



2060 FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION PLAN  
**QUALITY OF LIFE &  
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**  
2012 PERFORMANCE REPORT

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*This report is part of the Performance-Based Planning and Programming Process used by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). For a description of that process, updates to this report and other transportation performance reporting initiatives of FDOT, go to [FDOTPerforms.org](http://FDOTPerforms.org).*

## **OUR GOALS**

### **MAKE TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

### **MAKE TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS TO PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

Transportation investments can contribute greatly to our quality of life while affecting the human and natural environment in both positive and negative ways. Increasingly, the transportation decision-making process considers the varied potential impacts of alternative transportation investments. Transportation planners and engineers now have numerous amounts of data and analytical tools to evaluate the beneficial and adverse environmental effects and the means for bolstering the former while mitigating the latter.

Transportation planning should also be integrated and coordinated with land use, development, and natural resources to the greatest extent that it is feasibly beneficial. Transportation decisions should be made with careful attention to enriching the quality of life for the public while ensuring responsible stewardship of the environment.

## **OUR OBJECTIVES**

The Florida Department of Transportation sets objectives and strategies to implement the goals of the *2060 Florida Transportation Plan*. Each objective is advanced through varied strategies. The following objectives provide the policy framework for connecting the Department's budget and work program to the *2060 Florida Transportation Plan*.

- Make transportation decisions in the context of community interests, plans, values and visions
- Enhance the Florida travel experience
- Deliver a transportation system that supports quality of life and environmental stewardship

The best transportation investments enhance quality of life, provide options for mobility, and are compatible and consistent with the needs and desires of the communities they affect.

Transportation planning and project development can occur in ways that enhance livable communities through responsible environmental stewardship.



## **OBJECTIVE: Make Transportation Decisions in the Context of Community Interests, Plans, Values and Visions**

The Department has made great strides to ensure that transportation planning and project design meaningfully engage people and result in projects that are harmonious with community values and vision. The old image of state DOTs not being people or community friendly has long been displaced by an action orientation all about collaboration and community involvement. This positive approach stresses that transportation improvements can bolster quality of life and community character, rather than subtracting from them.

The 2060 Florida Transportation Plan was developed with the hands-on involvement of many varied stakeholders with extensive regional input through workshops around the state. We continue to improve our public involvement efforts through surveys and research of best practices nationally. By establishing a Context Sensitive Solutions Policy we established a strong linkage between, transportation project development and Community Visions. Our close partnership with local Metropolitan Planning Organizations helps us assess possible social and cultural impacts of various project alternatives. Finally, by completing over 1,500 Transportation Enhancement projects over the past decade—such as bike paths and sidewalks—we have enriched many communities demonstrating that transportation can connect people in ways that build community.

### **Community Involvement**

The Department has a long history of providing opportunities for the public and our many partners to be engaged and involved in our transportation decisions. The Department's Public Involvement policy calls for "information exchange activities in all functional areas using various techniques adapted to local area conditions and project requirements." We recognize the importance of flexibility in our efforts to effectively address unique community needs and desires. Community involvement is a way of doing business for the Department. It is not unusual to go above and beyond the requirements of various state and federal policies to ensure that stakeholders truly have a sense of ownership for Department funded projects.

Throughout 2010, the Department updated the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) and used extensive partner/public involvement to receive input from interested stakeholders. A 29-member steering committee composed of key partners, supported by four advisory groups, guided the process. Two statewide webinars with more than 800 attendees let participants know how they could become involved in the Plan's update. Twelve regional workshops were held throughout the state where nearly 550 participants attended to provide input. Throughout the process, nearly 300 briefings were held with statewide, regional and local partners with more than 10,000 Floridians participating throughout the process. The Department continued



its extensive public outreach efforts up through the adoption of the 2060 FTP in December 2010.

A series of research projects have reviewed national literature on public engagement, surveyed activities in other states, assessed the status of public involvement in our own state, and identified performance measures to help us better understand the strengths and opportunities in our public involvement processes. Future research will provide survey instruments and tools for the districts and MPOs to use to evaluate their own efforts.

The Department has also undertaken an aggressive effort to ensure that our communication with the public is easy to understand. The Plain Language Initiative resulted in office-by-office review of documents and written materials to assure we are creating communication which is clear, concise and easily understood. In addition, we have developed a web page which lists all meeting notices required to be posted by Florida Statute. The reader can view all meeting notices or just those in a specific geographical area.

### **Community Visions**

A community's vision and values help to guide current and future development. Major transportation decisions should be made in the context of long range visions about the future growth and development of Florida's regions and, ideally, the state as a whole. Community visioning is occurring at all levels: locally, regionally and statewide. At its core is the recognition that vision and values have meaning to people, that a unique sense of place matters a lot and should be reflected or incorporated in projects and programs.

Locally, visions are developed through comprehensive plans and through metropolitan planning organization plans. These plans present a future based on developing infrastructure suited to human-scale development. As local plans, these efforts are closest to impacting individual citizens' lives.

Regionally, visions are developed for areas that typically share common economic, environmental, or cultural ties. Elements of regional visions pertaining to public sector policies and investments should be implemented through changes to strategic regional policy plans, local government comprehensive plans, long range transportation plans, resource agency plans, and economic development plans. As regional visioning matures, regions should develop new approaches to governance and decision making to help move desired outcomes from concept to implementation in a timely and efficient manner. For instance, Central Florida embarked on an 18-month visioning process to create a Shared Growth Vision where nearly 20,000 Central Florida residents were involved in creating a vision for how the region can grow through 2050, when the population is expected to double from 3.5 million to 7.2 million people.



The Department is committed to providing projects that are supportive of community visions. To that end a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) design policy was instituted. It provides a proactive, collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to planning and developing transportation projects and activities for all modes appropriate to scale, cost, location, and schedule. CSS takes into account the views of stakeholders and the local area in which the project will be located, operated, and maintained. CSS considers the physical setting in which a project or activity is to be implemented and seeks to enhance and conserve community defining features and environmental resources.

### **Community Effects**

The human environment can be affected both positively and negatively by transportation actions. Decisions made by the Department and other transportation agencies can impact issues such as mobility, land use, housing, the economy, and aesthetics; shaping how people live, work and play. The Department proactively addresses the significance of these effects through its Sociocultural Effects Evaluation process in an effort to identify, avoid, minimize or mitigate potentially unacceptable consequences of a proposed transportation action and when possible enhance the community at the same time. Using demographic data and public input provided through local Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), the process allows the Department to understand community goals and values to better address community concerns.

FDOT districts coordinate with MPOs and local governments to collect existing data and the results of earlier community outreach. For example, a sociocultural effects evaluation of a major interstate project identified that access to schools could be an issue, leading to close coordination with the school district's Safe Routes to Schools program.

### **Transportation Alternatives**

The Department is also supporting community visions and values by implementing projects through the federally-funded Transportation Alternatives (TA) program<sup>1</sup>. TAs can include community-based projects which expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. TA projects can expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment. These projects can include creation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, streetscape improvements, sidewalks within communities, intrastate multi-use trails, and refurbishment of historic transportation facilities,

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<sup>1</sup> The TA funding replaces funding from the Transportation Enhancement (TE), Recreational Trails, Safe Routes to School, and several other discretionary programs, wrapping them into a single funding source.



such as a historic train station or lighthouse restoration. A few project examples that were implemented using the former TE funds include the Cross Florida Greenway Overpass on I-75, restoration of the Boca Grande Lighthouse, and the Withlacoochee Trail.

The Department will receive an average allocation of about \$50 million per year for the TA program. Since 2000, the Department has coordinated with MPOs and local governments to fund 1,530 TE projects totaling more than \$617 million.

### **Strategies for Supporting Community Interests, Plans, Values & Visions**

The Department will help ensure that the objective related to supporting community interests, plans, values and visions is achieved through these actions:

- Provide local and regional entities with the tools to support environmental stewardship
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders and partners to offer input in the transportation decision-making process

### **OBJECTIVE: Enhance the Florida Travel Experience**

Transportation is far more than getting from “point A to point B,” as important as that is. The Department realizes that the travel experience itself has significant value for transportation system users, particularly in light of Florida’s great natural beauty. Indeed, the journey is as important as the destination. This fairly new focus on enhancing the Florida Travel Experience is opportunity laden and provides an important reminder that performance—at its very core—is very much in the eye of the traveler/system user.

The Department has an extensive range of officially designated Scenic Highways that cover nearly half of the state’s counties. Scenic Highway designation is special. It is only given to those transportation routes with unique assets for enhancing the experience of travelers, including scenic vistas and portals to other unique community features; features that are protected and conserved by local communities. We are also making major strides in improving our Highway Beautification Program, including planting large trees that provide natural beauty with the benefit of reducing noise and water runoff. We continue to conduct biennial customer surveys that provide perhaps the most useful performance data possible—customer based measures. Even in challenging economic times our most recent survey demonstrated significant or sustained improvement according to our customers in a wide range of areas. Response from over 7,000 customers provides us with a wealth of information about our performance.

### **Scenic Highways**



The Department's Scenic Highways Program promotes Florida as an attractive destination for travelers, with cultural, historical, archeological, recreational, natural and scenic qualities. Among the 26 Florida Scenic Highways (a total of 1,452 miles traversing 43 percent of Florida's counties), six have received National Scenic Byway designation and one has received the special All-American Road designation.

Florida's designated scenic highways promote a heightened awareness of the state's exceptional resources and unique history through educational and visual experiences. The program was developed "to preserve, maintain, protect and enhance Florida's outstanding cultural, historical, archeological, recreational, natural and scenic resources." It is voluntary and grass-roots based, involving strong local citizen and government support to help meet its objectives. The program is perhaps best summarized by its mission statement: "The Florida Scenic Highways Program will preserve, enhance and maintain the intrinsic resources of scenic corridors through a sustainable balance of conservation and land use." Through community-based consensus and partnerships, the program will promote economic prosperity and broaden the traveler's overall recreational and educational experience.

### **Highway Beautification**

The Department's Highway Beautification Program is being "re-engineered" to make Florida an attractive place for its residents, tourists and businesses. It is the policy of the Department to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance Florida's natural resources and scenic beauty. Under this policy, Florida strives towards having the nation's most beautiful highways; safe roadsides that are durable, and ecologically and economically sustainable; and measurable returns on its investment.

Now and for the next few years the Department will implement roadside beautification projects using large trees, and few if any shrubs. This will help make Florida an attractive place to do business, to attract visitors and businesses to invest more time and money in Florida. With thoughtful site specific design, this Consistent, Predictable, and Repeatable approach will produce the highest visual impact and distinctive sense of place at the lowest design, construction, and maintenance cost. Tall trees generously and safely placed at the most highly traveled interchanges and gateways into and through the state (Florida's most visible landscapes) will instantly create a welcoming and enjoyable experience; the first and lasting impression of the state and individual communities.

For the future, as the economy strengthens and as the highest priority roadside landscapes are being completed, beautification can be routinely integrated into the processes used to plan, design, construct, and maintain roadways—roadways that accommodate bold performing landscapes that enhance private enterprise and public health and safety. Roadside landscape



projects can mimic natural processes that manage stormwater, filter air, shade pedestrians, conserve energy, provide habitat, and be beautiful. Bold leadership at all levels within the Department can make it possible to create and sustain memorable landscapes that contribute to Florida's overall well-being.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Since 2000, the Department has surveyed Florida residents, visitors, commercial drivers, and government officials about what we are doing right and what we can do better in providing transportation products and services to them. These survey results help us track our progress in improving customer satisfaction.

From August 2011 to March 2012, the Department conducted its most recent biennial customer satisfaction surveys. More than 6,500 FDOT customers responded to our surveys. They included Florida residents (2,881), visitors to Florida (400), government officials (408), and commercial drivers (2,831). As with the previous surveys, these groups rated their satisfaction with several aspects of the State Highway System: the visibility of roadway signs and markings, construction zones, traffic flow, rest areas and airports, and overall satisfaction with the transportation system.

The 2011/2012 survey results overall are comparable to those of the previous customer surveys. Since 2000, satisfaction steadily improved in key areas such as access to businesses during construction, timeliness of completing construction projects, as well as local input on roadway design and statewide plans. Significant improvements in satisfaction have also been observed with safety, travel time, congestion and overall transportation system.

### **Strategies for Enhancing the Florida Travel Experience**

The Department will help ensure the objective related to enhancing the Florida travel experience is achieved through these actions:

- Monitor and improve satisfaction in key areas important to our customers
- Promote and implement programs such as Scenic Highways and highway beautification

## **OBJECTIVE: Deliver a Transportation System That Supports Quality of Life and Environmental Stewardship**

As good stewards of public resources the Department strives to reconcile transportation improvements with surrounding environmental assets as efficiently as possible to maximize the amount of funding available to improve the State's transportation infrastructure. The Department has made significant progress addressing that challenge through our Efficient



Transportation Decision-Making Process (ETDM) and Project Development & Environment (PD&E) process. As we collaborate with environmental resource agencies this process helps achieve consensus on outcomes as cost-effectively as possible.

Process improvements have also translated into project improvements ranging from bridge replacements that preserve important historic assets to establishing roadway lighting schemes that minimize impacts to protected species. The Department's performance in this area will continue to be one that strives to go above and beyond, by achieving cost-effective solutions collaboratively with resource agencies. Mobility that respects the environment will serve to enhance and protect Florida's unique quality of life for the long-term.

The Department works with environmental resource agencies to create linkages between land use, transportation, cultural, and environmental planning initiatives. One way this has been accomplished is through the Efficient Transportation Decision-Making (ETDM) process, which is Florida's streamlining initiative to provide early involvement of environmental resource and permitting agencies, along with the public, in planning and developing transportation improvements. Resource and regulatory agencies serve as members of an Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) to perform early project screenings through the use of a web-based Environmental Screening Tool. These screenings inform the Department and local governments of potential environmental issues within the vicinity of a proposed project. Along with agency-specific data, comments from the agencies and the public are used by the Department to identify and subsequently avoid or minimize potential impacts to natural and cultural resources. Between 2003 and 2011, 519 projects have been screened through the ETDM process.

Florida's PD&E process was developed to ensure that the design of transportation projects appropriately reflects and incorporates the unique engineering, natural and community characteristics of the local area. The Department created the process to ensure that transportation projects follow the policies and procedures which fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and similarly related state laws, which assures consideration of the natural and human environment in the planning and delivery of transportation projects. Through the PD&E process the Department has developed mechanisms by which early consultation, coordination and communication with stakeholders address potential issues.

### **New River Bridge Replacement**

An example of the Department's commitment to preserving significant historical transportation structures can be found in the rehabilitation and re-use of the historic Snow-Reed Swing Bridge on Southwest 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue crossing the north fork of the New River in Ft. Lauderdale. The 11<sup>th</sup>



Street Bridge is one of the oldest bridges in Ft. Lauderdale (built in 1924-1925) and connects two historic neighborhoods, Sailboat Bend and Riverside Park. This historic bridge is a swing-style bridge that rotates on a pivot in the center of the bridge, thereby allowing waterway traffic to pass on either side.

The original plans called for the complete replacement of the bridge. Through the National Historic Preservation Act planning process it was determined that the replacement of the existing bridge would cause an adverse impact. Working with the US Coast Guard, CSX Railroad, State of Florida Historic Preservation Office, local historians, rail enthusiasts, and the city of Fort Lauderdale, the Department was able to incorporate the bridge's bascule component into a boardwalk at the nearby residential Riverside Park just east of the bridge's existing location. This approach to bridge preservation allowed the Department to speed the delivery of this project by 5 years, along with considerable cost savings.

### **Coastal Roadway Environmentally Sensitive Lighting Initiative**

Roadway lighting can interfere with sea turtle nesting, affecting the breeding success of sea turtles, which are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In 2011, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) identified the Department's Coastal Roadway Environmentally Sensitive Lighting Initiative as an Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative, highlighting the project's innovative approach to wildlife preservation and its use of cutting-edge science to achieve significant, high-quality results to reduce or eliminate impacts to sea turtles. This initiative incorporated specially designed roadway lighting that reduced or eliminated impacts to adjacent sea turtle nesting beaches through an embedded roadway lighting design system implemented along State Road A1A (SR A1A) in Boca Raton.

The embedded roadway lighting system was also awarded the Engineering Excellence Award by the Florida Institute of Consulting Engineers, and the American Council of Engineering Companies. Another component of the lighting initiative was a street light retrofit in Broward County in which the Department retrofitted existing lighting structures rather than replacing them. This cost-effective strategy earned FDOT recognition from the State of Florida Prudential-Davis Productivity Awards Program.

### **Strategies for Supporting Quality of Life & Environmental Stewardship**

The Department will help ensure the objective related to supporting quality of life and environmental stewardship is achieved through these actions:

- Consider integration of environmental stewardship throughout transportation decision-making in project delivery



- Assure stewardship is accomplished through standardized processes and consistent approaches
- Optimize mitigation approaches for unavoidable impacts