

## Coastal Connector - Frequently Asked Questions

**What is the FDOT and the FTE?** The Florida Department of Transportation is responsible for the establishment, maintenance, and regulation of public transportation in the state of Florida. The department was formed in 1969.

Florida's Turnpike Enterprise was created in 2002 as a sub-agency of the FDOT to operate its 461-mile system of limited access toll roads using private-sector business practices. The Coastal Connector falls within the oversight of the FTE.

**What is a limited access toll road or turnpike?** A toll road is funded by user fees and designed for long distance travel. Limited access means there are a limited number of entrances and exits, sometimes as few as two per county. Those using toll roads are generally "just passing through" to a final destination. When people travel on a toll road, they usually use the service plazas located in the median of the road to purchase fuel and food.

**How will my property value be impacted by the construction of a toll road?** Although the FTE would like to have you believe that toll roads increase the value of the properties through which they run, that would most definitely not be the case for most properties in Marion and Citrus Counties. The value of properties in Marion and Citrus Counties are based on the area's natural beauty and the unique, irreplaceable soil of the Horse Capital of the World. A super highway is unlikely to bring added value to the area since it would diminish the reasons why people currently move to this part of Florida.

**How will our current roads and property taxes be affected by adding a toll road?** Our local roads are already in tough shape, and this would add more burden to local governments who would be responsible for improving the areas around the entrances and exits to the toll road. Additionally, with the loss of hundreds of homes and farms from the tax base, the remaining properties would need to provide more tax income to offset the decreased revenue. Toll roads do not generally provide additional income for the areas they cut through.

**What is the end goal of this toll road anyway?** The FDOT has been attempting to construct a road connecting Tampa to Jacksonville since the late 1980's, despite being unable to produce any data to support that need. Although the FTE says the Coastal Connector could be used as a hurricane evacuation route, this is contrary to the recommendations of the I-75 Relief Task Force (2016) and the Florida House of Representatives Select Committee on Hurricane Response and Preparedness (2018). So, the answer to this question is still unknown.

**What was the I-75 Task Force?** This was a group of local and state officials and individuals charged with identifying strategies to provide traffic relief along I-75 with the long-term goal of better connectivity between Tampa Bay and Northeast Florida. The task force focused on six counties (Alachua, Citrus, Hernando, Levy, Marion, and Sumter). Their final recommendations included: 1) Optimize existing transportation corridors; 2) Evaluate potential enhancements to, or transformation of, existing transportation corridors; and 3) Evaluate potential areas for new corridors after evaluation of enhancements to I-75 and other I-75 connector roads, and determination of need. To better evaluate the need for I-75 improvements, the task force recommendations included evaluation of potential capacity and connectivity enhancements on major north-south corridors parallel to I-75, including US41 and US301. **In simple language: the I-75 Task Force recommended that I-75 be improved and all existing and connected roads be improved before focusing on building new roads through new corridors. Against these recommendations, the FTE is going ahead with the Coastal Connector study.**

**Who has the power to make the final decision about the Coastal Connector?** The Governor, currently Rick Scott, has the final word. He is advised by the FDOT Secretary, Mike Dew. Your representatives in the Florida Legislature in Tallahassee can also influence his decision.

**The FTE says this road won't be built anytime soon, maybe even 2045. Why worry now?** This is calculated misinformation. The reality is that construction could start as soon as three years from now in Lecanto. The FTE would like to move ahead as quickly as possible. The less we know and the less concerned we are, the easier it is for the toll road builders to get to the point where it will be too late for us to stop it. Our property values are already negatively affected by the prospect of the toll road. Once the final route is agreed upon by the FDOT and the FTE, the next step is to start condemning land through the government's right of eminent domain. This means that even if you do not wish to sell your property, the government or its agent has the right expropriate private property for public use by paying compensation. Those in the direct path of the toll road will get fair market value for their property. However, those property owners who are along the route but not within the route of the toll road are the citizens who will suffer the greatest loss. Although their tax value will remain the same, their ability to sell their property will be greatly diminished.