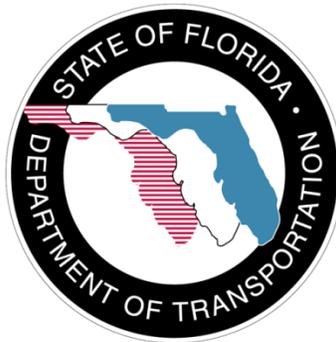


# **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**REPORTING PERIOD**

**(July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010)**



**RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

**(REDI)**

**The Florida Department of Transportation  
2010 - Annual  
Rural Economic Development Initiative Report**

**Table of Contents**

**Executive Summary ..... 3, 4**

**Map of Rural Florida..... 5**

**Projects Coordinated by FDOT (see district spreadsheets for reports of projects)**

**District 1 .....6 - 8**

**District 2.....9 - 14**

**District 3..... 15**

**District 4..... 16 - 23**

**District 5.....(refer to spreadsheet)**

**Note: Jobs Created .....24**

**Internal Agency Education / Advocacy**

**Florida Consultative Planning Process for Non-metropolitan Areas..... 25**

**Florida Department of Transportation  
Rural Economic Development Initiative  
2010 Annual Report  
July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010**

**Executive Summary**

*The Annual 2010 REDI Report for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has been prepared pursuant to section 288.0656(8), Florida Statutes. Information included in this report was received from the relevant District Offices, as well as the Offices of Policy Planning and Traffic Engineering and Operations.*

The Florida Department of Transportation's mission is to provide a safe transportation system that ensures the mobility of people and goods, enhances economic prosperity and preserves the quality of our environment and communities. The 2025 Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) identifies goals, objectives, and strategies to guide transportation decisions in Florida over the next 20 years. Of significance to the rural areas of the State, the FTP addresses how Florida's transportation system can meet the mobility needs of our growing population, help make our economy more competitive, help build sustainable communities, and help preserve our natural environment.

The Department has established policy to provide a more cohesive and coordinated plan for meeting the transportation needs of our communities throughout the state. Our role in this process is to provide funding and deliver projects Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and local government officials have chosen as their priorities to the maximum extent feasible. The Department recognizes the critical infrastructure needs of our rural communities and supports the work of the Rural Economic Development Initiative to help address these priorities.

Additionally, the Department continues to deliver state and federal programs and projects to better serve the needs of non-metropolitan areas of the state. A comprehensive public involvement process has been developed to facilitate input from rural communities. Staff from the districts and Central Office continue to work closely with other state and federal agencies, the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, Regional Planning Councils, County Commissions, Enterprise Florida, Inc., Visit Florida and others representing rural interests to provide assistance to help meet rural priorities. Partnerships and outreach with the Florida League of Cities, Florida Association of Counties, Florida Main Street Program, Florida Redevelopment Association and the Small County Coalition are standard business practice. REDI and other rural program activities are coordinated by the Department's REDI Representative, in conjunction with the various District offices and the Turnpike Enterprise.

The Department has developed guidelines, requirements, and criteria for the various funding programs established through the Department's Transportation Incentive Programs. The Department has also developed and implemented a program to assist rural communities by waiving or reducing local match requirements, upon request, for projects within their communities. Information about these programs is contained in this report, the Department's

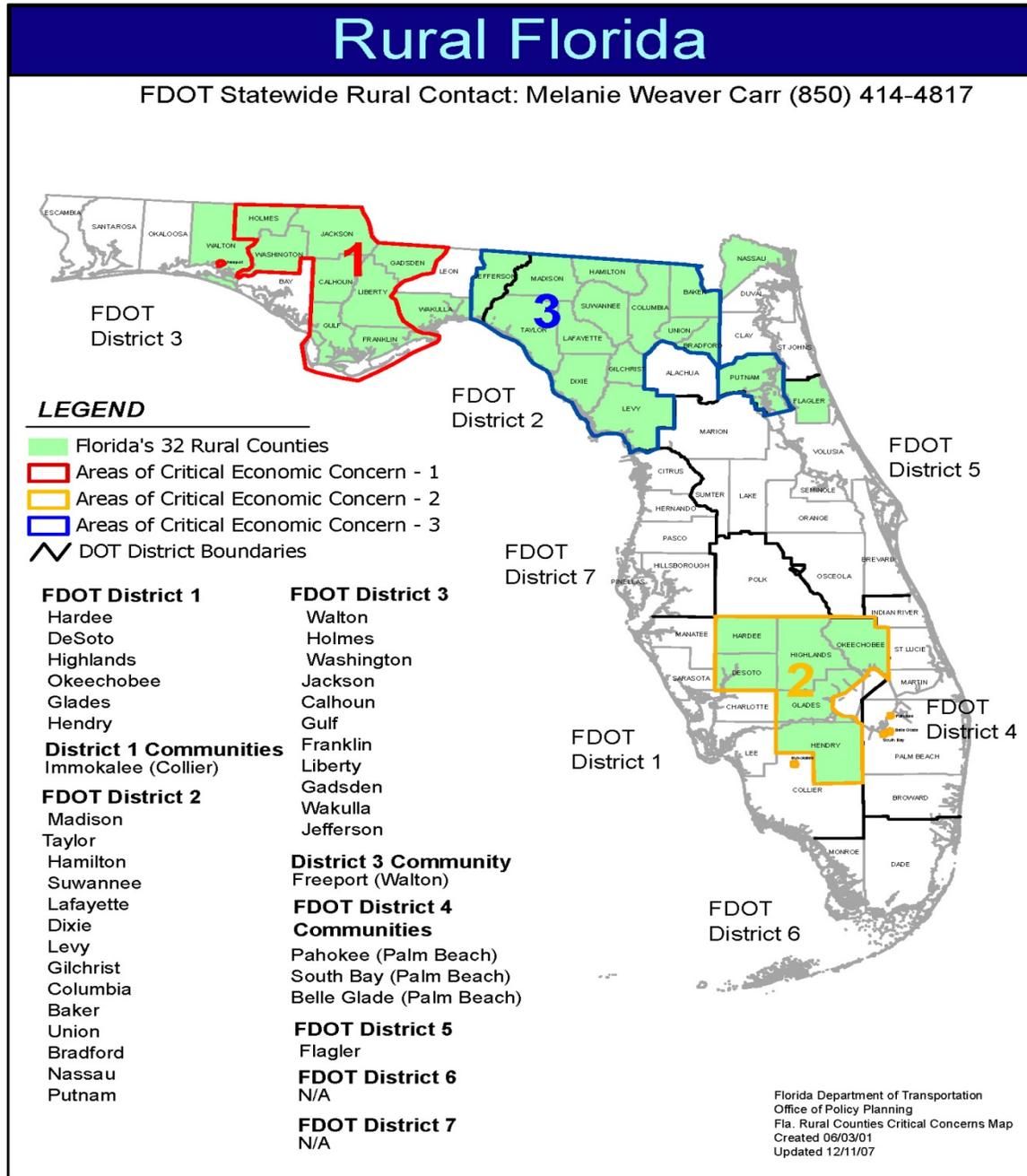
Internet website, as well as the “Florida Resource Directory,” maintained by the Governor’s Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development.

This report has been prepared by the Florida Department of Transportation, Office of Policy Planning. For additional information, contact Melanie Weaver Carr, REDI Representative and Statewide Rural Development Coordinator, at (850) 414-4817, or [melanie.carr@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:melanie.carr@dot.state.fl.us).

# Map of Rural Florida

The map identifies Florida's:

- rural counties (32)
- counties within the three "Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern"
- FDOT Districts (7)



## **Projects Coordinated by FDOT**

*Note: FDOT's REDI report is organized by district/county. The South Central Florida RACEC is totally encompassed within D1. The North Central Florida RACEC is encompassed within D2 and also includes Jefferson county from D3. The Northwest Florida RACEC is totally encompassed within D3. The remaining rural counties are included with the following districts:*

- *Wakulla – District 1*
- *Nassau – District 2*
- *Walton – District 3*
- *Flagler – District 5*

## **District One REDI Report**

District One Rural Community Liaisons: Mark Clark, Susan King, Trinity Scott

- Solicited new candidate stimulus projects from local cities and counties, coordinated the field review of projects by consultant team, reviewed and commented on the draft constructability studies.
- Provided routine coordination with rural county staff and management regarding projects thru meetings, phone conversations, letters and emails regarding various transportation issues.
- Attended Central Florida Regional Planning Council and Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council meetings.
- Participated in the Central Florida Regional Planning Councils' Heartland 2060 vision plan workshops and subcommittee meetings.
- Participated in the FTP workshop in Highlands County
- Solicited new candidate projects for the school infrastructure program, coordinated field review and assisted in the preparation of project submittal.
- Reviewed County Commission agendas weekly for transportation issues and reported issues to management.
- Solicited and coordinated the new highway priority projects from the rural county staff and County Commissions.
- Coordinated transportation enhancement projects with rural counties and cities.
- Act as emergency management liaison to the rural counties
- Solicited Federal Discretionary Grants from rural counties
- Solicited State funded County Incentive Grant Program projects.
- Assisted rural counties with TIGER II grant information
- Reviewed Intergovernmental Coordination and Review(ICAR) for proposed projects in the rural counties.

## **District One Northern Rural Counties including Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee:**

Rural Community Liaisons: Jan Parham and Roxann Lake

- Attended Central Florida Regional Planning Council Meetings.

## **District One Southern Rural Counties, including Desoto, Glades and Hendry Counties:**

### **Julia Davis**

- Attended meetings of the Glades and Hendry Local Coordinating Board
- Attended meeting of the DeSoto Local Coordinating Board
- Attended meetings of the Collier Local Coordinating Board (covers Immokalee)
- Attended meetings of the LORI group (Lake Okeechobee Regional Initiative)
- Conducted two workshops on the FTA 5310 grant application process

### **Heartland Rural Mobility Plan**

The District One, Modal Development Office continues to partner with Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative, Inc. (FHREDI) to develop and implement a mobility (passenger transportation) improvement process for the six counties and four communities in the FHREDI region. This project is known as the *Heartland Rural Mobility Plan*.

This region is also known as the South Central Florida Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC). It is comprised of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties; Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay in Palm Beach County, and the community of Immokalee in eastern Collier County. The region continues to experience economic distress, including extraordinary unemployment rates.

The FHREDI region has significant percentages of minority and low-income populations, and rates of individuals below the poverty level higher than the United States average. All of these data point to the importance of achieving the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan's goal of rural public transportation improvement.

During this past year, the rural public transit subcommittee of the Lake Okeechobee Regional Initiative, including staff from FHREDI, the Collins Center for Public Policy, and the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization made significant progress with its three-to-five year financial sustainability plan for the Clewiston – Belle Glade Community Bus Route.

This route continues to serve minorities, minority neighborhoods, people with disabilities, the rural poor, including low-income and minority passengers who rely on the bus service for jobs and classes at the local state college. Recently, District One Public Transit Office staff met with this subcommittee while the group evaluated extension of the route to Moore Haven to accommodate the public transit needs of rural people in connection with a new rural dental and health clinic scheduled to open in January 2011. The Moore Haven extension is also a Heartland Rural Mobility Plan project priority.

In this reporting period, the Central Office sent to District One additional financial support for the Clewiston – Belle Glade Community Bus Route. The additional financial resource resulted through astute Central Office management of Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act rural public transit funds, and redirection of residual funds to the eligible operating assistance category.

### **The Clewiston- Belle Glade Community Bus Route**

Pursuant to information from District Four:

“More than 20% of the population in the Glades area has no access to an automobile. To help address this situation, the Lake Region Commuter Route, a fixed route transit service operated by Palm Tran linking Clewiston, South Bay, Belle Glade and Pahokee to West Palm Beach, was started in 2002. District Four provided a total of \$945,000 for the project. Due to lower than expected costs, this funding extended beyond the initial three-year period for the service until December 2007. In response to growing ridership and increased demand, FDOT, Palm Beach County and Hendry County formed a partnership to share the costs to continue service in 2008. In December 2008, District Four and District One agreed to assist in continuing this service for an additional two months at an approximate cost of \$40,000.”

In March 2009, District One entered an agreement with Good Wheels, Inc, to continue the Clewiston-Belle Glade Community Bus Route without any disruption of service. The Clewiston-Belle Glade Community Bus Route connects with Palm Tran's Lakes Region Commuter Route providing service between West Palm Beach and the Palm Beach County communities along the lower Lake Okeechobee area. District One supplied State Transit Discretionary program funds for route operations. Good Wheels, Inc. utilizes FTA 5311 Rural Public transit funds to support this route.

### **Immokalee**

The Collier Area Transit system (“CAT”) provides fixed route service and paratransit service to the community of Immokalee. During the reporting period, District One supplied several grants which provided capital equipment (buses and vans) as well as operating assistance, to the CTA system. Some of this funding went toward a route which serves Immokalee.

## **District Two REDI Report**

### **Reporting Rural County Meetings from 07/01/2009 to 06/30/2010**

Kim Evans, Rural County Community Liaison

#### **Tentative Work Program Meetings**

December 7, 2009 – Suwannee River Water Management District in Live Oak, Florida. Counties present were Taylor, Madison, Lafayette, Hamilton and Suwannee County

December 8, 2009 – FDOT District Two Office in Lake City, Florida. Counties present were Levy, Dixie, Gilchrist, Bradford, Union and Columbia County

December 15, 2009 – FDOT District Two Urban Office in Jacksonville, Florida. Rural Counties present were Baker, Putnam and Nassau

#### **Board of County Commissioners Meetings to Discuss the Five Year Work Program**

May 3, 2010 – Gilchrist County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 3, 2010 – Taylor County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 4, 2010 – Levy County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 5, 2010 – Madison County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 6, 2010 – Dixie County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 6, 2010 – Columbia County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 10, 2010 – Lafayette County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 17, 2010 – Union County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 18, 2010 – Suwannee County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 18, 2010 – Hamilton County Board of County Commission Meeting

May 20, 2010 – Bradford County Board of County Commission Meeting

#### **Rural Public Meeting or Workshops**

September 15, 2009 – Public Meeting -\_Access Management Classification Changes, US 90 West from I-75 to Bascom Norris Drive, US 90 East from Lake City Airport to NE Barts Terrace and SR-47 from SW Ridge Street to US 41 in Columbia County

September 17, 2009 – Public Workshop - 2010 Regional Workshop, Meeting held in Gainesville, Florida. Even though this workshop was held in Gainesville, the surrounding rural counties were invited

September 22, 2010 – Public Workshop - 2010 Regional Workshop, Meeting held in Jacksonville, Florida, Even though this workshop was held in Jacksonville, the surrounding rural counties were invited.

April 7, 2010 – Public Meeting - Palatka to Lake Butler Trail State Park Right Turn Lane. Meeting held in Putnam County Administration Building in Putnam County

### **Rural Meetings attended by District Planning Office**

July 14, 2009 - Putnam County – Putnam County Trails

August 20, 2009 – Bradford County – 144<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SR 100

October 7, 2009 – Suwannee County – Catalyst Project (teleconference)

October 21, 2009 – SRWMD – O'Leno Trailhead Meeting at the District Office

October 22, 2009 – Lake City – North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

November 2, 2009 – Taylor County Commission Meeting

December 3, 2009 – Lake City - North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

December 16, 2009 – Suwannee County – Live Oak Train Depot

January 11, 2010 – Putnam County – Putnam County Trails

January 22, 2010 – North Central Florida Regional Planning Council – Baker County

March 2, 2010 – Levy County – Levy County Bridges

March 9, 2010 – Madison County – Drainage Repair in Greenville

March 16, 2010 – Columbia County – Lake City Avenue Sidewalk

May 12, 2010 – Bradford County – Lawtey Visionary Meeting

May 20, 2010 – Suwannee County – Live Oak 6<sup>th</sup> Street Sidewalk Meeting

June 2, 2010 – Suwannee County Catalyst Meeting (teleconference)

June 15, 2010 – Bradford County – City of Starke – Starke Bypass

June 16, 2010 – Madison County – CR 150 Bridge

## **Rural Meetings attended by Jacksonville Urban Planning Office**

### Town of Newberry

12/15/2009 – Discuss proposed text amendments to Comprehensive Plan (DCA)

### Baker County

7/13/2009 – Cedar Creek DRI

10/15/2009 – Reality Check First Coast in Baker County. Local citizens mapped the desired locations and densities of population and employment through the year 2060. Event orchestrated by Northeast Florida Regional Council in collaboration with the Urban Land Institute. Meeting held in Baker County AG Center.

10/28/2009 – Met with Baker County staff to discuss Baker County's concurrency management system and FDOT concerns. Meeting held at FDOT Jacksonville Urban Office.

1/26/10 – Met with Baker County Staff and developers regarding Jackson-Shaw Land Use Amendment and Concurrency – Urban Office

2/25/10 – Met with Baker County Staff and developers regarding Jackson-Shaw Land Use Amendment and Concurrency – Urban Office

6/3/2010 – I-10 Parallel Corridor discussion

### Nassau County

7/1/2009 – Discussion with Nassau County concerning traffic volumes on SR 200. Meeting held at FDOT Jacksonville Urban Office

7/10/2009 – Piney Island Discussion

8/10/09 – Met with developers and Permits regarding a property near SR 200 & I-95– Urban Office

8/18/09 – Went to City Council meeting to clarify if the City wanted to remove on street parking in favor of bike lanes on SR 200 in Fernandina Beach – Fernandina Beach City Hall

8/25/09 – Met with City planning staff regarding Amelia Island Bike Trail proposal - Fernandina Beach City Hall

9/22/09 – Met with Nassau County Planning staff regarding the County's Concurrency Management System – Urban Office

10/14/09 – Was on a panel that included Fernandina Beach City and Nassau County Staff regarding the Amelia Island Bike Trail - Fernandina Beach Police Station

10/22/09 – Met with Nassau County Staff and developers regarding the creation of a joint use pond – Urban Office

11/4/09 – Met with Fernandina Beach Staff and citizens regarding the procedure to apply for Safe Routes to School – Fernandina Beach

12/22/09 – Met with Nassau County Staff and developers for a methodology for a concurrency application for a church – Urban Office

1/21/10 – Met with Nassau County Staff and developers regarding Terra Pointe Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Urban Office

2/10/10 – Went to Nassau County Boardroom where the Commission was hearing an appeal for transportation concurrency – Nassau County James S. Page Governmental Complex

3/19/2010 – Nassau County discussion of Long Range Transportation Plan. Meeting at FDOT Jacksonville Urban Office.

4/20/10 – Met with Nassau County Staff regarding a PD&E study for Chester Road – Urban Office

6/7/10 – Met with Nassau County Staff regarding an upcoming resurfacing project on SR 200 near Yulee – Urban Office

6/15/10 – Met with Nassau County Staff and developers regarding a methodology for a Future Land Use Map Amendment (East Nassau Planning Area) – North East Florida Regional Council

#### Putnam County

7/29/2009 –Putnam County Local Government in Cooperation (LOGIC) Meeting. Various local leaders and government agencies discussed issues and events in Putnam County. Upcoming Work Program projects in Putnam County were discussed. Meeting held in Palatka.

11/16/2009 – Reality Check First Coast in Putnam County. Local citizens mapped the desired locations and densities of population and employment through the year 2060. Event orchestrated by Northeast Florida Regional Council in collaboration with the Urban Land Institute. Meeting held at the AG Center in Putnam County.

2/3/2010– Met with Putnam County Planning Consultant to discuss level of service and Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) issues in Putnam County. Meeting held at FDOT Jacksonville Urban Office.

2/22/2010 – Putnam County EAR (GMB)

5/11/2010 – Putnam County Board of County Commissioner’s Meeting. James Bennett discussed FDOT Work Program.

#### Taylor County

11/5/2009 – Foley MDRI methodology discussion

12/1/09 – Met with Taylor County Staff and developers regarding a proposed Master Planned DRI methodology meeting – North Central Florida Regional Council

12/14/2009 – Foley MDRI and Taylor County EAR Meeting

4/8/2010 & 4/20/2010 – Taylor County EAR Discussion (DCA) and follow up

4/28/2010 & 4/29/2010 – Taylor County EAR update

5/3/2010 – Taylor County EAR model distribution

5/11/2010 – Taylor County BOCC Work Program update

#### Union County

10/5/2009 – Scope for alternative concurrency mitigation study – conference call

1/22/2010- Alternative concurrency study (conference call)

2/5/2010 – Concurrency Scope discussion

6/3/2010 – SR 26 Corridor kickoff meeting

### **Special Rural Projects and Activities**

Baker County highlighted the rural vanpooling project this year in the Baker County Press. See article below.

Joel Addington  
News Editor

[reporter@bakercountypress.com](mailto:reporter@bakercountypress.com)

*Commuters spending more than \$21 a week driving to and from work could save big by participating in the Florida Rural Vanpool Program. The Florida Department of Transportation [FDOT] is using financial support from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the stimulus package, to offset 60 percent of the cost for “vanpools” in 28 rural Florida counties, including Baker, during the next 21 months. FDOT partnered with VSPI, Inc. of Troy, Michigan to launch a vanpool program designed to reduce commuting costs, highway traffic and vehicle emissions. According to estimates from Jim Cipollone, VPSI’s Florida manager, commuters going from Macclenny to Jacksonville could pay as little as \$44 a month to participate in a vanpool, provided their route is roughly 68 miles round-trip and they join 14 other riders to share 40 percent of the total operating costs.*

### **United We Guide Mobility Management Pilot Project in Putnam County**

The Florida Departments of Transportation, Elder Affairs, Health, Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Florida Highway Patrol and Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged developed and piloted a unique mobility management program called, “United We Guide”, where we trained the Community Transportation Coordinators in both Putnam and St. Johns counties to be true mobility managers.

Ride Solution, Inc. serves as the Community Transportation Coordinator for Putnam County, an agency already familiar with the unique transportation needs of seniors and the transportation disadvantaged populations living within their county. Ride Solution staff was trained by the United We Guide team to provide one-on-one assistance to seniors in their county who need help with transportation, safety or mobility issues. The Mobility Manager worked with their individual transportation needs and matched them to the appropriate resource. Seniors living in Putnam County were able to dial one number (386) 325-9999 and listen to voice prompts directing them to their Mobility Manager.

By training the Mobility Managers on available state transportation safety and mobility resources, seniors who may no longer be safe to drive were provided with alternative mobility means to remain independent and active within their community. The program also provided families with the ability to make private choices when driving is no longer a safe option.

In addition to providing support and training, the United We Guide Team also developed transportation guide books listing specific safety and mobility information and resources for Putnam County. The Putnam County transportation guide book can be accessed at: <http://www.safeandmobileseniors.org/pdfs/PutnamUWGTransportationGuidebook.pdf>

While the pilot program ended in December 2009, both Putnam and St. Johns are continuing to promote and take calls on the program. The United We Guide Team continues to promote and support both pilot counties and to explore funding to continue this innovative mobility manager program.

For more information on this program, please contact Gail Holley:

[gail.holley@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:gail.holley@dot.state.fl.us)

**District 3 2010 REDI Report**

<b>Project County</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting Title</b>
Calhoun County	7/21/2009	Work Program Meeting
Calhoun County	2/2/2010	FTP PIP Meeting
District Wide	5/25/2010	Horizon 2060 Public Workshop - Florida Transportation Plan Meetings
Franklin County	8/18/2009	Work Program Meeting
Gulf County	8/25/2009	Work Program Meeting
Gulf County	5/18/2010	State Road 71 (SR 71) Construction Public Information Meeting
Holmes County	7/14/2009	Work Program Meeting
Holmes County	6/1/2010	Brackin Road over Caney Branch Bridge (Bridge No. 52413)
Jackson County	9/8/2009	Work Program Meeting
Jackson County	4/1/2010	State Road 10 (US 90) Public Information Meeting
Jackson County	4/15/2010	State Road 77 Public Information Meeting
Jackson County	6/17/2010	2060 FTP Regional Workshop
Liberty County	8/4/2009	Work Program Meeting
Walton County	3/25/2010	Freeport City Council Meeting
Washington County	3/23/2010	Farrell Nelson Road over Flat Creek Bridge Public Information Meeting



## **District 4**

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### **South Central Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern: Cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay in Palm Beach County**

Larry Hymowitz, Mobility Coordinator

---

#### **I. Rural Projects/Awards/Services Coordinated by REDI/REDI Agencies**

Please see District 4 spreadsheet.

#### **II. Recommendations - Statutory/Regulatory Flexibility**

District Four previously worked with Pahokee and Belle Glade to address financial concerns over the relocation of water mains necessary for construction projects along US 441. The cities accepted interest free loans in FY 04/05 and 06/07 to cover costs associated with utility relocation to be repaid over a 15-year period. Both cities are current with their repayment obligations.

#### **III. Special Initiatives or Efforts**

District Four continues to coordinate rural-related activities with District One and hold informational and other sessions with groups such as the Palm Beach MPO.

##### **Growth Management**

District Four continues to participate as a reviewing agency and technical assistance resource in the State's local government comprehensive planning process applicable to Pahokee, South Bay and Belle Glade.

##### **Inland Port/Intermodal Logistics Center (ILC) - Background**

Phase I of a South Florida Inland Port Feasibility Study was completed in 2007 and the final recommendations recognized that existing markets would not be attracted to an inland facility. The study reported that new markets would have the potential if regionally connected to Port Everglades and Miami as well as the Port of Palm Beach.

Study conclusions:

- The State should work with local and regional partners to promote consideration of a mixed use freight hub that would directly serve the Port of Palm Beach;
- Maximize use of existing transportation corridors;
- Provide a variety of transportation, distribution, and warehousing facilities;
- Promote regional economic development;
- Dependency on public and private investments.

FDOT allocated \$200,000 for a Phase II analysis that included a market analysis of an Inland Port facility. Phase II began in January 2008 and the market analysis is complete. It revealed the following conclusions:

- The analysis projected that 80 million square feet of distribution facilities are needed to serve the southern tip of Florida over the next 20 years.
- Phase II showed that if land costs and transportation costs were controllable and able to compete with other areas of the state, a large complex is feasible.

A Task Force was established by the Port of Palm Beach Board to actively promote the implementation of an inland facility. Membership included Port of Palm Beach Staff and Consultant, Palm Beach County Deputy Administrator, Palm Beach County Economic Development staff, Lake Okeechobee Redevelopment Enterprise (LORE); Palm Beach County; Port of Palm Beach Lobbyists and FDOT District 4.

The Task Force deemed it necessary to develop a competitive process to identify the best location, including environmental impacts, growth management, economic development etc. Additionally, it is apparent that no governmental agency has the resources to develop a proposal as large as the Inland Port concept.

The team was focusing on a private partner to provide development and land concessions and utilizing Federal Private Activity Bonds to finance development.

#### **Inland Port/Intermodal Logistics Center (ILC) - 2010 Update**

The proposed Inland Port/Intermodal Logistics Center project is now being championed by two private developers; one associated with St. Lucie County and the other Palm Beach County. The Port of Palm Beach has formally rescinded its Request for Proposals for the Inland Port/Intermodal Logistics Center. St. Lucie County has transmitted a proposed Land Use Amendment to the Department of Community Affairs to amend 7,100 acres from Agriculture to Heavy Industrial. Palm Beach County is now reviewing a proposal from Florida Crystals to entertain a proposed 800 acre Land Use Amendment between Belle Glade and South Bay from Low Density Residential to Industrial.

#### **US 27 Freight Corridor Feasibility Study - Background**

District Four initiated a feasibility study of US 27 as a reuse corridor/exclusive freight corridor with limits extending the Hialeah Yard in Miami-Dade County to the Florida Heartland (Glades) area. Logistics and distribution, consistent with an inland port, is one of five target industries under consideration as part of the Rural Economic Development Catalyst Project for the South Central Rural Area of Economic Concern.

## **US 27 Freight Corridor Feasibility Study - 2010 Update**

FDOT has completed the feasibility study reviewing the potential for freight rail connecting rail extensions in Western Miami-Dade County to rail infrastructure in the Glades area. The study identified 10 potential alignments and no fatal flaws per se, however, stakeholders indicated substantial engineering, environmental and public benefit analysis were warranted to assess the viability of the proposal. Funding for a proposed Planning and Conceptual Engineering (PACE) study has been allocated and could be underway in early 2011.

## **US-441 Corridor Feasibility Study**

US-441 is designated as an Emerging Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) corridor on the statewide SIS network. It is significant for the movement of freight and goods, particularly agricultural products, from South-Central Florida to the central and northern parts of the state and the rest of the country. The corridor also performs important roles in hurricane and emergency evacuation response and recovery for South-Central Florida. The corridor is located within the Heartland Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (which includes Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay), where agriculture and environmental tourism are the principal economic drivers.

The purpose of this study was to investigate potential measures and/or actions required to maximize the freight and general traffic-carrying capacity of the US-441 (SR-80/SR-15) corridor, between SR-25 (US-27) in South Bay and the intersection with SR-70, located south of the City of Okeechobee.

The study identified a set of strategies to accommodate projected increases in the movement of freight and goods and to improve safety and traffic flow on the SR-15 (US-441) corridor in Palm Beach and Okeechobee counties. The study also identified and ranked potential alignment alternatives for a truck by-pass route on new alignment. The study was completed in February 2010. A qualitative assessment of various intersections within the project area was conducted to evaluate operational conditions during the peak season, but no physical improvements were identified for the short term.

The results of the study included two corridor improvement strategies, as follows:

1. Short-term Operational/Safety Improvements (improvements that are relatively low-cost within existing right-of-way that can be implemented immediately)
  - a. Intersection qualitative assessments
  - b. SR-715/Belle Glade Traffic Operations Study
  - c. SR-15/SR-729/Muck City Road Traffic Operations Study
  - d. SR-15 Pahokee Traffic Operations Study
  - e. Access Management Re-Classification Study

2. Long-Term Needs
  - a. SR-80 Truck By-Pass PD&E Study
  - b. SR-80 Traffic Operations Study
  - c. Corridor shoulder widening
  - d. Corridor widening (if/when warranted)

These results will assist in the identification of measures that should be undertaken by FDOT to meet the transportation needs associated with the long-term economic vitality of the region.

### **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – City of Belle Glade Project**

The \$2,200,000 Belle Glade Southeast 3<sup>rd</sup> Street project, from MLK Jr. Blvd to Ave G, will provide much needed safety and infrastructure improvements to an area in desperate need of upgrade and repair. Currently the street lacks drainage, sidewalks and lies within an elementary school zone. The project involves reconstruction of the roadway with curb and gutter, sidewalks, closed drainage and lighting. The project is expected to create 31 jobs. This design-build project was let on 10/30/2009 and was awarded to a design-build firm on 11/03/2009. The project is expected to be under construction by July 2010.

### **Regional Greenways and Trails**

The Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) is part of the Florida National Scenic Trail, one of eight federally designated National Scenic Trails in the United States. Lake Okeechobee, the second largest freshwater lake within the United States, is an internationally significant ecosystem linked to the Everglades and a largely untapped national and international attraction. The LOST consists of a multi-use recreational trail on top of the Herbert Hoover Dike around the 115-mile circumference of the lake. It also includes over 20 trailhead facilities both on and adjacent to the dike. Approximately 65 miles of the trail is paved, and the remaining sections are comprised of a crushed stone surface.

Planned improvements include trail surface enhancement, universal access, bicycle / pedestrian bridges over canals and around water control structures, picnic shelters, parking, lighting, restrooms, interpretive signing/kiosks, equestrian facilities, and campsites. Improvements will better accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, sightseers, naturalists, skaters, picnickers, campers, fishermen, paddlers and the physically challenged.

The Glades area has one of the highest unemployment rates in the State. The LOST will provide the basis for future employment from eco-tourism, hiking, bicycling and fishing, as well as support businesses such as restaurants, lodging, outfitting and other trail-related sales and services. The ultimate goal is to attract national and international visitors providing economic benefits to Glades area communities.

Other agencies participating in the LOST project are the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD); the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP); the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE); Martin, Palm Beach, Glades, Hendry and Okeechobee counties; the Palm Beach MPO; and municipal governments.

Federal enhancement funds (\$12.5 million) were used to partially complete the improvements in trail master plans prepared by District One and District Four. Construction of Segment 1 of the trail, from Port Mayaca to the Kissimmee River, was completed in fall 2004. Construction of Segment 2, from Moore Haven to Pahokee, was completed in April 2005. In 2007, District Four commented on the need to mitigate for impacts to the LOST from major rehabilitation of the dike through the Intergovernmental Coordination Review (ICAR) process. The ACOE had stated that it would not be responsible for repairing any damage incurred through its dike rehabilitation project. FDOT and the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) sent letters to the ACOE that urged reconstruction of the LOST, should any damage occur while undertaking the Project.

Palm Beach County's plan to improve access and enhance tourism opportunities for communities along the LOST includes ongoing trail development within the Ocean to Lake Greenway, which runs 72 miles from Hobe Sound Beach in Martin County to Lake Okeechobee near Port Mayaca. The greenway, recognized as a priority corridor by the FDEP Office of Greenways and Trails, contains trail facilities that host a variety of users – hikers, bikers and equestrians. Many trails are shared-use, and some are set aside solely for the utilization of a particular user group. For example, the Ocean to Lake spur of the Florida National Scenic Trail is restricted to hiking only. The majority of Northeast Everglades Natural Area (NENA) Plan lies within the Greenway, and hosts various shared-use pathways that are aggressively undergoing further development at this time. The Palm Beach MPO and the Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management Department continue to place a high priority on funding for the Ocean to Lake Greenway facilities.

A total of \$1,295,800, including \$500,000 in federal enhancement and \$795,800 in local funds, is programmed to contribute to rehabilitation of a Railroad Cottage Enhancement Project in South Bay, and enhanced connections to the LOST and South Bay RV Campground. Further construction progress is awaiting additional appropriations to the project from FDEP. The Palm Beach MPO assisted in turning over administration of this project from the City of South Bay to Palm Beach County Parks Department, which had more staff resources to carry out the project. A Notice to Proceed has been issued on the project.

Another \$549,149 in enhancement funds are in various stages of production for construction of paved multi-use pathways connecting the downtowns of Belle Glade and South Bay to the LOST (S. Canal Street from SR-715 to SR-80 and US 27 from South Bay to the LOST). Additionally, regional connections from the eastern urbanized portions of Palm Beach County west to the Glades are being examined. Specifically, the Palm Beach Canal has been recognized as a potential future greenway linkage between eastern and western Palm Beach County.

The Pahokee LOST Trail Connector Project was determined not feasible and was removed from the Work Program due to conflicts with long-term rehabilitation of the Herbert Hoover Dike. Since there is no replacement project that could be let in 2011 in the Glades area, FDOT policy requires that the funds be retained in Tallahassee for reprogramming elsewhere.

As part of the development of the Palm Beach County Bicycle Transportation Master Plan, the Palm Beach MPO, along with its planning consultant, held one of four County public participation workshops in Glades communities on April 14th, 2010. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain public input from residents on bicycle transportation needs in Western Palm Beach County.

### **Clewiston- Belle Glade Community Bus Route - Background**

More than 20% of the population in the Glades area has no access to an automobile. To help address this situation, the Clewiston- Belle Glade Community Bus Route, a fixed route transit service operated by Palm Tran linking Clewiston, South Bay, Belle Glade and Pahokee to West Palm Beach, was started in 2002. District Four provided a total of \$945,000 for the project. Due to lower than expected costs, this funding extended beyond the initial three-year period for the service until December 2007. In response to growing ridership and increased demand, FDOT, Palm Beach County and Hendry County formed a partnership to share the costs to continue service in 2008. In December 2008, District Four and District One agreed to assist in continuing this service for an additional two months at an approximate cost of \$40,000. In March 2009, District One entered an agreement with Good Wheels, Inc, to continue the route without any disruption of service.

### **Clewiston- Belle Glade Community Bus Route - 2010 Update**

District One supplied \$75,000 in State Transit Discretionary program funds for route operations. Good Wheels, Inc. also utilizes FTA 5311 Rural Public transit funds to support this route.

### **Belle Glade Express - Background**

District Four awarded Belle Glade \$340,000 in service development funds in FY 09/10 for a transit shelter and new shuttle service. The service will provide stops in high density residential areas to transport citizens to and from shopping areas, the hospital and health care centers, Palm Beach State College, and the City's attraction locations. This project is expected to increase accessibility to four connectors: Palm Tran, the Clewiston- Belle Glade Community Bus Route, Downtown West Palm Route, and the Pahokee Route.

### **Belle Glade Express - 2010 update**

With demonstration funds from District Four, the City of Belle Glade began the Belle Glade Express bus service on January 11, 2010. The first two full months of service showed an average monthly ridership of over 2,000 trips on the City's four routes. Additionally, Palm Tran completed a maintenance facility in Belle Glade that will enable it to store and maintain buses in the Glades area.

District Four continues to serve on the Local Coordinating Board for the Palm Beach County Transportation Disadvantaged Program. FTA Section 5310 grants provide funding for the purchase of vehicles used to transport the elderly and persons with disabilities. District Four recommended the Achievement Rehabilitation Center of Belle Glade and the Oakwood Center of The Palm Beaches, Inc. receive 250,000 in funding for FY 09/10. Plans include the improvement of a fixed route service that accommodates an estimated 200 people.

The vanpool program operating in the tri-county (Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach) region, with partial funding from Districts Four and Six, has continued to pursue the formation of vanpools as a means of mobility to and from residents' homes to work locations. The Palm Beach vanpool coordinator is working with the Glades General Hospital, as well as the Workforce Alliance and the county school district, to establish vanpools for the Glades area.

### **Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI) - Background**

Starting in July 2007, District Four participated in development of the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan intended to improve the economic health of the region through development and implementation of an overall mobility improvement process. This planning effort was led by the Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI) and District One.

- The plan covers six counties and four communities, including Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay. It contains regional goals and objectives, identifies needs, presents new opportunities to advance mobility, and identifies 12 pilot projects.
- In May 2009, the plan's recommendation to establish a Mobility Working Group (MWG) to serve as an initial public transportation planning organization for the region was approved by the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan Steering Committee.
- The MWG is to utilize the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan as the foundation of its efforts to coordinate, develop and implement public transportation improvements. It will be composed of key mobility stakeholders to include local government representatives, community transportation coordinators, regional planning councils, transit operators/providers, FDOT and FHREDI.

### **Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI) - 2010 update**

One recommendation in the Florida Heartland Rural Mobility Plan is to continue the Clewiston-Belle Glade Community Bus Route and possibly extend the route to Moore Haven and LaBelle. FHREDI has joined in partnership with the Collins Center for Public Policy to find dedicated funding to keep the Route going, increase the service, and extend the route to at least to Moore Haven where a new health and dental clinic is to open in December 2010.

### **Lake Okeechobee Regional Initiative (LORI)**

The Lake Okeechobee Regional Initiative (LORI) was formed in 2009 by the Collins Center for Public Policy to facilitate economic diversification along the southern rim of Lake Okeechobee. Pahokee, Belle Glade and South Bay are communities targeted by LORI, along with Clewiston in Hendry County and Moore Haven in Glades County. LORI's mission is to bring together these diverse communities with common challenges and opportunities. Its focus is on strong regional leadership, clear regional priorities and effective regional communication. Various staff from Districts One and Four participate in LORI by attending meetings; making presentations

and otherwise sharing information on transportation-related planning and projects; and providing assistance on particular challenges. One part of the activities undertaken by LORI is the partnership with FHREDI to find a dedicated funding source for the Lake Region Commuter Route.

## **Rail**

Federal Title II signal safety and maintenance projects to note for the SCFX rail crossings are as follows:

- A Federal Title II signal safety project in the amount of \$158,291 was initiated at Larrimore Road in Pahokee. This project should be completed in FY 10/11.
- A new Federal Title II signal safety project in the amount of \$ 26,000 will be initiated for Belle Glade - NW Avenue L SCXF Crossing #272305X in FY 10/11.

A resurfacing project (422989-1) on SR 717/West Canal Street North has a rail component to the project in FY 10/11 in the amount of \$114,892, which will extend the rail crossing surface to accommodate a proposed sidewalk. Also, the vehicular gate will be relocated and a pedestrian gate will be added.

The sidewalk/enhancement project (422172-1) has been initiated for the Downtown to LOST Connection – West Canal Street South also has a rail component to the project in the amount of \$165,282, which will extend the rail crossing surface to accommodate the proposed sidewalk. The vehicular gate will be relocated and a pedestrian gate will be added.

FDOT conducted diagnostic reviews in this area to determine future safety project needs. Currently, Central Office is conducting diagnostic reviews in other FDOT districts and will be prioritizing projects for selection.

## **Other Projects**

District Four has a sidewalk project programmed in FY 12/13 on SR-715 from Duncan Padgett Park to S. of 14<sup>th</sup> Terrace. The project will provide pedestrian connectivity from Pahokee to Duncan Padgett Park.

**\* Note for Jobs Created Column in District Spreadsheets**

The Florida Department of Transportation has conducted analyses of the economic impacts of transportation investments. In the long run, every dollar invested in transportation yields an estimated \$4.92 in user and economic benefits (see <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/planning/policy/economic/macroimpacts0909.pdf>).

Additionally, the current economic crisis has highlighted short term jobs and income generated by transportation improvements. It has been estimated that every \$1 billion spent on highways supports 28,000 jobs with one third of those in construction-oriented employment. For more information on the impacts of transportation on Florida's economy, go to: <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/planning/trends/tc-report/economy.pdf>.

## **Internal Agency Education / Advocacy**

### **Florida's Consultative Planning Process for Non-metropolitan Areas**

Federal law and rules require each state to have a documented process for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials during development of the long range statewide transportation plan (i.e. Florida Transportation Plan) and the statewide transportation improvement program (i.e. Work Program). In addition, at least once every five years states must review and solicit comments regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process and any proposed changes. REDI, the Florida Association of Counties and members of the Small County Coalition were briefed on this draft process document during November 2008.

After first documenting our process in 1999, the department sought input on the process from our various partners and updated Florida's process document in 2004. For the February 2009 update, the document was revised to reflect changes in state and federal law and our current practices for consultation with non-metropolitan officials during the development of statewide plans and the department's Work Program.

FDOT Policy -- [Consultative Planning Process for Non-metropolitan Areas](#)

[Florida's Consultative Planning Process for Non-metropolitan Areas - Final Report](#)