

# Port Manatee Connector

## PD&E STUDY

Project Overview  
JUNE 2008

### PROJECT NEED

An enhanced roadway connection from Interstate 75 (I-75) to Port Manatee in Manatee County would serve as a crucial freight route, improve the overall efficiency of the existing highway network and relieve congestion at the gateway to the Port. The need for the Port Manatee Connector is supported by local, statewide and nationwide land use, economic and growth objectives based on the following factors:

- I-75 and Port Manatee are both included in Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) plan.
- The proposed facility is identified in the 2030 SIS Multi-Modal Unfunded Needs Plan.
- The proposed facility is identified in the 2030 Sarasota-Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Cost-Feasible Plan as a needs project.
- The proposed facility promotes international and statewide trade transportation networks.
- Port Manatee is the closest deep-water U.S. port to the Panama Canal (under expansion).

With the planned expansion of Port Manatee, in conjunction with the anticipated population and employment growth in the vicinity of the Port, the Port Manatee Connector will play a critical role in accommodating travel demands and improving the movement of goods and people.

### PLANNING, DESIGN, RIGHT OF WAY AND CONSTRUCTION

The PD&E study is scheduled for completion in mid-2011. Design, Right of Way acquisition and Construction are not funded in the FDOT Tentative Five-Year Work Program.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), recently initiated the Port Manatee Connector Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study on May 20, 2008. The PD&E Study involves the analysis of viable alternatives for enhanced access between I-75 and Port Manatee in Manatee County. To meet the purpose and need objectives of the project, proposed improvements may include upgrades to existing roadways and alternatives on a new east-west alignment. The Port Manatee Connector will provide access to Port Manatee at US 41 and connect to a new or modified interchange with I-75. The PD&E Study process will involve the development and evaluation of existing roadways and potential new roadway alignments, and the evaluation of environmental impacts and construction related costs. The study area for the Port Manatee PD&E Study generally extends from south of I-275 to south of State Road 674 (SR 674) and from the Tampa Bay coast line to east of I-75, in northern Manatee County or southern Hillsborough County.

### STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the PD&E Study is to develop and evaluate viable alternatives that will improve goods movement and traffic flow between I-75 and Port Manatee, which are both designated on Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) plan. The objective of this PD&E Study is to provide the information necessary to reach a decision on the type, design, and location of the Port Manatee Connector in an effort to enhance regional connectivity, system linkage, mobility, accommodate expected traffic needs, support economic development and provide an additional evacuation route for the surrounding community.



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### BACKGROUND

The Port Manatee Connector Feasibility Study was completed in October 2006 to provide a preliminary evaluation of the purpose and need for the proposed facility and to document the feasibility of viable alignments for the proposed connector. During the Feasibility Study, nine alternative alignments were identified and evaluated. As a result of the Feasibility Study, six of the nine alternatives were determined to be viable options. The Port Manatee Connector PD&E Study will follow prescribed Federal processes associated with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This will require a very deliberate consideration, evaluation and documentation of project corridors and alternatives. As such, the PD&E Study Team will use information from the Feasibility Study and re-evaluate the project study area to develop appropriate analyses and documentation that will comply with FHWA requirements. The study will proceed with no pre-determined solution(s) while allowing opportunities for input from all stakeholders including local governments; local, state and Federal agencies; property owners and interested parties.

### STUDY PROCESS

The intent of the PD&E Study process is to study each viable alternative to the level of detail necessary to accurately assess any potential impacts associated with the proposed improvements and to make a recommendation of the preferred alternative(s). This process is mandated by federal and state laws. The Port Manatee Connector PD&E Study will include an evaluation of all reasonable alternatives that meet the purpose and need established for the project. Interchange locations and concepts will also be evaluated during the PD&E Study. The level of documentation for the proposed improvements is expected to consist of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will fully document the purpose and need for the project, the development and evaluation of corridors, alignments and viable alternatives, potential environmental effects and the public involvement coordination conducted throughout the project. The EIS will be made available for public review and comment before finalizing. The preferred alternative(s) for the Port Manatee Connector will not be finalized until the corridor and alignment alternatives analysis is complete and a Public Hearing has been conducted to provide an opportunity for public comment. Following the Public Hearing, a preferred alternative will be recommended by FDOT and Location Design and Concept Acceptance (LDCA) will be requested. As the lead federal agency, FHWA will review the LDCA recommendation and document the final determination in a Record of Decision. The PD&E Study is anticipated to be complete with a Record of Decision in 2011.

### PROJECT STATUS

The PD&E Study is ongoing. A Purpose and Need Scoping meeting is tentatively scheduled for fall 2008. The formal Public Hearing will be scheduled in 2010.

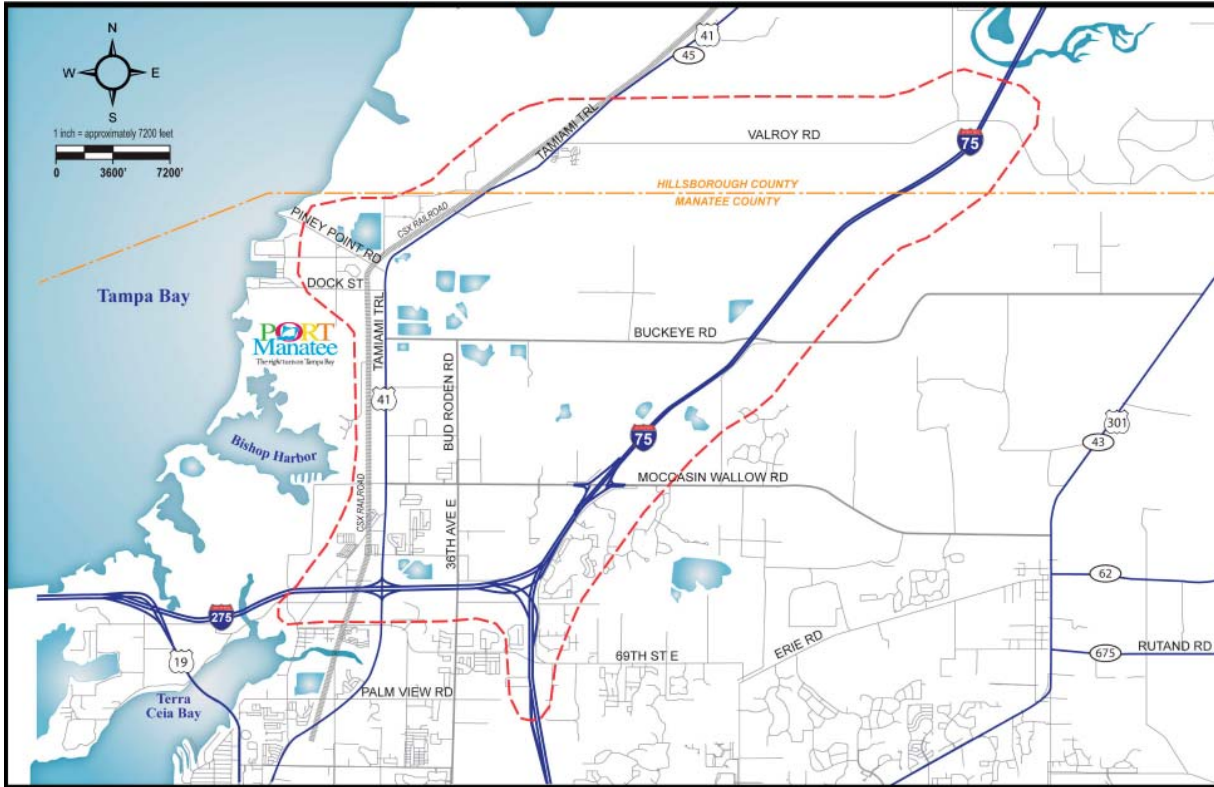
### OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Community input is solicited throughout the PD&E process. Opportunity for public input will be conducted through scoping meetings, public information meetings, newsletters, a project website and the Public Hearing. Coordination with local officials and stakeholders will be initiated through the scoping process. Scoping is required early in the project development process to provide an opportunity to identify significant issues, exchange information and identify consultation requirements. Scoping will be initiated in fall 2008 and will be announced through invitational letters that will be sent to local officials and agency stakeholders in the study area.



# Port Manatee Connector PD&E STUDY

## PROJECT LOCATION MAP AND STUDY CORRIDOR AREA (boundary shown in red)



For additional information on this project or if you would like to schedule a meeting, please contact:

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Written comments and questions can be faxed to (863) 519-1921 or mailed to:  
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