Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Technical Memorandum

Florida Department of Transportation Florida's Turnpike Enterprise Central Polk Parkway

Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study

From US 17 (SR 35) to SR 60
Polk County, Florida
ETDM Project No.: 14372
FDOT Financial ID No.:440897-4-22-01
Federal Aid Project No.: N/A

Prepared for:

Florida's Turnpike Enterprise P.O. Box 613069, Ocoee, FL 34761



January 2021

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I. Introduction

Project Purpose and Need

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study to evaluate the extension of the Central Polk Parkway (CPP) from US 17 (State Road [SR] 35), approximately a half mile west of 91 Mine Road, to SR 60. This project is located between the City of Lakeland to the north and the City of Bartow to the west. The study evaluates a new four-lane divided limited access expressway which will feature All-Electronic Tolling (AET), similar to the CPP design segment to the north from Polk Parkway (SR 570) to US 17 (FPID: 440897-2). Please refer to **Figure 1** for the project location map.

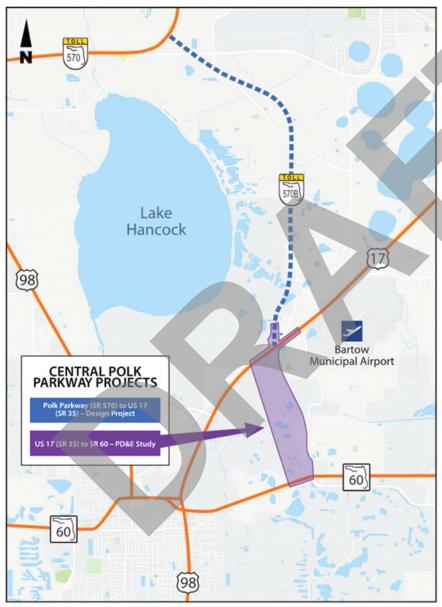


Figure 1: Study Area

This study provides engineering and environmental documentation aid Polk County, and the Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) determining the type, preliminary design, and location of the proposed roadway. The US 17 interchange location and type was evaluated as part of the CPP design segment to the north and documented within the Alternatives Evaluation Report which concluded the optimal interchange configuration to be a tight diamond interchange. As a result, the US 17 interchange location and type is fixed for the purposes of this study and consistent across all of the alternatives included herein. A multiuse recreational trail is proposed outside of the limited access right of way and parallel to the Central Polk Parkway alignment. The multi-use trail is included with Polk County's master trail plan.

This project was evaluated through FDOT's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process Project #14372. An ETDM Programming Screen Summarv Report containing comments from the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) was published on June 5, 2019. The ETAT evaluated the project's effects on natural, physical, cultural. social and economic resources. The ETDM information can be found in the project file.

Project Background

A Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study for the Central Polk Parkway, conducted by the FDOT, District 1, FPID 423601-1, concluded in March 2011 with an approved State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR). The 2011 PD&E study evaluated a new six-lane limited access facility with two (2) recommended alternatives: the Western Leg (SR 60 to the Polk Parkway [SR 570]) and the Eastern Leg (SR 60 to I-4). In February of 2013, the design for Central Polk Parkway Segment One (Polk Parkway [SR 570] to US 17 [SR 35]) of the 2011 PD&E Western Leg was partially completed to Phase I design by FDOT District 1, FPID 431641-1. Central Polk Parkway Segment One is currently under final design by the Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) to provide a new four-lane divided limited access expressway from the Polk Parkway to US 17, FPID 440897-2. This new expressway will include all electronic tolling (AET).

The Central Polk Parkway extension from US 17 to SR 60 is being evaluated as part of this PD&E study, FPID 440897-4-22-01. This segment was not evaluated as part of the previous Central Polk Parkway PD&E Study, FPID 423601-1. However, it should be noted that the Central Polk Parkway nomenclature is still being utilized for this CPP extension segment.

Planning Need

The purpose of the project is to evaluate a new multi-lane limited access facility between US 17 and SR 60. The project will improve regional north/south connectivity, enhance freight mobility and economic competitiveness, improve emergency evacuation times and accommodate future population growth.

According to the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), the population of Polk County is estimated to grow from 661,645 (2017) to 906,100 by 2040 (a 27% increase). The Central Polk Parkway (CPP) from US 17 (SR 35) to SR 60 is anticipated to accommodate the increased travel demand expected from the projected freight, residential and employment growth.

The addition of this new roadway to the regional transportation network will relieve congestion from parallel facilities, including truck traffic, in central Polk County, particularly US 98 (SR 700), SR 540, US 17 (SR 35) and SR 60. This roadway segment will connect to the adjacent proposed segment of the CPP (FPID: 440897-2) from the Polk Parkway (SR 570) to US 17 (SR 35).

The Central Polk Parkway will provide additional connections to the local roadway network and adjacent Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facilities such as Polk Parkway (SR 570), US 98 (SR 700) and SR 60. The Polk Parkway is a beltway route that provides connections from Interstate 4 (I-4) to Polk County cities such as Winter Haven, Bartow, Auburndale, and the south side of Lakeland. SR 60 provides coast to coast connections including freight movement to and from the CSX Winter Haven Intermodal Rail facility. US 98 (SR 700) provides north-south connections throughout Polk County.

To summarize, the Central Polk Parkway will reduce congestion and delays from future population growth, alleviate increased traffic as a result of the CSX Winter Haven Intermodal Rail facility, and provide a more robust evacuation network.

Planning Consistency

The Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Momentum 2040, identified a new limited access facility through the project area as a high priority project that has the potential to be added to the future LRTP, pending funding.

The Transportation Improvement Program for the Polk TPO (adopted 1/6/19, amended 2/13/20) identifies the Central Polk Parkway from SR 60 to the existing SR 570 (Polk Parkway) as its number one priority for Candidate Turnpike Projects. Moreover, the FDOT's Strategic Intermodal System Adopted 1st 5 Year Program for the Turnpike Enterprise has included funding for design, right of way, and construction for the proposed CPP extension from US 17 to SR 60, with construction programmed for FDOT's FY2025.

II. Corridor Characteristics

Land Use

Each county has a Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (Comp. Plan) that guides where, when, and how growth takes place in the county. The overall goals and objective are outlined in the Comp. Plan. Those goals and objectives are to maintain quality residential and non-residential uses, natural resource conservation and preservation of beneficial and protective natural systems, enhance economic development, and ensure fiscal conservancy.

Analysis of 2011 SWFWMD FL Land Use and Land Cover Geographic Information System (GIS) data provided in the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) identifies "Reclaimed Land" as the highest percentage of land use within the 1,000-foot study area buffer. "Reclaimed Land" accounts for approximately 556 acres (35.31%) of the area within the 1,000-foot study area buffer. Land listed as "Extractive" and as "Freshwater Marshes" also account for a large portion of the area within the 1,000-foot study area buffer with coverage of approximately 192 acres (12.21%) and 140 acres (8.87%), respectively. Other land uses found within the study area buffer include Cropland and Pastureland (8.33%), Residential (7.31%), Commercial and Services (2.24%), Wet Prairies (3.4%), Other Open Lands (Rural) (3.3%), Transportation (3.02%), Mixed Rangeland (2.85%), Tree Crops (2.55%), Pine Flatwoods (2.2%), Utilities (2.11%), Institutional (1.55%), Hardwood Conifer Mixed (1.49%), Open Land (1.1%), Reservoirs (0.85%), Emergent Aquatic Vegetation (0.51%), Recreational (0.35%), Industrial (0.34%), and Intermittent Ponds (0.11%). The existing land use in the project area is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

The Polk County Future Land Use Map (FLUM) shows the future land use around the proposed corridor effectively remaining as agricultural, with some industrial and phosphate mining land uses occurring to the south (see **Figure 3**).

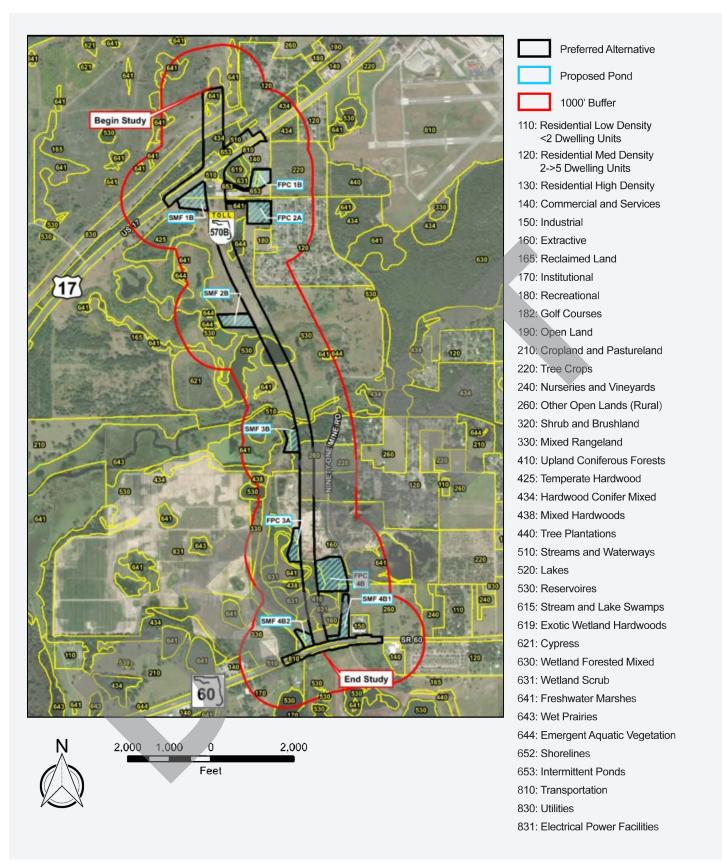
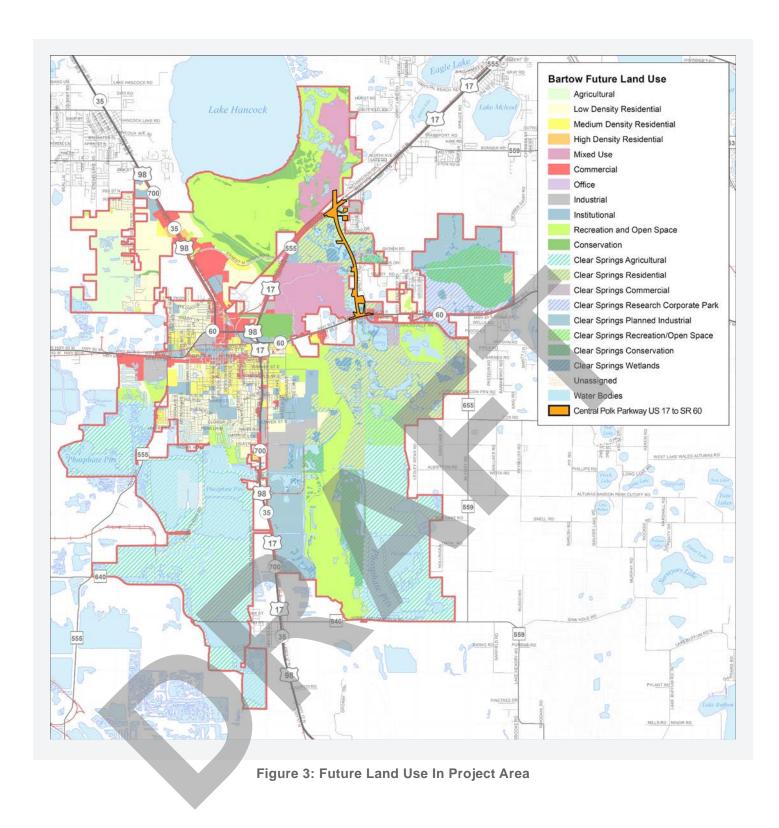


Figure 2: Existing Land Use In Study Area



Community Focal Points

Table 1 shows a summary of the Community Focal Points within the project study area (see **Figure 4**). Community focal points are public or private locations, organizations, or facilities that are important to local residents and the community. Community focal points were identified and assessed in the study area. These focal points include cemeteries, community centers, cultural facilities, fire stations, government facilities, health care facilities, law enforcement, parks, religious facilities, and schools.

The proposed improvements are being constructed primarily within vacant land between US 17 and SR 60. Therefore, there is no direct impact to the community focal points listed in **Table 2**.

The roadway improvements will enhance connections in the community by increasing safety, creating efficient connections for goods and services, and focusing on reducing congestion on the local system to allow for comfortable connections to the places to live, work, and play. In general, the project will improve the social environment of the corridor by creating better connections to destinations within and surrounding the corridor.

Table 1: Community Focal Points Summary

Facility Type	Total Facilities
Cemetery	0
Community Center	0
Cultural Facility	0
Fire Station	0
Government Facility	0
Health Care Facility	0
Law Enforcement	0
Park	1
Religious Facility	1
School	0
Grand Total	2

Table 2: Community Focal Points by Facility Type

Facility Type	Facility Name	Full Address
Park	Gordon Heights Park	Dudley Rd Bartow, FL 33830
Religious Facility	Peace Creek Baptist Church	3070 State Road 60 East Bartow, FL 33830

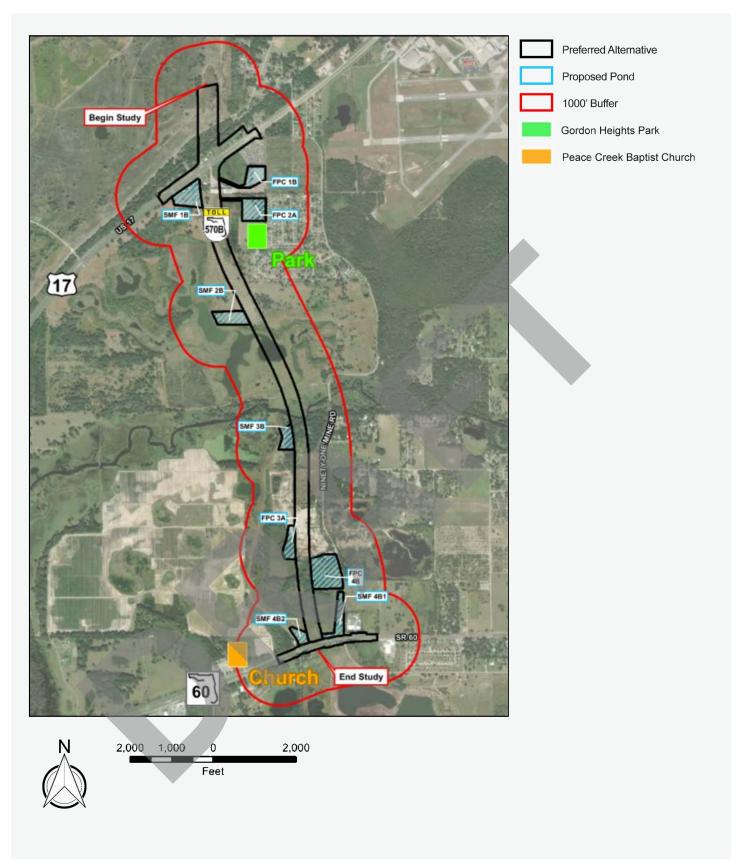


Figure 4: Community Focal Points

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics and trends were analyzed within a one-thousand foot buffer around the project. The population within this buffer totaled approximately 523 persons in 2017. The population within this buffer area has trended downward over the last 27-year period, with a decrease of 37 percent. The population density within the area is approximately 0.40 persons per acre and has remained relatively steady. The average family size has remained almost exactly the same since 1970 at 3.55 persons per family.

In 2017, the median age for individuals in the corridor area was 52 years old, an increase of 16 years older than the median age in 2010. Significant increases in the percentage of individuals in the project area over 50 years old has occurred in the past 7 years.

Table 3: General Population Trends

	1990	2000	2010	2017
Total Population	835	767	684	523
Average Persons Per Acre	0.35	0.37	0.50	0.40
Average Persons Per Family	3.52	3.33	3.20	3.55
Median Age	N/A	32	36	52
Percent of Population Under 18 Years Old	37.12	35.59	27.49	13.95
Percent of Population 18-49 Years Old	48.26	46.42	39.32	26.97
Percent of Population 50 Years Old and Greater	14.62	17.99	33.19	59.08



Total housing units in the study area have decreased by 10% since 1990, with the number of single family units rising slightly and mobile home units decreasing by 46%. The median housing value within the study area rose 99% overall from 1990 to 2017, but decreased by 26% since 2010. Renter occupied households have increased slightly since 1990; however rental occupied households have decreased substantially since 2010. The number of owner occupied units decreased by 24% since 1990. There are 12 occupied housing units without a vehicle, which is 6.3% of occupied households in the study area. **Table 4** summarizes housing trends within the study area.

Table 4: Housing Trends

Housing	1990	2000 2010		2017	
Total Housing	258	260	264	231	
Units per Acre	0.17	0.17	0.19	0.17	
Total Single Family	183	218	249	202	
Total Multi-family	9	14	0	7	
Mobile Home Units	39	28	30	21	
Total Owner-Occupied Units	197	211	171	149	
Total Renter-Occupied Units	36	44	63	40	
Total Vacant Units	26	4	30	41	
Median Housing Value	\$40,800	\$53,400	\$102,500	\$81,200	
Occupied Housing Units w/No Vehicle	33	47	14	12	

Corridor Diversity

The racial profile within the 1000-foot project buffer is primarily comprised of Black or African American population groups as displayed in **Table 5**. Race/ethnicity percentages over the last 27 years has remained similar in the overall project area.

Table 5: Racial Comparison of Study Area

Race	1990	2000	2010	2017
Black/African American	73.53%	74.58%	59.94%	74.38%
White	23.23%	19.43%	31.43%	24.09%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.00%	0.05%	0.02%
Asian	0.24%	0.13%	.29%	0.00%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.00%	0.00%	1.02%	0.00%
Hispanic/Latino	4.67%	5.48%	13.30%	2.49%

Income

The median family income in the project area in 2017 was \$55,541, a 109% increase from 1990. However, when adjusted for inflation, income has only risen 11% over the 27 year period. While income has risen slightly, the percent of households below the poverty level has remained above 20%. **Table 6** summarizes income statistics within the study area.

Table 6: Income within the Study Area

Income	1990	2000	2010	2017
Median Family Income	\$26,592	\$37,801	\$40,547	\$55,541
Population below Poverty Level	21.80%	28.16%	17.40%	22.37%
Households below Poverty Level	26.61%	26.95%	30.04%	21.58%
Households with Public Assistance	21.89%	1.95%	5.15%	4.21%

Education

Table 7 provides a summary of the education levels for the one-thousand foot buffer surrounding the project. The percentage of residents within the buffer that are high school graduates or higher (81.11%) closely reflects the graduation rates in Polk County as a whole. Note that the graduation rate has risen significantly in the buffer area since 1990. Educational attainment tends to influence earnings and employment rates. For those populations with lower educational attainment, lower earnings may influence lifestyle choices, such as the ability to own a personal vehicle.

Table 7: Education Attainment

Age 25 And Older	1990	2000	2010	2017
Less than 9th Grade	28.65%	8.41%	11.11%	4.60%
9th to 12th Grade No Diploma	19.23%	21.03%	24.17%	14.29%
High School Graduate or Higher	52.12%	70.33%	65.00%	81.11%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	2.12%	7.01%	8.89%	10.90%

Transportation Facilities

Figure 1 provides an overview of the proposed project and its connection to and enhancement of existing transportation facilities. The proposed CPP extension will primarily connect to three major roadways: at the western terminus, connecting to the proposed CPP Segment One that will extend from US 17 (SR 35) northward to the existing Polk Parkway (SR 570); also at the western terminus, connecting to US 17; and at the eastern terminus, connecting to SR 60. The project is also just southwest of the Bartow Municipal Airport and will provide an enhanced alternative to accessing the airport from the south and east.

The CSX Winter Haven Intermodal facility is located approximately 8 miles east of the proposed CPP extension's intersection with SR 60. The CPP Extension, along with the proposed CPP Segment One from

US 17 to the existing Polk Parkway, would provide an efficient connection between the Intermodal facility and Lakeland and Tampa. In addition, a 12-foot multi-use recreational trail is also being evaluated as part of the project's PD&E study. The trail is proposed within a separate 26-foot parallel right of way corridor on the east side of the CPP extension alignment.

Future trends

According to the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), the population of Polk County is estimated to grow from 661,645 (2017) to 906,100 by 2040 (a 27 percent increase). The Central Polk Parkway from US 17 (SR 35) to SR 60 is anticipated to accommodate the increased travel demand expected from the projected freight, residential and business growth.

In the recently adopted Momentum 2045 LRTP produced by the Polk TPO, the report states: "Central and eastern Polk County especially will need to address the transportation needs resulting from the projected employment and residential growth; as well as increased freight traffic as the CSX Intermodal Logistics Center (ILC) continues to spur significant economic development in the area." The Momentum 2045 plan also forecasts that the Northeast sub-region of Polk County, which includes this CPP extension, will experience a 62% increase in population and 45% increase in employment from 2015 to 2045.

The Transportation Improvement Program for the Polk TPO (adopted 1/6/19, amended 2/13/20) identifies the Central Polk Parkway Segment 1 as its number one priority for Candidate Turnpike Projects (see **Figure 5**). Moreover, the FDOT's Strategic Intermodal System Adopted 1st 5 Year Program for the Turnpike Enterprise has included funding for design, right of way, and construction for the proposed CPP extension from US 17 to SR 60.

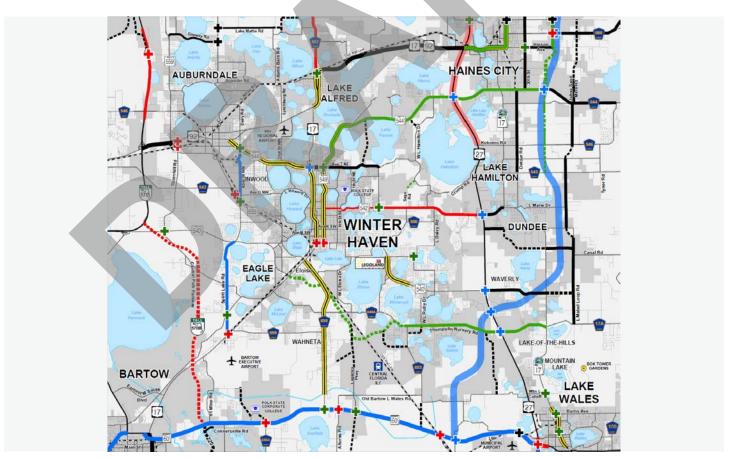


Figure 5: Draft 2045 Cost Feasible Plan Winter Haven Area

III. Potential Effects

Both the direct and indirect potential sociocultural effects anticipated from the proposed Central Polk Parkway extension were reviewed. Direct project effects are changes in the community that occur as a result of implementing a project (e.g. business displacement caused by acquisition of right of way). Indirect effects occur over time and may extend beyond the project's study area (e.g., changes in community cohesion, land uses changes).

The project corridor was reviewed by state and Federal regulatory agencies through Florida's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Process. **Table 8** summarizes the degree of effect assigned by these agencies reviewing potential sociocultural effects for the project. The following sections summarize the potential effects for each sociocultural issue

Table 8: Degree of Effect by Agencies

	Land Use Changes	Social	Relocation Potential	Economic	Aesthetic Effects	Mobility
Florida's Turnpike Enterprise	Enhanced	Moderate	Minimal	Enhanced	Minimal	Enhanced
FL Dept. of Economic Opportunity	Enhanced			Enhanced		
US EPA		Moderate				

Social

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) commented that social impacts should be continually evaluated throughout the life of the project in order to ensure that impacts do not fall disproportionately on minority and low-income populations. USEPA recommended that a Noise Study be performed in the project area that considers any necessary abatement for potential noise impacts. USEPA requested future updates of project revisions or submissions of the environmental documents, if the project becomes federally funded.

FDOT acknowledged in its Preliminary Environmental Discussion comments that the original Sociocultural Data Report identified a minority population of 78.53% within the 1000-ft. project buffer. In accordance with Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice) agencies are to identify the impacts of a project that appear to fall disproportionately on minority and low-income populations. Therefore, the USEPA assigned a degree of effect on Social Impacts as "Moderate". The USEPA also recommended that social impacts be continually evaluated as the project continues into future phases of development to ensure that minority and/or low-income persons are neither disproportionately adversely affected by the proposed transportation project, nor denied reasonable access to it by excessive cost or physical barriers.

The USEPA also asked for the project to consider meaningful public involvement that includes local community leaders, groups, businesses and residents to ensure that the communities within the project buffer agree with the proposed project. The project's Public Involvement Plan (PIP) includes specific outreach tools to encourage and engage local residents and businesses. The PIP also provides for information dissemination in English and Spanish, along with varying types of outreach methods.

Furthermore, the USEPA requested that the project consider an alternative that minimizes potential relocation issues that adversely affect the community. Under the current PD&E concept, the Preferred Alternative is estimated to require three business relocations and nine residential relocations.

The USEPA also recommended that the project conduct a Noise Study in the project area and consider any necessary abatement for potential noise impacts. A Noise Study has been conducted for the project, with one residence having a predicted noise level that approaches, meets, or exceeds the Noise Abatement Criteria. However, a noise barrier was not evaluated because under FDOT policy, at least two impacted receptors must receive a 5 decibel noise reduction, and therefore a noise barrier is not feasible to abate noise at a single isolated impacted receptor.

Because the project alignment is through largely undeveloped areas, social relationships or movement within the existing communities are not substantially impacted. Existing neighborhoods will not be split by a physical barrier. The improvements will not isolate a portion of an ethnic group or neighborhood, or separate residences from community services facilities. Access to existing community facilities will be maintained, but the traffic pattern may change to accommodate the introduction of the limited access facility toll lanes. Some impacts to driving patterns are anticipated because of the addition of ramp intersections at the proposed SR 60 and US 17 interchanges. Overall, the project is not expected to create any new barriers to social interaction for the communities surrounding the project, nor detract from community goals or special designations. The addition of the new corridor should provide equal or better economic opportunities for residents and businesses in the community as enhanced access to such a significant transportation resource is provided. The improvements will also assist in evacuation of residents and visitors during a hurricane emergency.

Land Use

Because the proposed CPP extension is a limited access facility, land use in the project area is not expected to substantially change. **Figure 3** (see previous land use section) identifies the future land use for the study area.

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO) commented that the proposed project is compatible with City and County development goals and consistent with all applicable comprehensive plans. FDEO stated that the project is included on the City of Bartow 2030 Future Traffic Circulation Map, the 2030 Future Number of Lanes Map, and the Polk County Generalized Transportation Map. FDEO identified the future land uses surrounding the project as Conservation, Mixed Use, Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional for the City of Bartow and Agriculture/Residential-Rural, Phosphate Mining, Business Park Center, Residential Suburban, and Commercial Enclave for Polk County. The FDEO assigned an "Enhanced" degree of effect on surrounding land use for the project.

Economic

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO) commented that the project is not located within a Rural Area of Opportunity. FDEO stated that the project has limited potential to attract new development and generate additional employment opportunities.

The project is expected to enhance the mobility of people and goods and is anticipated to have a positive economic effect on the area. Therefore, the FDEO assigned an "Enhanced" degree of economic effect for the project.

Mobility

The 1,000-foot Preferred Alternative buffer contains one (1) Bus Transit Route, one (1) Shared-Use Non-motorized Trail (SUN Trail) Network facility (Bartow Winter Haven Trail Corridor – requiring acquisition), and one (1) Transportation Disadvantaged Service Provider Area (Lakeland Area Mass Transit District). The Bartow Executive Airport is located just northeast from the project's western terminus, and the project should enhance access to this facility. The CSX Winter Haven Intermodal facility is located approximately eight (8) miles east of the project. It should be noted that the Polk Parkway, a limited access toll facility, is located directly north of the Preferred Alternative.

The proposed project will enhance mobility by providing a new multi-lane limited access roadway that will improve connectivity to the regional transportation network and a new multi-use recreational trail that will connect US 17 to SR 60.

Based on the analysis above, the degree of effect for mobility has been rated "Enhanced."

Aesthetics

Aesthetic effects are expected to be minimal and will be considered during the PD&E Study in accordance with the PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 5. A "Minimal" degree of effect on aesthetics has been assigned to this project.

Relocation Potential

The Preferred Alternative will require right of way for the proposed improvements. The proposed right of way is shown on the concept plans included in Appendix B of the State Environmental Impact Report. A Conceptual Stage Relocation Plan was prepared under separate cover. There are no parcels involving institutional or community facility uses located within the proposed right of way. The Preferred Alternative is estimated to impact twenty-two residential or non-residential parcels and would result in eight residential and fourteen non-residential parcels with impacts. There are three estimated business relocations and nine estimated residential relocations with the Preferred Alternative.

In order to minimize the unavoidable effects of Right of Way acquisition and displacement of people, the FDOT will carry out a Right of Way and Relocation Assistance Program in accordance with Florida Statute 421.55, Relocation of displaced persons.

IV. Summary

This Sociocultural Effects Evaluation supports the Project Development and Environment study evaluating the extension of the Central Polk Parkway (CPP) from US 17 (SR 35), approximately a half mile west of 91 Mine Road, to SR 60. This project was evaluated through FDOT's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process as project #14372. An ETDM Programming Screen Summary Report containing comments from the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) was published on June 5, 2019. The ETAT evaluated the project's effects on natural, physical, cultural, social and economic resources.

The Central Polk Parkway will reduce congestion and delays from future population growth, alleviate increased traffic as a result of the CSX Winter Haven Intermodal Rail facility, and provide a more robust evacuation network. The project is included in the recently adopted Polk County Momentum 2045 LRTP. Moreover, the FDOT's Strategic Intermodal System Adopted 1st 5 Year Program for the Turnpike Enterprise has included funding for design, right of way, and construction for the proposed CPP extension from US 17 to SR 60, with construction programmed for FDOT FY2025.

Community focal points were identified as part of the study. The proposed alternative will not directly impact either of the two focal points identified.

Corridor characteristics were identified, and potential effects to six primary sociocultural issues were evaluated, and are summarized as follows:

Social: Under the current PD&E concept, the Preferred Alternative is estimated to require three business relocations and nine residential relocations. Because the project alignment is through largely undeveloped areas, social relationships or movements within the existing communities are not substantially impacted. Existing neighborhoods will not be split by a physical barrier. The improvements will not isolate a portion of an ethnic group or neighborhood or separate residences from community service/facilities. Overall, the addition of the new corridor should provide equal or better economic opportunities for residents and businesses in the community as enhanced access to such a significant transportation resource is provided.

Land Use: Because the proposed CPP extension is a limited access facility, land use in the project area is not expected to substantially change.

Economic: The project is expected to enhance mobility of people and goods and is anticipated to have a positive economic effect on the area.

Mobility: The proposed project will enhance mobility by providing a new multi-lane limited access freeway that will improve connectivity to the regional transportation network and a new multi-use recreational trail that will connect US 17 to SR 60.

Aesthetics: Aesthetic effects are expected to be minimal and will be considered during the PD&E Study in accordance with the PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 5

Relocation Potential: Under the current PD&E concept, the Preferred Alternative will impact twenty-two residential or non-residential parcels and will result in 8 residential and fourteen non-residential parcels with impacts. The Preferred Alternative is estimated to require three business relocations and nine residential relocations. In order to minimize the unavoidable effects of Right of Way acquisition and displacement of people, the FDOT will carry out a Right of Way and Relocation Assistance Program in accordance with Florida Statute 421.55, Relocation of displaced persons.