



# NORTHERN TURNPIKE EXTENSION

## Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) Report and Project Development Status Report

Submitted to the Governor and Legislature

Revised December 27, 2022



## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE), part of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), has conducted an Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) to evaluate the extension of Florida's Turnpike (State Road [SR] 91) from its northerly terminus in Wildwood. This corridor is referred to as the Northern Turnpike Extension (NTE).

## PROJECT GOALS



ENHANCE  
REGIONAL  
CONNECTIVITY



ADDRESS  
REGIONAL  
CONGESTION  
AND SAFETY



ACCOMMODATE  
INCREASED  
TRAVEL  
DEMAND



IMPROVE  
HURRICANE  
EVACUATION

## WHAT IS THE ACE PROCESS?

As part of the Planning phase of the Project Development Process, the NTE followed the ACE process. The ACE process was used to identify, evaluate, and eliminate non-viable alternative corridors and make recommendations for evaluation in greater detail in a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. The ACE process consistently evaluated and relatively compared four initial alternative corridors with respect to the project goals (purpose and need for the project), potential impacts to key environmental resources, and engineering feasibility, including costs.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY COORDINATION

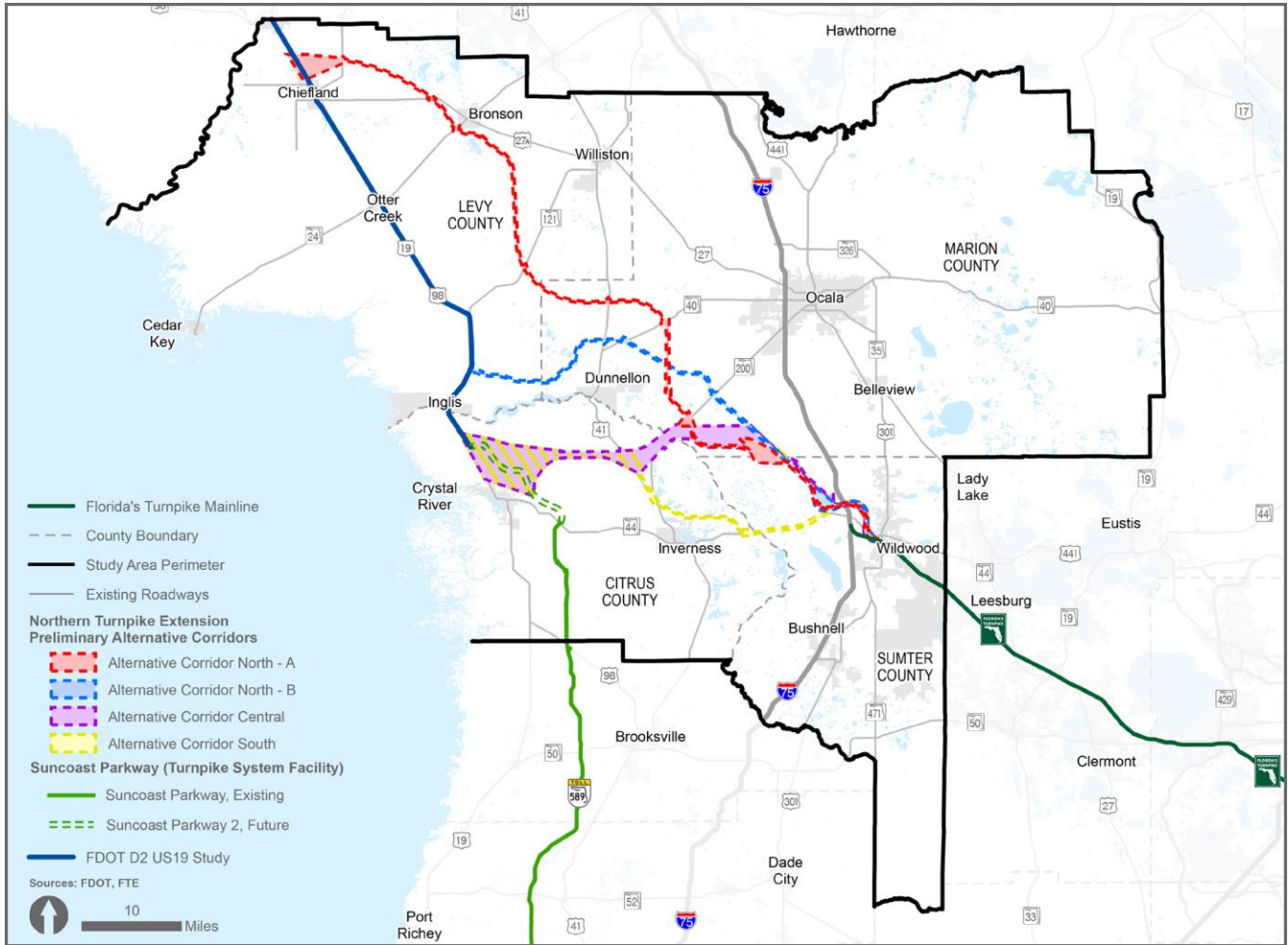
This project was screened through the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process (ETDM No. 14480, <http://etdmpub.flas-etat.org>) with the Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report published on January 24, 2022. During the ETDM process, FTE received comments from environmental resource agencies on the four initial alternative corridors. These comments helped to determine the feasibility of the project, focus the issues to be addressed in the evaluation, and allow for early identification of potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities.

## PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE CORRIDORS

Using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, project goals, stakeholder input, and a review of previous studies in the project area, the ACE process developed four initial alternative corridors, namely:

- Alternative Corridor North-A (Red), approximately 81 miles
- Alternative Corridor North-B (Blue), approximately 48 miles
- Alternative Corridor Central (Purple), approximately 40 miles
- Alternative Corridor South (Yellow), approximately 42 miles

All alternative corridors began at the northern terminus of Florida’s Turnpike in Wildwood east of Interstate 75 (I-75) and headed northwest to terminate at the future location of Suncoast Parkway (SR 589) or US 19/98. The four initial alternative corridors were presented at the public meetings in December 2021, and at meetings with local governments, community groups, and other stakeholders. The feedback received informed the planning process. The four initial alternative corridors are shown below.



## EVALUATION

The corridors were screened through the FDOT ETDM process from October 2021 through December 2021 (ETDM No. 14480), during which regulatory agencies and other members of the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) provided comments on the initial corridors. A draft Methodology Memorandum, outlining the evaluation parameters for the initial corridors, was developed and uploaded to the FDOT Environmental Screening Tool (EST) for review by the ETAT from May 2022 to June 2022. A public kickoff (both in-person and virtually) was held in December 2021. Additional small group meetings and agency presentations were also held.





Over the course of the study process, FDOT received considerable feedback from the public, local agencies and stakeholders regarding the need to prioritize I-75 improvements as a critical enhancement to regional mobility and reliability within the study area. Current data also illustrates high projected growth in the vicinity of I-75, especially northbound I-75 at SR-44, north of the Sumter/Marion County line to north of Ocala, and Alachua County limits. Additionally, local communities within the study area, including the Community of Royal in Sumter County, expressed a need for more robust coordination and collaboration with FDOT to further minimize environmental impacts and to preserve and protect community character.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The ACE process included a public engagement program that allowed agency, Tribal, local government, and public input that was considered throughout the ACE.

Public input opened when the project website went live on October 21, 2021, and was collected throughout the ACE process through an online comment form available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Contact information for the project manager was also available and comments were received via mail, e-mail, and phone call. In-person and virtual Public Kickoff Meetings on December 7 and 9, 2021 provided additional opportunities for public comment.



**1,300+**  
Public meeting attendees



**36**  
Meetings & presentations with local governments & community groups



**3,368**  
Public comments received



**50,000+**  
Website visits

*Note: Public Engagement data referenced as of September 6, 2022 (the close of public comment period and the first business day following 30 days after the upload of the ACE Report).*

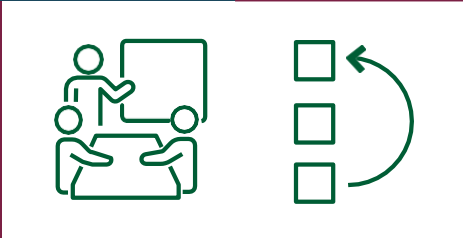
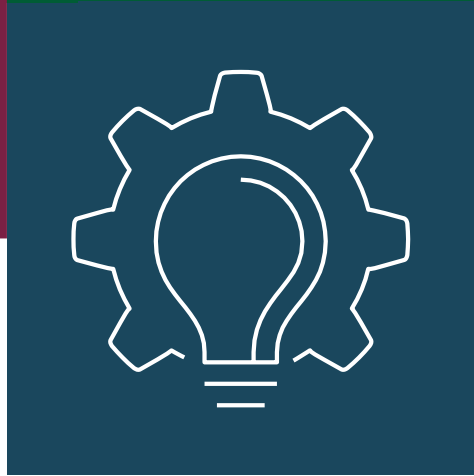
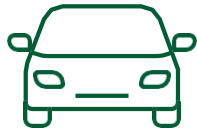




Significant concerns were identified with portions of all four initially proposed corridors including No Build resolutions submitted by eight local governments. The project team, including FDOT Secretaries also met with several community organizations and local governments throughout the study area, such as Citrus, Levy, Marion, and Sumter counties, the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization, the cities of Dunnellon, Inverness, and Wildwood, the Community of Royal, and the Florida Transportation Plan Environmental Partners Working Group. These meetings were held virtually, over the phone, or in-person, and provided an opportunity to discuss specific questions and comments with project team members. The Department deeply values community input and is committed to thoroughly exploring all concerns received during this process.

## CONCLUSION

Improvements to I-75 are a critical component to the success of any northern extension of the Turnpike Mainline. Therefore, this study's evaluation was completed without making a specific recommendation of a corridor for continuation to the Project Development and Environment, or PD&E, phase. As the prioritized improvements to I-75 progress, this study's recommendation is for FDOT to initiate a regional study of need and include an emphasis on complementing I-75 and other regional transportation improvements within the study area. As we continue to refine and develop viable corridor concepts for this area, such as I-75, future expansions of Florida's Turnpike, and other regionally significant projects, we will prioritize engagement to avoid communities and other resources that have substantial cultural, historic, or other significance. The goal of every project is to ensure all needs are met, environmental concerns are addressed, and community characteristics are protected.



Financial Project Identification (FPID) Number: 449743-2  
Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Number: 14480



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