

SRPP Transportation Table of Contents

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Chapter V: Transportation

I. INTRODUCTION

The efficient and economical transport of people and goods is fundamental to the health, safety, and well-being of the Region. Transportation systems profoundly affect the regional economy, land development patterns, and the environment. The various modes of travel -- walking, bicycling, driving, flying -- each have an optimal range of distances and circumstances, and the successful transportation system recognizes the appropriate role of each. In measuring a transportation system's performance, standards other than simple traffic throughput must be used to balance the impacts of the transportation system with the Region's overall goals.

This Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) establishes "... public policy for the resolution of disputes over regional problems, needs, or opportunities through the establishment of regional goals and policies and provides a regional basis and perspective for the coordination of governmental activities and the resolution of problems, needs and opportunities that are of regional concern or scope." [27E-5.003(3), F.A.C.] The Regional Transportation Element of this Strategic Regional Policy Plan specifically implements Chapter 186.507 of the Florida Statutes and is intended to be consistent with the State Comprehensive Plan (Ch. 187, F.S.).

II. EXISTING REQUIREMENTS OF OTHER PLANNING OR REGULATORY PROGRAMS

A. Federal

Transportation plans from the Federal, State, and local levels recognize the importance of achieving a fully integrated "multi-modal transportation system." The Federal "Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991" (ISTEA) has re-directed policy and funding toward a broad range of travel modes, and encourages better integration among them. ISTEA requires plans to assess the social, economic, energy, and environmental impacts of transportation decisions. ISTEA, while providing more local control, strives to optimize the use of existing transportation facilities through enhanced maintenance and congestion management strategies before building new facilities.

B. State

Plans for the various transportation modes are periodically updated by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and its three regional offices which serve portions of the Withlacoochee Region, and by the two Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) within this Region. The Florida Transportation Plan, completed in 1995 for the planning period through 2020, is periodically developed by the FDOT. The State Plan contains specific components including the Aviation Systems Plan, the Rail Plan, the Intermodal Plan, the Seaport Plan, and the Florida Intrastate Highway System Plan. Existing plans have been relied upon in drafting this SRPP, and should be referred to for more detailed information regarding trends and conditions, specific projects, and transportation management strategies.

The State has established criteria for those highways which should function as "state highways", and those which should be local roads. Highways which are functionally classified onto the state system may receive a degree of corridor protection from driveways and other traffic impediments. It is anticipated that FDOT will negotiate the conditions of transfer with affected local governments prior to any functional reclassification. In order to take effect, all transfers of public roads to or from the State Highway System (SHS) must be by mutual agreement of the affected governmental entities and approved by the Secretary of the Department of Transportation. (Section 335.041, F.S.)

C. Local Comprehensive Plans

In the course of preparing this Plan, local comprehensive plans were reviewed for current or proposed transportation issues and facilities of regional significance.

As part of the local planning process, local governments are being encouraged to preserve rights-of-way for construction of future transportation projects, including the identification of unused rights-of-way which may be needed for future transportation corridors and identification of those corridors for which action is most needed to prevent destruction or loss. In the future, there may be a statutory requirement for local governments to notify FDOT prior to the re-zoning or issuance of a development order on parcels containing designated future corridors.

D. Local Transportation Planning, Construction, and Maintenance

In urbanized areas with populations greater than 50,000, the primary responsibility for transportation planning is vested with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), which are comprised of local city and county elected officials. In 1995, two MPOs were operating in the Withlacoochee Region: the Ocala/Marion County MPO, and the Spring Hill/Hernando County MPO. Annually, the MPOs prepare a Unified Planning Work Program describing in detail the tasks for the upcoming year for every public mode of transportation or public transportation facility. A Transportation Improvement Plan is also prepared annually that specifically allocates the budgeted funds for various projects. Long range transportation plans are prepared periodically. Besides ex-officio membership on the MPO Board by FDOT officials, the MPOs receive input from their Technical Advisory Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee, Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board, and Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

A typical Unified Planning Work Program for the Region's MPOs contains the following tasks:

- Surveillance activities, including highway system performance, land use and socio-economic activities, and the provision of transportation data
- Program management and technical assistance to FDOT
- Project planning for various modes: mass transit, transportation disadvantaged, bicycle/pedestrian, aviation, and short- and long-range planning of highways.
- Traffic congestion management
- Funding sources and amounts for each project and transportation plan component

In the non-metropolitan areas of this Region (Citrus, Levy, and Sumter Counties), transportation planning is accomplished by the Florida Department of Transportation and by the local governments. Also, planning agencies prepare for the counties in the Region coordinated Transportation Development Plans which are updated on an annual basis.

E. Transportation System Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Each MPO and FDOT District Office is developing Work Plans for each of the six management systems required under federal regulations: pavement, highway safety, public transit, Intermodal, bridges, and congestion management. Each MPO is also required under state law to develop a congestion management system to guide these activities within their urbanized area that will guide investments for all transportation modes.

A number of tactics are available to improve the functioning of the highway system prior to expanding the number of lanes for single occupancy vehicles. While not an exhaustive list, the following techniques are being implemented by transportation planners to minimize the need for increasingly expensive road widenings and the social, economic, and environmental impacts of increased automobile traffic:

- improved incident (accident or breakdown) detection and removal
- high-occupancy vehicle lanes and preferential ramps on freeways
- traffic signal coordination; computerized signalization
- turn lanes, turnout bays, multiple left turn lanes, and lane channelization
- turn prohibitions
- intersection widening/travel lane narrowing
- restrictions or reduction of on-street parking and driveways
- bicycle lockers and showers at place of employment
- monetary incentives for using alternative transportation modes
- compressed work week
- van-pools, ride-sharing, park-and-ride facilities

III. LAND USE, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND TRANSPORTATION

Nearly eighty percent of the Region's present population has arrived during the previous three decades. Most of the residential development in the Withlacoochee Region is characterized by low to medium densities consistent with the trend in suburban development patterns throughout Florida and the Sunbelt. Average residential densities range from 26 persons per square mile in Levy County to 240 persons per square mile in Hernando County. Projections of population growth, land use patterns, and energy availability indicate that for the foreseeable future, both residential and commercial development patterns will continue to be driven by a reliance on the private automobile as the predominant transportation mode.

This Region has a disproportionately large share of elderly residents and visitors, which has policy implications for future mobility, including highway design, transit availability, and alternate transportation modes. But because the Region has a relatively low percentage of commuting workers, due in large part to the substantial percentage of retirees, peak period traffic is not as severe as it might otherwise be.

The highway system is the predominant means for evacuating the Region's vulnerable population during a major storm event. Unfortunately, many of the primary routes are low-lying and subject to flooding and congestion during peak hours.

IV. PRESENT TRENDS AND CONDITIONS: PEOPLE MOVERS

A. Automobiles/Highways

The automobile has been the primary mode of personal transportation for most of this century, and will remain so into the foreseeable future. Eighty-eight percent of the Region's population possesses a Florida driver's license of some description, and motor vehicles with tags outnumber people in the Region by more than 90,000. (Table 5-1)

Demands on the highway system are driven by a number of functions in addition to net population growth. For instance, in Florida, the growth rates in numbers of households, workers, licensed drivers, and vehicles per household are each increasing at 25% or more above the rate of basic population growth. Since the addition of lane-miles of highways has not kept up with the growth in traffic, it can be anticipated that future traffic congestion will be more severe than that experienced today unless alternative modes and traffic demand management options are made more attractive.

Approximately 85% of the Region's commuters drive single occupancy vehicles to work, while approximately 15% carpool or vanpool, and virtually none use public transit (See Table 5-2). There are no officially sponsored park-and-ride facilities in the Region.

1. Identification of Significant Regional Highway Facilities

Highway planning in the Withlacoochee Region falls into the jurisdiction of FDOT Districts 2, 5, and 7. The highways listed in Table 5-3 have been designated as "Significant Regional Facilities", each roadway having met one or more of the following criteria:

- a. The roadway is a segment in the National Highway System (NHS) Plan, which is an interconnected system of principal arterial routes serving major population centers, ports, airports, public transportation facilities, other intermodal transportation facilities, and other major travel destinations; or meet national defense requirements; or serve interstate and interregional travel. The system includes Interstate highways, some other principal arterials, the strategic highway network and connectors. [reference: Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, Pub. L. No. 102-240, Section 1006]
- b. The roadway is designated as a segment of the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS), "a statewide network of interconnected limited and controlled access facilities that allow for high-speed and high-volume traffic movements within the state." The system includes Interstate highways, Florida's Turnpike, expressways, and selected arterial highways. [reference FS 338.001(1)(2)]
- c. The roadway is designated as a significant regional highway in the Florida Transportation Plan.
- d. The roadway is paved and provides for other regional needs, such as access to a regional activity center, a hurricane evacuation route, or connection between two major highways, or two counties.
- e. All other rural and urban arterials designated as segments of the Florida State Highway System (SHS).

2. Future Highway Corridors: Northern Extension of the Florida Turnpike

a. Description

The Northern Extension of Florida's Turnpike is proposed to extend from the Turnpike's northern terminus at I-75 in Wildwood to U.S. 19 in Levy County. The project will include the construction of 48.9 miles of a four-lane, limited access facility, of which 5.9 miles will consist of the realignment of the existing Turnpike near its current northern terminus.

Interchanges are proposed at S.R. 44, I-75, S.R. 200, U.S. 41 and U.S. 19. The proposed tolling scheme involves the barrier system of toll collection which consists of mainline and ramp toll plazas. The Northern Extension of Florida's Turnpike will provide high speed access to points located northwest of Orlando and will relieve existing traffic congestion on I-75 and U.S. 41. This project is considered a vital link in the state's plan for emergency preparedness. As part of the project a realignment of the I-75/Turnpike interchange in Sumter County will greatly improve

statewide hurricane evacuation times as merging of the two major evacuation routes improves traffic flow.

b. Project History

In 1988, the Turnpike District initiated a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to examine the feasibility of extending the Turnpike from its current terminus at Wildwood, northward approximately 49 miles to Lebanon Station in Levy County. Later in 1988, authorization for proceeding with the project was granted in House Bill 1639.

In 1990, the project was not re-authorized in Senate Bill 1316. As a result, the PD&E Study was placed on hold. In 1992, the project was reinstated in House Bill 2439 and by June of that year the PD&E Study was completed. The Turnpike District selected and approved an alignment by signing a Final State Environmental Impact Report (FSEIR). The approval was issued in the form of a Location Concept Acceptance (LCA).

Concurrent with the approval of the FSEIR and issuance of LCA, the State Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Lands, which is now a part of the Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), purchased the Goethe State Forest in Levy County. A portion of the project's alignment, as identified in the FSEIR, was located within the Forest. The project underwent a review by the Governor's State Clearinghouse in November 1992. It was agreed that a reevaluation of the PD&E Study was required for the portion of the project located in Levy County. In June 1993, the Turnpike District began efforts on this reevaluation.

c. Project Status

The PD&E reevaluation is being finalized in 1995 as a Supplemental State Environmental Impact Report (SSEIR). The SSEIR includes the development and evaluation of alternative alignments to minimize or avoid impacts to the Goethe State Forest and the assessment of potential impacts to the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, an endangered species inhabiting the Forest.

Florida Statutes incorporate the Northern Extension as an expansion project to the Turnpike District's system of user-financed, limited access toll highways. As an expansion project, it will be subject to a final test of economic feasibility. If the test is passed, then funds could be programmed and bonds could be sold for the right-of-way acquisition and construction. As of 1995, there are no funds programmed for design, right-of-way, or construction in the Turnpike District's work program. A preliminary traffic and revenue study is currently being developed to assist in determining the preliminary economic feasibility of the project. [source: FDOT newsletter (undistributed)]

3. Future Highway Corridors: Suncoast Parkway

a. Project Description

The Suncoast Parkway will serve as a high capacity, high speed transportation facility connecting the Tampa area with destinations to the north. The facility will help to alleviate the traffic congestion which now exists along adjacent routes which include U.S. 19, U.S. 41 and I-75.

The Suncoast Parkway is a proposed multi-lane, limited access toll facility. The Parkway consists of two phases, called Project 1 and Project 2. Project 1 is in its land acquisition state and Project 2 is undergoing a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study.

The southern terminus of Suncoast Parkway, Project 1 is located at the Veterans Expressway south of Van Dyke Road in Hillsborough. Project 1 will extend 44 miles (approx. 71 km) northward through Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties to a northern terminus occurring at an at-grade intersection with U.S. 98 (S.R. 700) near the Hernando/Citrus County line. Interchanges will be provided at Van Dyke Road, Lutz Lake Fern Road (future), S.R. 54, Ridge Road Extension (future), S.R. 52, County Line Road, Spring Hill Drive, and S.R. 50.

Conceptual studies have identified a Project 2 study area which extends 26 miles (approx. 42 km) northward from the northern terminus of Project 1 into Citrus County, between U.S. 19 and the Withlacoochee State Forest, to an area located near the Levy County line.

b. Project History

In 1988, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 7 initiated a PD&E Study to determine the social, environmental, and economic impacts of constructing a multi-lane transportation facility through portions of Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties.

In the Spring of 1990, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1316 which incorporated Suncoast Parkway, Project 1 as an expansion project in the Turnpike District's system of user-financed, limited-access toll highways.

The results of the Project 1 PD&E Study were presented at public hearings held in 1992 and public meetings held in 1993. The PD&E Study evaluated various corridors, alignments, and interchanges for Parkway utilizing FDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) environmental impact criteria.

Subsequent to the public hearings and meetings, FDOT District 7 prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which documents the findings of the Project 1 PD&E Study. The EIS was submitted to the FHWA in 1993 and was approved in August 1994. FHWA is processing their formal approval in what is called the Location Concept Acceptance.

In January 1994, the Turnpike District initiated Preliminary Engineering for Project 1. These efforts are being performed to support the findings of the PD&E Study. Also in January 1994, the Turnpike District began the preparation of a Planning Level Concept Study for Suncoast Parkway, Project 2. Based on the major environmental and community impacts, the Study identified a viable study area. In August 1994, the Turnpike District initiated a PD&E Study of this Project 2 study area.

c. Project Status

Preliminary engineering activities which include surveying and geotechnical investigation are now underway. Location concept approval for Project 1 was granted by the Federal Highway Administration in December of 1994 which signaled the beginning of the final design phase. Final design public hearings will

be held to present the preliminary plans to the public, showing details of the proposed facility in relation to the properties affected. These public hearings occurred in the Fall of 1995.

Suncoast Parkway, Project 1 will be a tolled roadway financed through the sale of revenue bonds. If Project 1 passes its financial feasibility tests, then right-of-way acquisition will begin in early, 1996. Construction of Project 1 is scheduled to begin in July of 1998, with the project open to traffic at the end of 2000.

Suncoast Parkway Project 2 became an authorized Turnpike expansion project by the action of the 1995 Florida Legislature. Project 2 is now in the design phase of its PD&E Study which is scheduled to be completed in June 1997.

B. Public Transit

1. Fixed Route Public Transit and Commuter Rail

The high residential densities and concentrations of commercial, industrial, institutional, educational and other types of "trip attracting" development needed to support traditional mass transit systems are largely absent from the Withlacoochee region. One of the region's counties, Citrus, tried a fixed route system as a part of its rural public transportation system but discontinued it in 1992. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the most urbanized county in the region, Hernando, is in the process of studying the feasibility of demand-response and fixed route transit options for the county's Spring Hill urbanized area. Additional public transit funding sources will become available for the urbanized area if a fixed route system is found to be feasible and implemented (e.g., Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 9 capital and operating expenses grants and Florida Department of Transportation public transit block grants).

The feasibility of commuter rail from the Tampa Bay area into Hernando County will be analyzed as part of a Bay-area Commuter Rail study.

2. Intercity Bus Service

All of the counties in the Withlacoochee region, with the exception of Sumter County, have cities with intercity bus service provided by the Greyhound Bus Lines. Terminals in the region are located in:

Ocala	Crystal River	Chiefland
Belleview	Brooksville	Cedar Key (bus stop only)

3. Paratransit Services

Paratransit services are available in all of the counties in the Withlacoochee region through coordinated transportation systems. These systems operate as a part of Florida's transportation disadvantaged program. The state's transportation disadvantaged program is governed by Part I of Chapter 427, *F.S.* (1993 and 1994 Supp.) and implementing rules in Rule Chapter 41-2, *F.A.C.*

The purpose behind their establishment and operation is to promote the delivery of transportation services to the transportation disadvantaged in a manner that is cost-effective, efficient, and reduces fragmentation and duplication of services. Transportation services are provided through the systems using a variety of vehicles,

including mini-buses, vans, mini-vans and automobiles. Also, many of the vehicles used are specially equipped to serve the needs of the disabled and public transit riders.

Coordinated transportation systems serve a wider population than the "transportation disadvantaged" as that term is defined by statute. A fully coordinated transportation system includes all of the transportation services purchased or provided by various agencies/organizations for individuals in its designated service area using transportation disadvantaged funds. Also, coordinated transportation systems which receive government public transit grants serve the general public, including the transportation disadvantaged general public. All of the coordinated transportation systems in the region use FTA Section 18 capital and operating expenses grant funding to subsidize public transit services provided in non-urbanized areas. The FTA's Section 18 Program has recently been renamed the Non-urbanized Area Formula Program.

The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) serves as the policy development and implementing agency for the state's transportation disadvantaged program. Major participants which implement the program at the county or multi-county level include the:

- Official Planning Agency, an MPO or a designated entity which performs long-range transportation disadvantaged planning and assists the CTD and the Local Coordinating Board in implementing the transportation disadvantaged program within a designated service area
- Local Coordinating Board, a group with a diverse membership appointed by the Official Planning Agency which identifies local service needs, advises the Community Transportation Coordinator on the coordination of services, and serves as an advisory body to the CTD in its designated service area
- Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC), a public, private nonprofit or private for-profit entity functioning as a sole provider, partial brokerage or complete brokerage which is responsible for, among other things, the delivery of transportation disadvantaged services originating in its designated service area
- Purchasers of transportation services such as the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (Medicaid trips)
- Transportation operators, public, private nonprofit or private for-profit entities which contract with a partial or complete brokerage CTC to provide transportation services within a coordinated transportation system.

Notably, one of a Local Coordinating Board's responsibilities is to evaluate multi-county or regional transportation opportunities as described in Section 427.0157(6), *F.S.* (1993), and Rule 41-2.012(5), *F.A.C.* Also, CTCs are required to plan and work with CTCs in adjacent and other areas of the state to coordinate the provision of community trips that might be handled at a lower overall cost to the community by another CTC. Residents in all of the counties in the Withlacoochee region utilize regional facilities, such as the Veterans Administration hospitals in Tampa and Gainesville, located outside of the region.

Table 5-4 identifies the Official Planning Agency, Local Coordinating Board and Community Transportation Coordinator for each of the counties in the Withlacoochee Region. The transportation services provided or arranged by CTCs include program trips subsidized by government or social services agencies and general trips subsidized by state Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund (TDTF) trip/equipment grants or other sources. A program trip is one made by a client of a government or social service agency for the purpose of participating in a program of that agency. Examples include Medicaid, congregate meal, day training and day treatment program trips. Most of the trips provided through the coordinated transportation systems in the Withlacoochee region are program trips. A general trip is one made by a transportation disadvantaged person or member of the general public to a destination of his or her choice, not an agency program. Examples include medical, shopping, employment and social/recreational trips. Program trips typically are considered to be sponsored. General trips can be either sponsored or non-sponsored.

According to the CTD's *Florida Five-Year Transportation Disadvantaged Plan 1992-1996*, the state's transportation disadvantaged program serves two population groups. The first group, the "TD Category I" population, includes disabled, elderly and low-income persons and "high-risk" or "at-risk" children. These individuals are eligible for government and social service agency programs based on their demographic status. They also are eligible to receive but may not need agency subsidies for program and general trips. The second group, the "TD Category II" population, includes individuals who are transportation disadvantaged according to the guidelines in Chapter 427, *F.S.* (i.e., unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation) and therefore eligible to receive TDTF subsidies for non-sponsored general trips. The "TD Category II" population is a subset of the "TD Category I" population.

Table 5-5 presents 1995 to 2000 TD Category I and TD Category II population forecasts for the counties in the Withlacoochee region and the region as a whole. Forecasted annual rates of increase between 1995 and 2000 for the TD Category I population range from 2.15 percent for Sumter County to 3.77 percent for Hernando County. Forecasted annual rates of increase between 1995 and 2000 for the TD Category II population range from 2.07 percent for Sumter County to 3.72 percent for Hernando County.

Table 5-6 compares the 1995 and 2000 TD Category I and TD Category II population forecasts to the estimated 1995 populations and projected 2000 populations for the counties in the region and the region as a whole. It indicates TD Category I populations comprise from 48.9 percent (Marion) to 56.8 percent (Citrus) of the current estimated populations of the region's counties. It also indicates the percentages will be about the same in 2000, ranging from 49.0 (Marion) to 56.7 (Citrus and Hernando). The TD Category I population percentages for the region as a whole are 52.9 for 1995 and 53.1 for 2000. Table 5-6 indicates TD Category II populations comprise from 8.8 percent (Citrus) to 12.5 percent (Sumter) of the current estimated populations of the region's counties. It also indicates the percentages will be about the same in 2000, ranging from 8.8 percent (Citrus) to 12.6 (Sumter). The TD Category II population percentage for the region as a whole is the same for 1995 and 2000 at 10.3.

Table 5-7 consists of a set of tables by county and for the region showing 1995 to 2000 market segment forecasts for the TD Category I population. Table 5-8 provides a similar set of tables for the TD Category II population. The elderly category in the market segment forecasts includes persons age 60 and over. Also, it should be noted that the market segment forecasts reflect the use of percentages based on county-level public transportation disability data from the 1980 U.S.

Census and county-level mobility or self-care limitation and 1989 income data from the 1990 U.S. Census.

Table 5-9 provides historical data on the numbers of program and general trips which have been provided through the coordinated transportation systems in the counties in the region. It also includes county-level general trip demand forecasts for 1992, 1993 and 1994 from the *Florida Five-Year Transportation Disadvantaged Plan 1992-1996*. The plan does not include county-level program trip demand forecasts. It, however, assumes program trip demand and supply will be equal based on the assumptions that agency programs will increase at the same growth rate as the TD Category I population and budgets for new and expanded programs will include sufficient funds to cover necessary transportation costs.

The data in Table 5-9 indicate the combined numbers of program and general trips provided through the coordinated transportation systems in Citrus, Hernando, Levy and Marion counties have increased over time. The current coordinated transportation system in Sumter County is new and growing rapidly. A comparison of the program and general trips provided totals and the general trip demand forecasts in the table, however, indicates only a fraction of the demand for general trips has been met. Also, unmet demand for program trips has been documented in counties in the region.

Table 5-10 presents 1995 to 2000 general trip demand forecasts for the counties in the region. They were computed by applying a trip rate of 1.2 trips per month for rural areas to the TD Category II population forecasts included in Table 5-4. Rural areas include counties without an FTA Section 9 operator. That trip rate was developed through a study of seven paratransit systems around the U.S. which were meeting most or all of the trip demand in their service areas, were providing high levels of service, and had eligibility guidelines similar to those contained in Chapter 427, *F.S.* (CUTR 1992). The rate developed for urban areas is 1.0 trips per month. Surveys on the trip purposes of transportation disadvantaged persons in other U.S. paratransit systems indicate approximately 35 percent of the general trips taken are medical trips, 20 percent are work or educational trips, 10 percent are shopping trips, and 35 percent are social, recreational and other trips (CUTR 1992).

Table 5-11 provides actual FY 1995-96 and projected FY 1996-97 to 1999-00 TDTF trip/equipment grant amounts for the counties in the region. Most general trips made through coordinated transportation systems are non-sponsored and provided using subsidies available through trip/equipment grants (CUTR 1992). These grants, which are administered by the CTD, roughly doubled in size in FY 1994-95 due to a \$1.00 increase in the vehicle registration fee for the TDTF enacted by the Florida Legislature in 1994.

Even with the recent substantial increase, trip/equipment grant funding is not expected to meet more than a fraction of the demand for general trips in the region during the FY 1995-96 to FY 1999-00 period. Also, increasing pressure to use a part of the increased trip/equipment grant funding for program trips is complicating the funding situation. Using TDTF moneys to replace existing funding for transportation disadvantaged services provided by any federal, state or local government agency has been and continues to be prohibited by CTD Rule 41-2.013, *F.A.C.*

Some idea of the extent to which trip/equipment grant funding is meeting current demand for general trips in the region can be gleaned by performing the following computation:

1995 Forecasted Demand for General Trips for Year (Table 5-10) -
Estimated Number of General Trips to be Provided Using FY 1995-96
Trip/Equipment Grant Funding = Estimated 1995 Unmet Demand for
General Trips.

The estimated number of general trips to be provided using FY 1995-96 trip/equipment grant funding is equal to the grant amount for FY 1995-96 (Table 5-11) divided by the average cost per trip from the most recent year data are available (FY 1993-94). This computation does not take into account possible changes in the configurations of transportation services offered and assumes no trip/equipment grant funding will be used to purchase equipment. Average trip costs for FY 1993-94 were \$10.42 for Citrus County, \$17.45 for Hernando County, \$14.60 for Levy County, \$11.23 for Marion County and \$10.49 for Sumter County based on CTC annual operating report data. Additional data available to the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council were used to determine the FY 1993-94 average trip cost for Hernando County. These average trip costs reflect combinations of program and general trips, demand response/reservation and subscription trips, ambulatory/wheelchair/stretchers trips, in-county and out-of-county trips, and public and private transportation providers. Data on the average costs of general trips provided through the coordinated transportation systems in the region are not readily available.

Performing the above computation yields the following results:

	1995 Forecasted Demand for General Trips	Estimated No. of General Trips to be provided using FY 95- 96 Trip/Equipment Grant Funding	Estimated 1995 Unmet Demand for General Trips
Citrus	136,224	16,207	120,017.00
Hernando	154,555	7,797	146,758.00
Levy	52,430	12,485	39,945.00
Marion	361,382	36,465	324,917.00
Sumter	63,835	8,220	55,615.00
REGION	770,421.00	81,269.00	689,152.00

The lack of sufficient funding for general trips has resulted in the use of a variety of demand-regulating measures by coordinated transportation systems in the region. Examples of such measures in use for general trips subsidized by TDTF trip/equipment grants include eligibility criteria, trip priorities, advance notice requirements, fares, and limited days and hours of service. Continued use of demand-regulating measures for general trips is anticipated.

4. Findings Relating to Public Transit

Findings relating to public transit in the Withlacoochee region include:

- The availability of public transit in the region is limited to intercity bus service serving selected cities and paratransit services subject to funding constraints. Expansions of public transit options have been limited by existing development patterns in all of the counties in the region. A continuation of the existing

development patterns can be expected to create continued limitations on available public transit options.

- There is precedent in the region for requiring major developments to address transportation issues beyond highway impacts. For example, the developer of the Tri-County Villages of Sumter development of regional impact is being required to provide or operate a bus shuttle system to move people between the development and popular destinations in the area and to make provisions for bicycle traffic with the possibility of combined bicycle/golf cart facilities.
- Substantial numbers of individuals in all of the counties in the region are transportation disadvantaged and those numbers are increasing as the counties' populations continue to grow and age. Also, there is an increasing number of individuals who own vehicles but are unable to drive them due to health or other reasons.
- There is a substantial gap in the region between the demand for trips needed by the transportation disadvantaged and the supply of trips available to the transportation disadvantaged. This gap is likely to remain, if not grow, in the years to come. Possible means of closing or at least minimizing growth in the gap include, among others, continuing efforts through coordination to use existing resources in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible, securing additional funding for general trips, encouraging the inclusion of sufficient funding in program budgets for program trips, and expanding public transit options to reduce the current reliance on costly paratransit services.
- Expanding public transit options should be viewed as a potential means of promoting mobility and choice for the general public, including the transportation disadvantaged general public.
- Innovations in public transit should be explored and pursued as appropriate. Examples include deviated fixed route systems and service routes.

C. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Nationwide, an estimated 7.2% of all travel trips are made by walking, and 0.7% of trips are made by bicycle. (USDOT. The National Bicycling and Walking Study. 1990). Comparable statistics are not available for this Region, however, the Region's climate and terrain make these modes of travel attractive for short trips. Two populations that are often pedestrians and bicyclists out of necessity are the young and the old. The Region has among the highest percentages of elderly residents in the State, with 40% of Citrus and Hernando County residents being sixty years or older (3rd and 4th in County rank in Florida).

The rural and suburban residential developments and strip commercial areas that characterize the Region's development pattern can be designed to be pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, but usually are not. The development of facilities for these modes has lagged far behind roadway development, with most residential subdivisions and new commercial areas lacking sidewalks and/or bike facilities. For instance, Hernando County's Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (1993) identified no designated or undesignated bicycle lanes or bike routes in the entire County. In the Ocala Metropolitan Area, only 3.7% of workers walked or took other non-motorized modes to work in 1990, which declined from 5.5% a decade earlier (CUTR. Demographics & Commuting Trends in Florida. 1994).

As a component of the State Highway System, "bicycle and pedestrian facilities shall be given full consideration in the planning and development of transportation facilities, including the incorporation of such ways into state, regional, and local transportation plans and programs. Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in conjunction with the construction, reconstruction, or other change of any state transportation facility, and special emphasis shall be

given to projects in or within 1 mile of an urban area." F.S. 335.065(1)(a) One example of how this requirement is being implemented will be on the Suncoast Parkway, which may include a 30-foot wide greenway with a 12-foot paved multi-purpose trail adjacent to the right-of-way at an incremental cost to the project of approximately two percent.

Two existing and two proposed rail-trails, and the former barge canal provide recreational opportunities as well as a transportation option for some of the Region's commuters and school children. Table 5-12 identifies regionally significant multi-purpose trails.

D. Waterways, Including Seaports

The Gulf of Mexico is relatively shallow along the Region's coastline, and a continuous intercoastal waterway does not exist. The navigable channels into small craft docking facilities and public boat ramps are marked and maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers in cooperation with the Coast Guard and Port Authorities. [list individual port authorities]

Numerous tidal creeks which are navigable by small craft connect to the Gulf, in addition to the navigable rivers listed below:

Suwannee River	Waccasassa River
Withlacoochee River	Crystal River
Homosassa River	Salt River
St. Martin's River	Chassahowitzka River
Mud River	Rainbow River
Silver River	Little Withlacoochee River
Weekiwachee River	

In addition to the rivers that flow to the Gulf, the Region is also bounded by the Ocklawaha River, which flows into the St Johns River and is thereby connected to the Atlantic Ocean.

E. Passenger Rail

1. AMTRAK

The Withlacoochee Region is served by AMTRAK passenger train service at Ocala and Wildwood. Service in 1995 is once per day northbound and southbound on the SilverStar. The terminal at Jacksonville provides connections to the north, south, and west. Amtrak operates on CSXT-owned tracks in this Region.

2. Proposed High Speed Passenger Rail

The State of Florida has planned a high speed train that will initially connect the Tampa Bay area with Orlando and Miami. A northerly leg which had been proposed in the 1980s to connect with Jacksonville might have traversed the Region; however the FDOT's Request for Proposals for the High Speed Rail System (with a proposal due date of October, 1995) does not mention a northerly leg for the initial phase of development. [see F.S. 341.302]

F. Aviation

Aviation planning in Florida is accomplished in a cooperative effort between the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and local governments and airport operators [F.S. 332.006]. The current Florida Aviation System Plan (1992-2010) summarizes trends and conditions, describes facilities, and recommends a number of improvements to the Region's aviation system and intermodal connections to airports. Regionally significant aviation facilities are listed in Table 5-13.

The Florida Aviation System Plan divides the state into nine regions; Hernando County is in the West Central Florida Metropolitan Area Aviation Plan, and the remaining counties of the

Withlacoochee Region are included in the North Central Florida Region's Aviation Plan. These plans include data regarding regional aviation trends and conditions, including:

- population projections, per capita income, and business forecasts
- passenger enplanements and aircraft operations forecasts
- cargo enplanements and based aircraft forecasts
- commercial and general aviation operations forecasts
- the area, runway size(s), instrument approaches, ownership, and other data about each airport
- potential obstacles to expansion (adjacent land use, vertical obstructions) for each airport

These aviation plans document the following trends for the Region:

- aircraft operations are projected to increase as much as 76%, and passenger enplanements are projected to increase by as much as 165% during the planning period
- air cargo activity is projected to increase by as much as 79% during the planning period, and based aircraft will also increase significantly.
- commercial and general aviation operations will increase at a much greater rate than the population growth

G. Intermodal Passenger Facilities

Intermodal facilities are those where two or more modes of transportation interface. For passengers, these are typically called terminals or ports. The intermodal passenger facilities of the Region include:

- Auto - Rail: AMTRAK terminals
- Auto - Bus: Greyhound terminals
- Auto - Airplane: Region's airports
- Auto - Boat: Private marinas and public boatramps
- Auto - Bicycle: Parking lots along rail-trails

H. PRESENT TRENDS AND CONDITIONS: FREIGHT MOVERS

1. Rail Freight

Three freight carriers serve the region: CSX Transportation (CSXT), Florida Northern Railroad (FNOR), and Florida Midland Railroad (FMid).

CSXT operates and maintains two primary lines in the region. The first is a north-south line which traverses Marion, Sumter, and Hernando Counties and goes through Ocala, Wildwood, Coleman, and Bushnell. This line carries a variety of commodities, including non-metallic minerals, chemicals and allied products, including some hazardous wastes. The other primary line operated by CSXT traverses Marion, Levy, and Citrus Counties, and passes through Williston and Dunnellon before terminating at the Crystal River Power Plant. It is used predominantly for coal transport to the power plant.

Florida Midland Railroad (Fmid) operates three lines, one of which is within the region connecting Wildwood to Leesburg. Products transported include non-metallic minerals, food, lumber, and chemicals.

Florida Northern Railroad (FNOR) has a line that connects Lowell with Chandler, passing through Ocala, where it also has a short industrial track. Commodities transported include nonmetallic minerals and food.

The District Five Local Emergency Planning Committee has completed a Railroad Traffic and Commodity Study (1994) which identifies the types, quantities, and risks associated with the rail shipment of hazardous materials through the Region.

In an amendment to the FDOT 1992 Rail Plan, the viability of Fmid's Wildwood to Leesburg line was analyzed to determine its eligibility for federal Local Rail Freight Assistance Program funds. The plan determined that usage of the line was increasing, that the rails were in good condition, but that cross-tie and grade crossings needed repair. A benefit-to-cost ratio of 1.24 was calculated based on anticipated repair costs of \$646,000.

2. Waterways/Seaports

The Region's only seaport is not listed as one of the ports under the jurisdiction of the 5-year Florida Seaport Mission Plan of the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic Development Council. [Ch. 311.09, F.S.]. Nevertheless, the barge docking facilities associated with the Crystal River Power Plant, and owned by Florida Progress Corporation, are of regional significance. The port is used for off-loading coal barges, and for loading limerock.

The western terminus of the decommissioned Cross Florida Barge Canal has a 300-foot wide channel that extends straight inland for approximately eight miles. It is under consideration for freight docking facilities and for a marina.

3. Intermodal Freight Facilities/Trucking

The State's Intermodal Transportation Plan does not list any major intermodal facilities in the Region, There are facilities for loading piggyback trailers at the Mark III Plant in Ocala.

V. SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL FACILITIES

Significant regional facilities are those which meet one of the following criteria:

- ① A resource or facility that due to its uniqueness, function, benefit, service delivery area, or importance is identified as being of regional concern.
- ② A resource or facility that requires the participation or involvement of two or more governmental entities to ensure proper and efficient management.

Significant transportation facilities that were listed within this chapter are compiled, for summary purposes into a list in Appendix D of this plan.

VI. TRANSPORTATION GOALS, POLICIES, AND INDICATORS

Regional Transportation Goal: A Regional transportation system consisting of integrated highways, transit, rail, air, bicycle, pedestrian, and other modes in an efficient manner that balances the needs for economic growth, public safety, and the protection of natural and cultural resources.

A. AVIATION

Goal 5.1 Access to a general aviation system and, reservation of future lands needed for aviation service expansion through the designation of future land uses that are compatible with future airport development and operations.

Policy 5.1.1 Periodic updates to the Aviation System Plan for the region and airport facility improvements as indicated in the Aviation System Plan should be undertaken.

Policy 5.1.2 Utilize and/or expand existing aviation facilities in the region to the maximum extent possible before encouraging the creation of new airports.

Policy 5.1.3 Designate land uses that do not cause impediments or hazards to aviation, and acquire lands or easements that provide adequate buffers.

Indicator: Increased utilization of, and improved facilities, safety, and financial performance at the region's general aviation airports.

B. BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Goal 5.2 Increase the utilization of bicycle and pedestrian ways in the region.

Policy 5.2.1 Bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and multi-purpose greenways, shall be part of the multi-modal planning and development of transportation facilities, including the incorporation of such ways into state, regional, and local transportation plans and programs. Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in conjunction with the construction, reconstruction, or other change of any state transportation facility that fulfills transportation plans; special emphasis should be given to projects in or within 1 mile of an urban area.

Policy 5.2.2 Land use plans and development regulations shall incorporate design standards to make communities "walkable" and "bicyclable," especially requiring path and sidewalk links to future transit stops that serve office and industrial complexes, retail centers, and residential development.

Policy 5.2.3 Design bicycle and pedestrian facilities that meet Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) or other applicable standards, and assist local governments in the planning, design, and construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Policy 5.2.4 Revise local development codes to scale development patterns and densities to favor "walkable/bicyclable" modes of transportation.

Policy 5.2.5 Adopt land development regulations that guide the location of schools, school access roads, and attendant bicycle/pedestrian facilities away from multi-lane high speed roads and away from heavily travelled commercial areas.

Indicator: Connectivity and miles of acquired and constructed bicycle and pedestrian ways and greenways; number of users of these facilities; Land development regulations that require and favor "walkable/bicyclable" scaled development patterns and densities.

C. PUBLIC TRANSIT

Goal 5.3 Address the provision of efficient, cost effective public transit for all populations.

Policy 5.3.1 Assist local governments in updating mass transit elements of their local government comprehensive plans.

Policy 5.3.2 Designate future transit corridors, terminals, and stops.

Policy 5.3.3 Improve mobility options for their transportation disadvantaged citizens through coordinated transportation systems.

Policy 5.3.4 Promote and encourage public-private partnerships, innovative home-based services, increased public and client awareness, and dedicated local and state funding sources for transportation disadvantaged programs.

Indicator: Development of public transit plans, and the designation of future facility locations; reduction in the number of transportation disadvantaged persons unserved.

D. CORRIDOR PROTECTION

Goal 5.4 Protect future right-of-way for regional transportation facilities from building encroachment and incompatible land uses through the designation of regional corridors.

Policy 5.4.1 Use transportation plans to designate linear corridors for future transportation options within their jurisdictions.

Policy 5.4.2 Retain and acquire abandoned linear corridors, such as rail, transmission, or pipelines for future transportation alternatives, and in the interim consider the availability of the corridor for non-motorized transportation.

Indicator: Designation and protection of regional and local corridors.

E. HIGHWAY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Goal 5.5 Provide transportation facilities to ensure that the regionally significant roadways operate at acceptable levels of service.

Policy 5.5.1 Level of service standards for regionally significant roadways should be consistent with the Florida Department of Transportation recommended level of service standards.

Policy 5.5.2 Perform timely maintenance, expansion, and repair of roads and bridges to minimize costly reconstruction and to enhance safety.

Policy 5.5.3 Encourage flexibility in the funding of transportation projects, including the construction and use of toll facilities and transit-based facilities and operations.

Policy 5.5.4 Give priority in the programming of transportation projects to local governments which adopt right-of-way protection ordinances.

- Policy 5.5.5 Mitigation mechanisms, including but not limited to impact fees, should be used by local governments to mitigate the impacts of development on regionally significant roadways, including the State Highway System.
- Policy 5.5.6 Control development permit issuance to ensure that regionally significant roadways operate at acceptable levels of service concurrent with the impacts of proposed development.
- Policy 5.5.7 Access management controls on regionally significant roadways should be coordinated between the pertinent permitting agencies and local governments and consistent with F.A.C 14-96 and 14-97 in order to maximize operating capacity and improve the safety of regional roadways.
- Policy 5.5.8 Base comprehensive plan traffic circulation and transportation elements on the adopted plans of the Florida Department of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations in order to support a coordinated transportation planning process.
- Policy 5.5.9 Coordinate land use plans and transportation planning efforts to ensure that land use decisions and transportation improvements are complementary.
- Indicator: Operating levels of service on regionally significant roadways.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Goal 5.6 Future transportation development that avoids loss and fragmentation of environmentally sensitive areas, and degradation of water resources .

- Policy 5.6.1 Comprehensive plans' goals, objectives and policies shall protect water quality and natural resources from adverse effects of transportation activities in coastal high-hazard areas or in identified environmentally sensitive areas such as significant uplands, wetlands, floodways, or productive marine areas.
- Policy 5.6.2 Ensure that transportation improvements in coastal high-hazard areas and environmentally sensitive areas are made only after evaluating the interests of human transportation need versus the need to protect and preserve regionally significant resources.
- Indicator: The amount of environmentally sensitive land, significant uplands, wetlands, floodways, productive marine areas, and coastal high-hazard areas impacted by new transportation improvements.

G. TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Goal 5.7 Use transportation alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle to minimize the increase in additional lane-miles of highway.

- Policy 5.7.1 Establish Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs in cooperation with the FDOT and private entities where major traffic generation occurs. The TDM programs may include: ridesharing, park and ride spaces, telecommuting, flexible work hours, and other employee incentives for using alternative transportation modes. Transportation Management Organizations may be initiated in accordance with FDOT's Commuter Assistance Program to aid in the implementation of TDM programs.

Policy 5.7.2 Encourage the development of facilities for efficiently moving goods and services within and through the region, including conventional and high speed rail, shipping, pipelines, transmission lines, and communications technologies.

Indicator: Improvements in transportation connectivity and efficiency; increased intermodal traffic.

H. EVACUATION ROUTES

Goal 5.8 Maintain adequate capacity on evacuation routes to complete movement of vulnerable populations prior to the onset of pre-landfall hazards .

Policy 5.8.1 Place high priority on improvements to designated evacuation routes, and discourage development in areas with inadequate facilities for timely evacuations.

Policy 5.8.2 Coordinate transportation evacuation routes with those of adjacent jurisdictions.

Indicator: Maintenance of minimum safe evacuation times (less than 24 hours).

I. LAND USE PATTERNS

Goal 5.9 Plan for land use patterns that provide better opportunities for non-automotive trips.

Policy 5.9.1 Local comprehensive plans and land development regulations shall provide incentives to develop and redevelop using mixed uses, higher densities, and multi-modal transportation facilities such as bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities.

Indicator: Modal shift and decrease in trips and trip distances.