



For Immediate Release

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**Suncoast Connector will Encourage Economic Growth & Development,
Revitalize Rural Communities**

Tallahassee, Fla. – Ahead of the third Suncoast Connector task force meeting, which will be held today, in Perry, Florida, local and statewide voices came together in support of the proposed corridor. The Suncoast Connector, which extends from Citrus County to Jefferson County, is one of the three corridors being studied as part of the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program.

Craig Fugate, former Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator and former Florida Emergency Management Director, said: “Among all the benefits the corridors outlined in the M-CORES program will provide, importantly, these corridors can be lifesaving evacuation routes, and crucial for bringing in relief supplies and other vital necessities, such as food, fuel and water. Currently, our state lacks the safe and accessible roadways our residents and visitors can depend on, especially during an evacuation. During Hurricane Irma in 2017, about 5.6 million Floridians – nearly a quarter of our state’s population – were told to evacuate, causing widespread traffic tie-ups. Further, inherent in the M-CORES process is the goal of ensuring anything that is built is done in an environmentally friendly manner and in way that creates positive economic and lifestyle impacts with minimal disruption.”

Alston Kelley, Madison County Board of County Commissioners, said: “As Florida looks ahead to the future, so must our local area. The proposed Suncoast Connector would connect our rural communities to more metro areas, allowing us to work toward economic prosperity, together. The project would also fill additional infrastructure needs, such as greater broadband connectivity and alternative modes of transportation, while identifying potential environmental impacts, such as wildlife habitat and water quality, addressing how they can be mitigated. Further, the project would provide needed evacuation routes in the event of a hurricane. We

look forward to the opportunities the Suncoast Connector will bring, and the Madison County Board of County Commissioners stands in support of this project.”

Brian Faircloth, president and owner of the Madison RV & Golf Resort, said: “As a family and a business owner, we believe the Suncoast Connector has numerous beneficial aspects. From a safety and evacuation point, citizens of Central and Southern Florida need additional routes when we have potentially catastrophic weather events impacting our state. Due to the massive growth in population in recent years, it is very evident our current roadway system is not suitable for mass and expedient evacuations and this corridor would add a very valuable evacuation line for those citizens. In addition to the safety factor, we believe the economic impact not only to Madison County, but surrounding counties as well, would be phenomenal. We are blessed the State of Florida continues to see positive growth and the addition of these roadways would certainly allow our families, our customers and citizens from across the state to easily access and financially support every aspect of our local economy. Businesses would see increased sales and certainly it would make us very attractive for new business opportunities we might miss out on otherwise.”

Edward Walker Dean, town manager of the Town of Greenville, said: “As the town manager of Greenville, words cannot express how excited and supportive I am of the M-CORES project. It would be a 50-year game changer for Madison County and would arguably be the biggest economic development project to hit this region since I-10 was built.”

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 Suncoast Connector, the other two regional corridors being studied are the Southwest-Central Florida 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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