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**Southwest-Central Florida Connector is Essential to Florida's Future
Infrastructure Growth**

Tallahassee, Fla. – In light of the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program task force meeting to be held today in Labelle, Florida, several voices came together to show their support for the Southwest-Central Florida Connector.

Craig Fugate, former Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator and former Florida Emergency Management Director, said: “Connecting Collier County to Polk County is essential to Florida’s future infrastructure growth, especially as it relates to hurricane evacuation and moving emergency personnel and Floridians up the state. Further, inherent in the M-CORES process is the goal of making sure these roadways are implemented in an environmentally friendly manner and in a way that creates positive economic and lifestyle impacts with minimal disruption. As a longtime emergency manager and Floridian, I support responsible infrastructure development that will help our state continue to be a leader in the nation, while also respecting the safety needs of our residents and tourists.”

Dylan Albergo, project engineer of WGI, Inc., said: “These new roads will help alleviate our crowded highway system. By doing so, it will help to reduce idling time, which helps the environment, will reduce maintenance costs and will connect communities. These new roads will also allow populations to be spread out in a more sustainable and affordable way, where sufficient clean water and air would be available for healthy families to thrive.”

Mark Wilson, president and CEO of the Florida Chamber, said: “With 4.5 million more people expected to call Florida home by 2030, 3 million more drivers on Florida’s roadways by the same time and 50 million more annual visitors, the time to invest in Florida’s transportation infrastructure is now. The Florida Chamber is uniting Florida’s business community for good to ensure a sustainable and reliable infrastructure system for Florida’s future.”

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Brad Swanson, president and CEO of Florida Internet & Television, said: “With these roads, we are investing in Florida’s future. This plan will fundamentally redesign how Floridians move about the state and revolutionize how we connect with each other. With more and more people moving to Florida each day, it is essential we have the proper infrastructure in place, which also includes dedicated rights-of-way for the future deployment of telecommunications and broadband technology which ultimately aids in increasing access to Florida’s rural areas.”

The Southwest-Central Florida Connector is one of the three corridors being studied as part of the M-CORES program. The Southwest-Central Florida Connector study corridor extends from Collier County to Polk County and includes Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, Charlotte, Glades, Lee, Hendry and Collier Counties.

The M-CORES program, as detailed on the Florida M-CORES website, “is intended to revitalize rural communities, encourage job creation and provide regional connectivity while leveraging technology, enhancing the quality of life and public safety, and protecting the environment and natural resources. The program was signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis on May 17, 2019.”

In addition to the Southwest-Central Florida Connector, the other two regional corridors being studied are the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector. According to the Florida M-CORES website, “the task force will summarize the results of its analysis in a final report by October 1, 2020.”

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