
■ Integrating the SIS into Florida's Communities

With up to 75 percent of future discretionary funding for transportation capacity focused on the SIS, the decisions about where to invest these funds and how to improve the SIS over time will have tremendous impact on the future of Florida's economy, communities and environment. FDOT will work closely with the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development; Enterprise Florida; the Department of Community Affairs; the Department of Environmental Protection; and other statewide, regional and local partners to ensure that the state's investment in the SIS supports an overall improvement in Florida's

quality of life and standard of living. Full implementation of the SIS offers benefits to Florida's rural, transitioning and urban areas.

In implementing the SIS, FDOT will work with partners to:

- **Strengthen the linkage between transportation and economic development.** In the future, transportation needs will be identified based on economic opportunities in addition to traditional measures of safety and congestion, with the potential to invest in catalytic projects that could transform regional economies. Project prioritization will be based in part on economic impacts, which will be more effectively assessed with input from Enterprise Florida and its partners.
- **Strengthen the linkage between transportation and land use planning.** FDOT will work through the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and other partners to develop and implement a complementary land use management strategy for the SIS that would protect SIS facilities from incompatible development. This linkage will be explored in coordination with DCA's efforts to reevaluate Florida's growth management system. Coordination of land use planning with SIS planning will occur at the regional level to ensure consistency with strategic regional policy plans and local comprehensive plans. This regional coordination will differentiate between urban, rural and transitioning areas (see box on next page). State incentives and technical support should be provided to assist these regional planning efforts.
- **Assist Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern** in developing long-range transportation plans that are integrated with economic development and land use visions. This will require focused state assistance in working with rural areas to identify needs for SIS facilities, and to ensure that regional and local transportation systems provide adequate connectivity between rural economic assets and the SIS. The SIS should support development in rural areas at appropriate locations or where the local government supports development to promote economic growth. However, the SIS should not be a catalyst for development that converts rural and agricultural lands into residential or commercial development where these types of development are not supported by adopted local comprehensive plans.
- **Ensure that the SIS protects or improves community livability and environmental quality.** The impacts of SIS projects on communities and the environment will be assessed at the statewide, regional and project levels. A new process will be explored for assessing impacts on natural resource systems, wildlife habitats and other environmentally sensitive areas that are of statewide and regional significance. The ETDM process will be used, as applicable, to evaluate all planned SIS projects for environmental and community impacts, and to determine ways to avoid or mitigate those impacts. The ETDM process will be augmented with comparable processes to consider the impacts of investments in other modes not currently covered by ETDM. Improvements to SIS facilities will incorporate context-sensitive design and access standards as appropriate, which should be consistent with thresholds establishing the level of protection and preservation for identified environmental resources and community assets.
- **Provide an organizational structure for ongoing coordination** among transportation, land use and economic development partners at a statewide level.

What Does the SIS Mean for Florida's Communities?

- **Rural areas** – Florida's rural areas need transportation access to worker, customer and supplier markets in larger urban regions, as well as in other states and nations, if their economies are to grow. No SIS hubs are located in rural areas today, and most rural areas rely heavily on SIS airports, seaports and other terminals located in urban areas to access national and global markets. The SIS will expand the capacity of the interregional corridors that link the Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern to other regions, including the hubs in those regions that provide access to other states and other nations. Some projects will include proactive investments to stimulate rural economic development, as well as to catch up with prior development, as in some of the urban regions. In addition, enhanced regional planning processes will help rural counties align transportation investments with regional economic strategies and coordinate SIS investments with the regional and local facilities that provide for movement of people and goods within each rural area.
- **Transitioning areas** – In many of Florida's fast-growing, urbanizing regions – from Southwest Florida to the Treasure Coast to the coastal regions of Northwest Florida – rapid population growth and land development are outpacing the capacity of the transportation system. Typically, few modal options are available for passengers and freight, particularly trips that connect to other regions or states. Often the SIS corridor also serves as the primary corridor for short-distance local and regional travel and transport, and a primary engine for economic development. The SIS will help accelerate improvements to these key corridors and also explore other modal options such as expanded rail, water or air service. In addition, better highway and rail access in urbanizing areas will help their airports, seaports and other terminals – many of which are designated as Emerging SIS today – reach their full potential. By coordinating decisions about where to expand and how to provide access to the SIS with regional development and land use decisions, the SIS can be an important catalyst for ensuring that future growth supports a high quality of life.
- **Urban areas** – From Miami to Tampa to Jacksonville, many of Florida's large urban areas have developed because of their roles as transportation hubs. The competitiveness of these urban areas is under increasing pressure today due to congestion on the highway system and constraints on future growth of ports and terminals. The SIS will focus state investment on the interregional corridors that link urban areas to one another and to other state and nations, and on the critical transportation hubs and their access roads, rail lines and waterways. The multimodal, systematic planning approach envisioned by the SIS will enable better coordination across modes and better investment in technology solutions and other operational strategies for realizing the most capacity available from congested facilities. The SIS will not fund all improvement needs for transportation within an urban area, but will create a reliable "backbone" to connect with those facilities that are funded through regional and local sources. For example, SIS passenger hubs will be designed to have efficient access to regional transit systems, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities.