling (East Central Florida Regional Planning Council) expressed his concern that the input from some of the Task Force members would unnecessarily force the FDOT to wait to make improvements in other areas until improvements are complete on I-75 even though many of these improvements would most likely not be opposed by the locals, such as additional road rangers and other operational improvements.



- Commissioner Charles Chestnut (Alachua County) thanked the Task Force for the opportunity to share the position letter of the Alachua County Commission.
- Janet Bowman (The Nature Conservancy) thanked the staff for the work they put into hosting the community open houses, and stated that addressing I-75 as soon as possible is the first priority. Ms. Bowman asked for an opportunity to provide specific language and feedback on draft language in the Task Force report prior to the next Task Force meeting.
- Rebecca Bays (Insurance Resources and Risk Management) thanked the staff and the public that attended and shared their input today.

Meeting Adjourned – 2:10 PM

DRAFT