

**RESOLUTION  
2020-022**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA, REQUESTING THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR RON DeSANTIS AND THE SECRETARY OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT TO ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT A “NO BUILD” OPTION FOR THE PORTIONS OF THE MULTI-USE CORRIDORS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE KNOWN AS THE SUNCOAST CONNECTOR AND THE NORTHERN TURNPIKE CONNECTOR THAT MAY BE PROPOSED THROUGH LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA.**

**WHEREAS**, in its 2019 session, the Florida legislature passed Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 7068, which was signed into law by Governor DeSantis on May 17, 2019, the text of which is reflected in several sections of the Florida Statutes, primarily Section 338.2278, Fla. Stat., and which created the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (“M-CORES”) Program within the Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”); and

**WHEREAS**, the stated purpose of the M-CORES Program “is to revitalize rural communities, encourage job creation, and provide regional connectivity while leveraging technology, enhancing quality of life and public safety, and protecting the environment and natural resources”; and

**WHEREAS**, the M-CORES Program proposes to extend certain transportation corridors within the State as tolled facilities and approved turnpike projects as part of the FDOT turnpike system in order to fulfill its stated purpose, which corridors include the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector; and

**WHEREAS**, Levy County is among the counties included in the proposed extension areas of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector; and

**WHEREAS**, the M-CORES Program requires the use of a Task Force for each corridor as part of an inclusive, consensus-building mechanism for design of the corridors, and for each Task Force to conduct public meetings and prepare a report to present to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives with its evaluations on environmental and economic

impacts, hurricane evacuation impacts and land use impacts of the Task Force's respective corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, the Suncoast Connector and Northern Turnpike Connector Task Forces, each of which contain a Levy County Commissioner as a member, are also tasked with evaluating design features of their respective corridors and the need for acquiring state lands for mitigation related to water quality/quantity of certain water bodies, agricultural land uses and wildlife habitat, and to include those evaluations in their respective reports; and

**WHEREAS**, the M-CORES Program contains deadlines for start of construction and for opening of the M-CORES corridors, which deadlines do not require FDOT to complete design of corridor routes or construction design for the corridors in sufficient time for those designs to be considered by the Task Forces in their respective reports; and

**WHEREAS**, the process and timelines for design and construction for the proposed M-CORES corridor extensions do not follow or take into account established and publicly transparent processes normally used for design and construction of FDOT projects of this magnitude, and do not provide adequate opportunity for public input through the Task Force public meetings on precise routes or construction design for the corridor extensions, since those routes and designs will not be established in time to be considered in the Task Force public meetings and reports; and

**WHEREAS**, the citizens of Levy County and the Board of County Commissioners (the "Board") value the environmental assets in the County, including Manatee Springs, Fanning Springs, the Suwannee River and other water bodies, and the Goethe Forest, the Lower Suwannee Wildlife Refuge, the Cedar Key State Preserve and Waccasassa Bay State Preserve, all of which provide valuable habitat to plants and wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, the citizens of Levy County and the Board also value the agricultural assets in the County, including the expanses of rural land put to work in the agriculture industry, which land is worked hard by farmers and ranchers in the timber, peanut, watermelon, cattle and other agricultural commodities industries, without which Levy County would lose a valuable part of its culture and heritage; and

**WHEREAS**, without provision for adequate public input in the M-CORES Program process, and without adequate timing of deadlines for design of routes and construction for the corridors, the Board is not able to fully consider the wishes of the citizens of Levy County or to effectively provide recommendations or review of the proposed extensions of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector through Levy County, either as an independent body or through its members that sit on those corridors' Task Forces; and

**WHEREAS**, since the M-CORES Program process does not provide design of precise routes or construction design for the Suncoast Connector or the Northern Turnpike Connector in sufficient time to include evaluation of those designs in the Task Force reports, those corridors' Task Forces are unable to meet their duties set out in Section 338.2278, Fla. Stat., to evaluate design features and the need for acquisition of state lands to mitigate impacts on the environmental and agricultural assets contained within Levy County, which assets are held so dear by Levy County citizens and the Board; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board recognizes that the growing population of Florida will require additions to critical transportation infrastructure within the State; and

**WHEREAS**, the established routes of U.S. Highway 19/98 and U.S. Highway 41 which traverse Levy County meet and exceed current traffic flow needs and are well within acceptable levels of service to provide anticipated future needs for many years to come; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board has received considerable citizen input expressing the desire of a "No Build" option for the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector, due in part to the lack of precise routes and corridor design with which to evaluate the impacts on Levy County, its environmental assets, its agricultural assets, and its way of life; and

**WHEREAS**, since the Board values Levy County's environmental and agricultural assets, since the M-CORES Program does not provide for design for the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector to be provided in sufficient time for those corridors' respective Task Force reports to include evaluation of the proposed corridors' impacts to Levy County environmental and agricultural assets, since current and anticipated traffic needs are met by existing roads in Levy County, and since Levy County citizens have expressed the desire for a "No Build" option for these corridors through Levy County, the Board finds it is in the best interests of Levy County and the public to recommend that a "No Build" option for the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector be adopted and implemented; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of County Commissioners of Levy County, Florida, that:

1. In order to protect Levy County's environmental assets, preservation areas providing habitat for plants and wildlife, rural lands, agriculture industry, and the quality of life of our citizens, the Board hereby supports adoption and enactment of a "No Build" option by the Governor and the FDOT for portions of the Suncoast Connector and the Northern Turnpike Connector that may otherwise be proposed to traverse any part of Levy County.

2. The Board respectfully requests Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida legislature, and the FDOT to avoid proposing any new turnpikes within Levy County without consideration of the public's wishes gathered through adequate public input processes and without using accepted processes for design and construction of public projects.

3. The Board respectfully requests that any impacts that major new State roadways and existing State roadways have on Levy County be provided with identified definitive alignment corridors early in the process, which cooperation will preserve transparency and will save time and overall expense in the planning process.

4. The County Coordinator will provide a copy of this Resolution to the Governor, the Secretary of FDOT, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives.

5. The Resolution shall take effect upon adoption by the Board.

**DULY ADOPTED** this 7<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2020.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Matt Brooks, Chairman

ATTEST: Clerk of the Circuit Court  
and Ex Officio to the Board

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Danny J. Shipp

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND  
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

  
Anne Bast Brown, County Attorney

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