



Florida Department of Transportation

# Highlands County Feasibility Study

Public Meeting September 17, 2024

FPID #: 449503-1

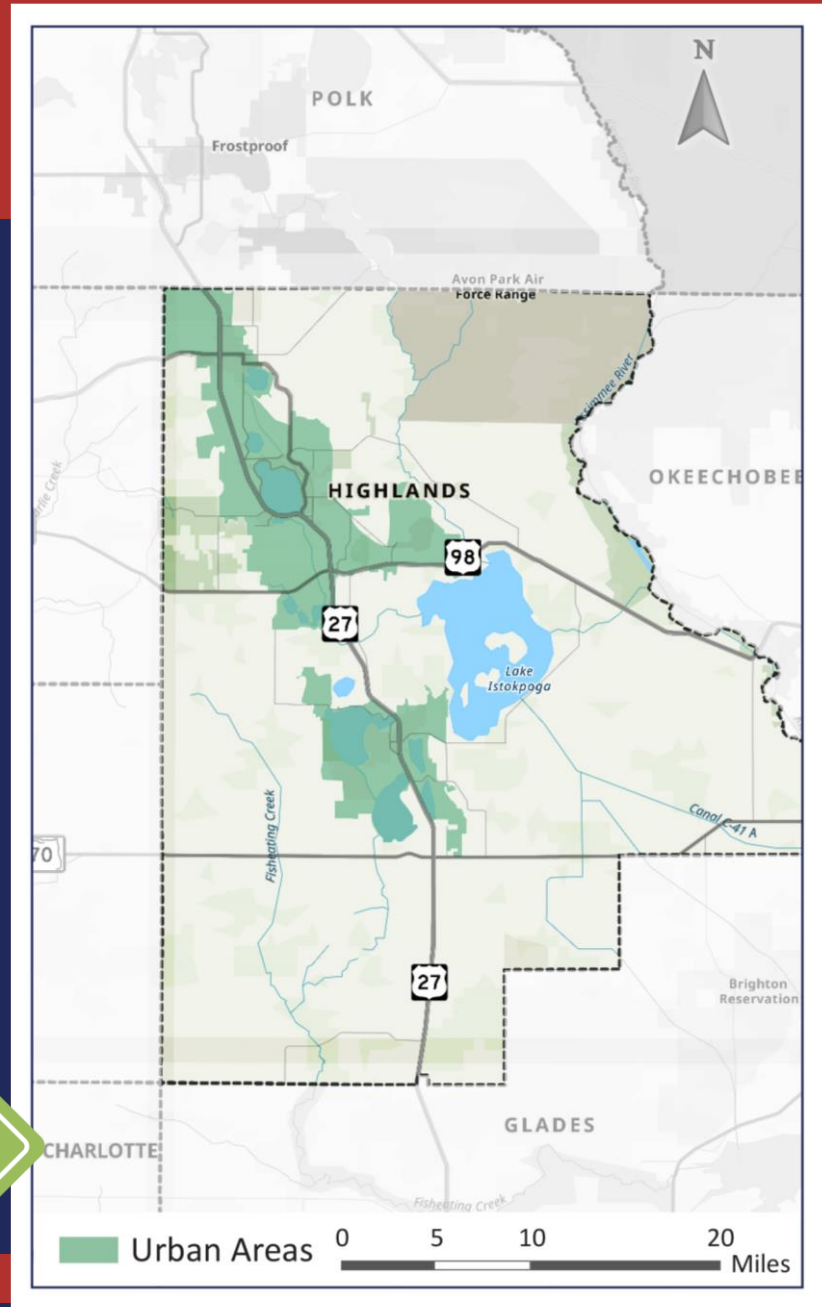
# WHY A HIGHLANDS COUNTY FEASIBILITY STUDY

## Regional Growth

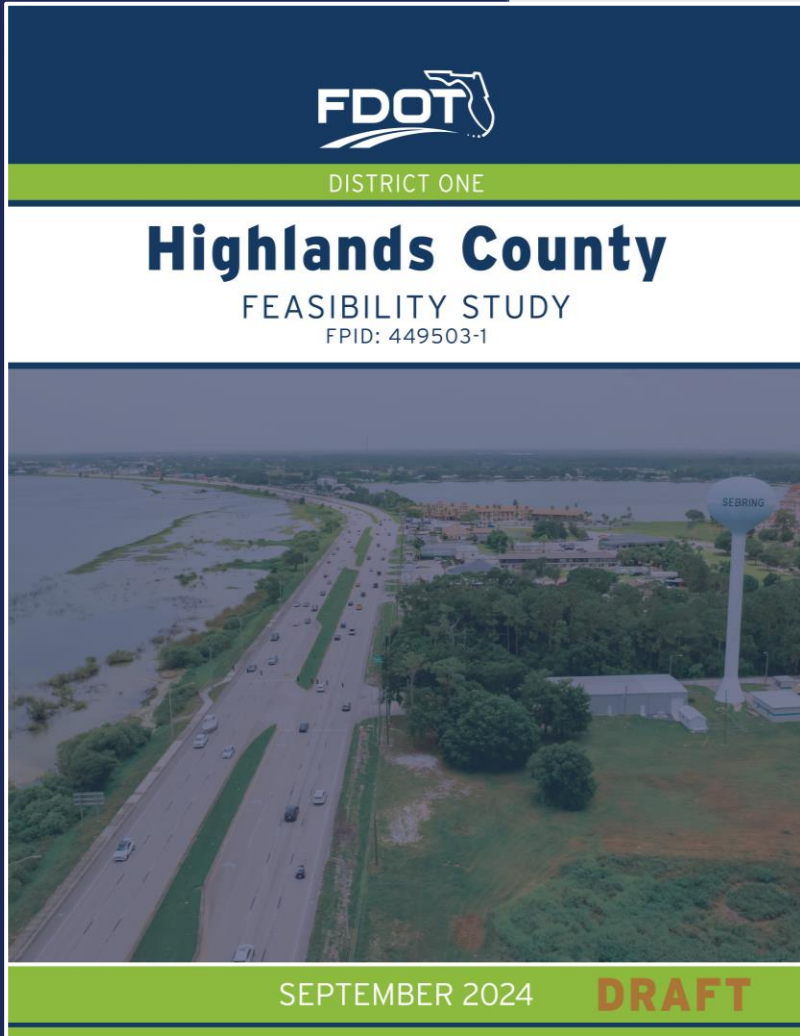
- Centrally located between major metropolitan areas
- Proactively planning to accommodate future growth

## Safety and Mobility Challenges

- Increased truck traffic
  - Conflicts with pedestrians/bicycles
- Limited evacuation and detour routes



# FEASIBILITY STUDY



## Scope:

- US 27 from CR 17 to SR 17 in Highlands County
- Assess need for future improvements within Highlands County with a focus on:



Safety to identify high crash locations



Traffic to evaluate capacity additions



Freight movement



Alternative route for detours and evacuation



Local plan review to ensure consistency

# Highlands County Feasibility Study Findings



## POPULATION TRENDS

Highlands County is expected to see a 54% increase in population.



## SAFETY

12 miles of US 27 have crash rates above the statewide rate.



## FREIGHT

US 27 serves as a major freight corridor carrying up to 43% truck traffic.



## EVACUATION/DETOURS

Limited parallel facilities to US 27 exist. Potential 67-minute detour to the nearest alternative route.

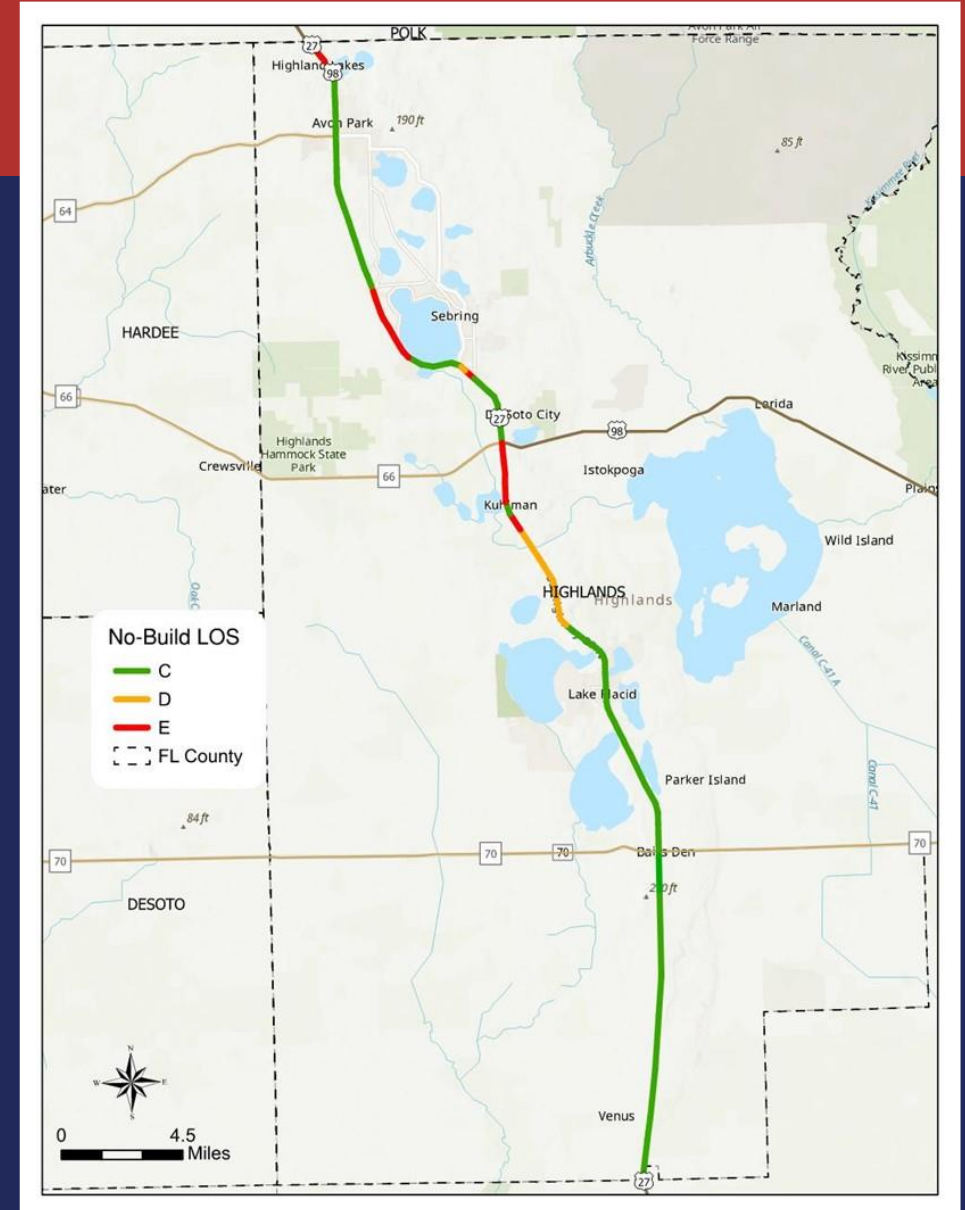


## TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Multiple segments of US 27 have more vehicles (up to 20% more) than can be accommodated.

# FUTURE YEAR BUILD OUT CONSIDERATIONS

- Portions of US 27 will be at or near capacity in 2045
  - Increased truck traffic
- Adding lanes to US 27 will not fix the problem:
  - New development will erode capacity initially gained from additional lanes
  - Impacts up to 304 parcels
  - Estimated project cost: \$120 million

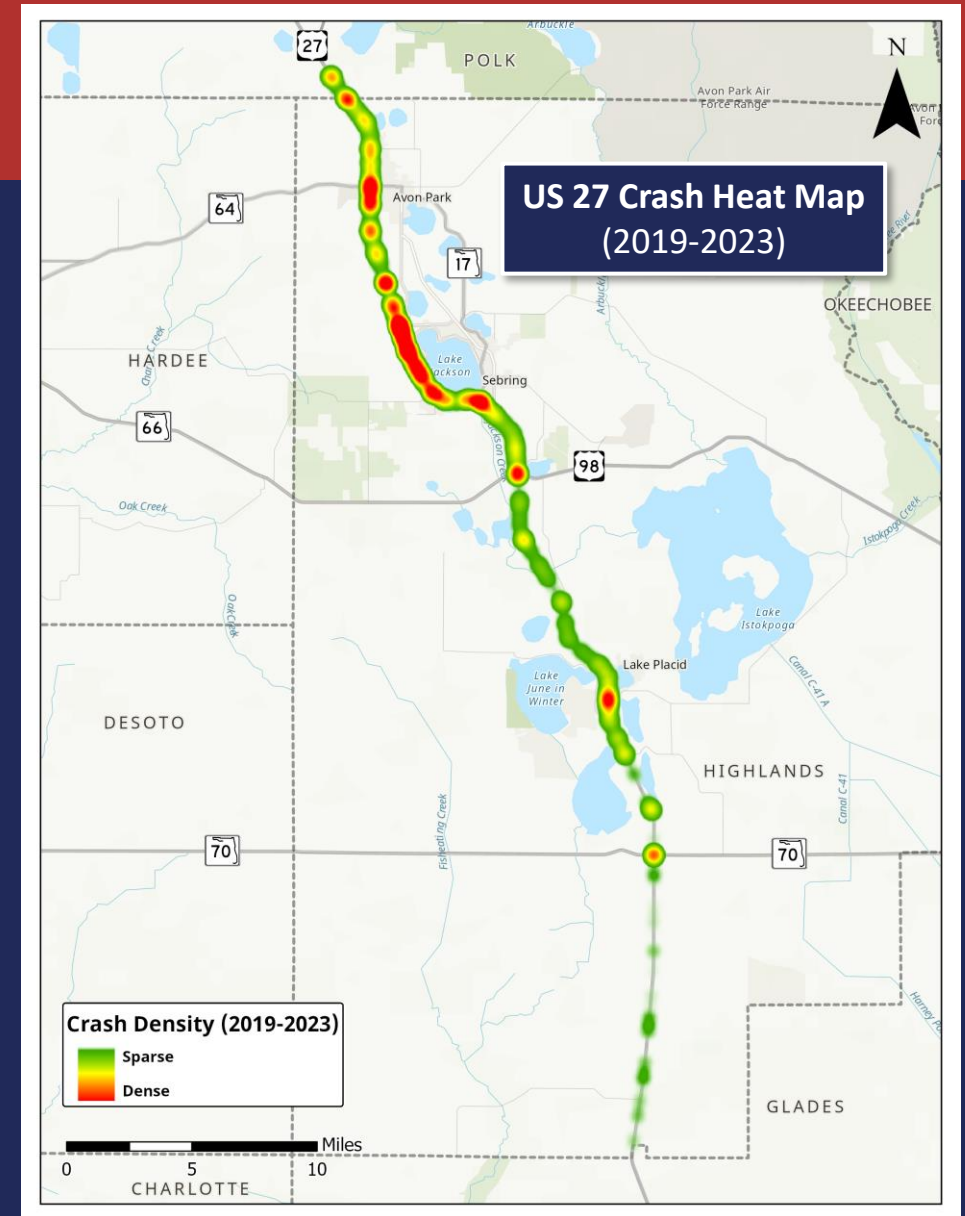


# SAFETY

- Most crashes are in urbanized areas (Sebring and Avon Park)
- The fatal crash percentage is four times the national average
  - Lack of continuous bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure identified as a contributing factor
- Projected crashes with an additional lane:

TOTAL CRASHES DOWN

WRONG-WAY CRASHES UP  
PEDESTRIAN CRASHES UP



# EVACUATION AND DETOURS

- Regional transportation network does not have the capacity to handle evacuation traffic
- Lengthy detours if portions of US 27 are closed

## DETOUR AND EVACUATION ROUTES

### DETOUR 1: SR 64 TO SR 66

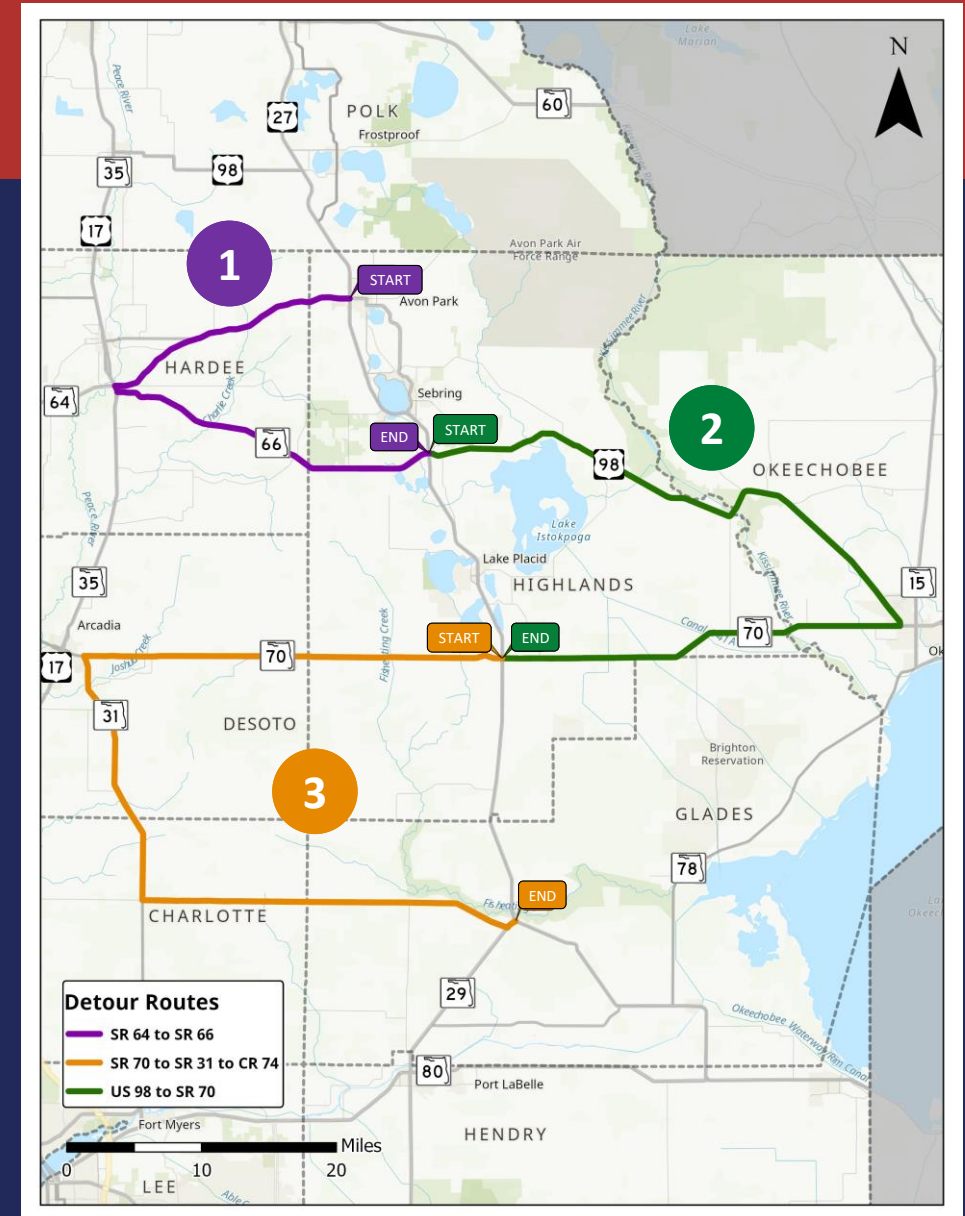
Additional Travel Time (mins)	30
Additional Distance (miles)	30.7

### DETOUR 2: US 98 TO SR 70

Additional Travel Time (mins)	60
Additional Distance (miles)	55.6

### DETOUR 3: SR 70 TO SR 31 to CR 74

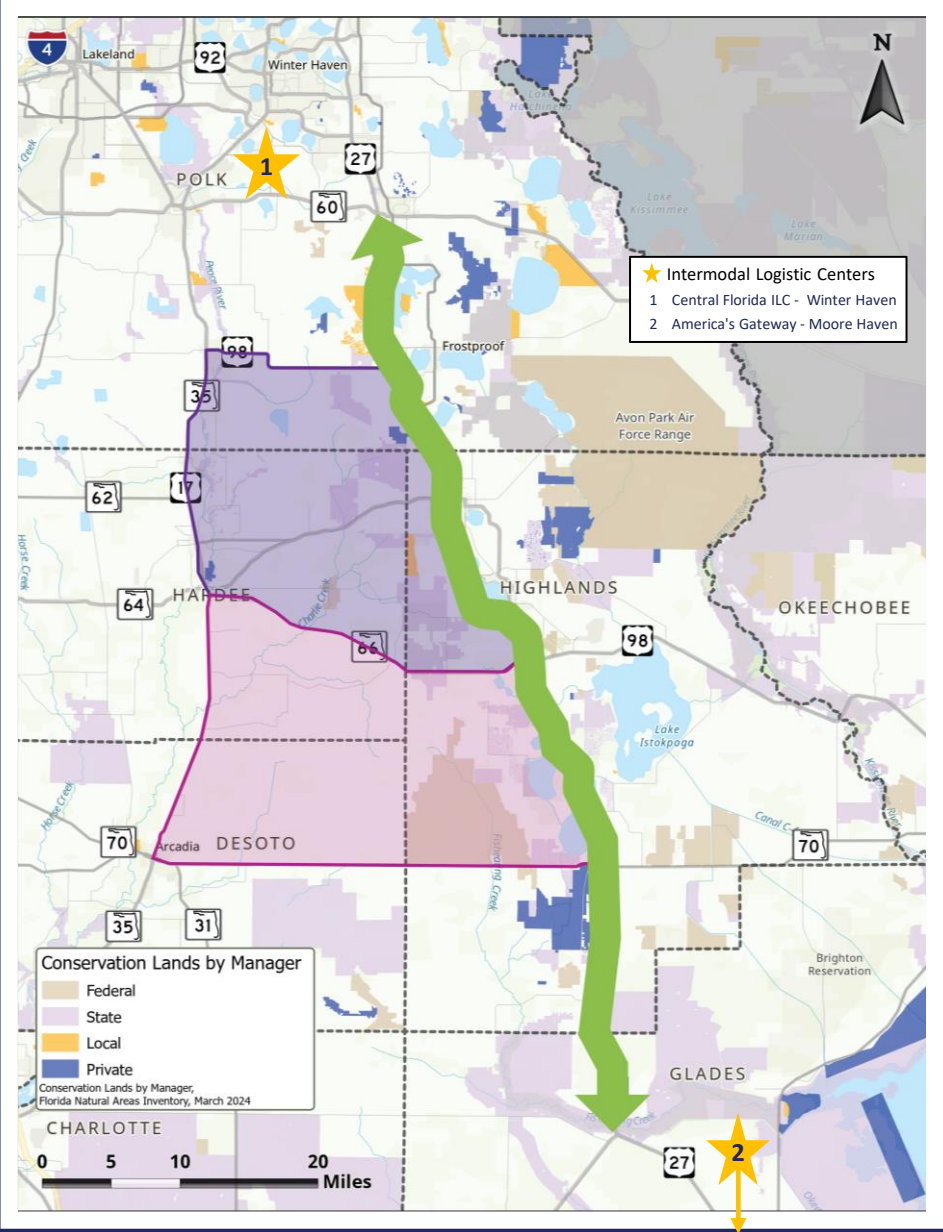
Additional Travel Time (mins)	67
Additional Distance (miles)	58.9



# FEASIBILITY STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

**FDOT**  
DISTRICT ONE  
**Highlands County**  
FEASIBILITY STUDY  
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SEPTEMBER 2024 **DRAFT**

- PD&E Study from SR 66 to US 98
- PD&E Study from SR 70 to SR 66
- Mobility Analysis





# FEASIBILITY STUDY

# RECOMMENDATIONS

# PD&E Study from SR 66 to US 98

The need for the project is based on:



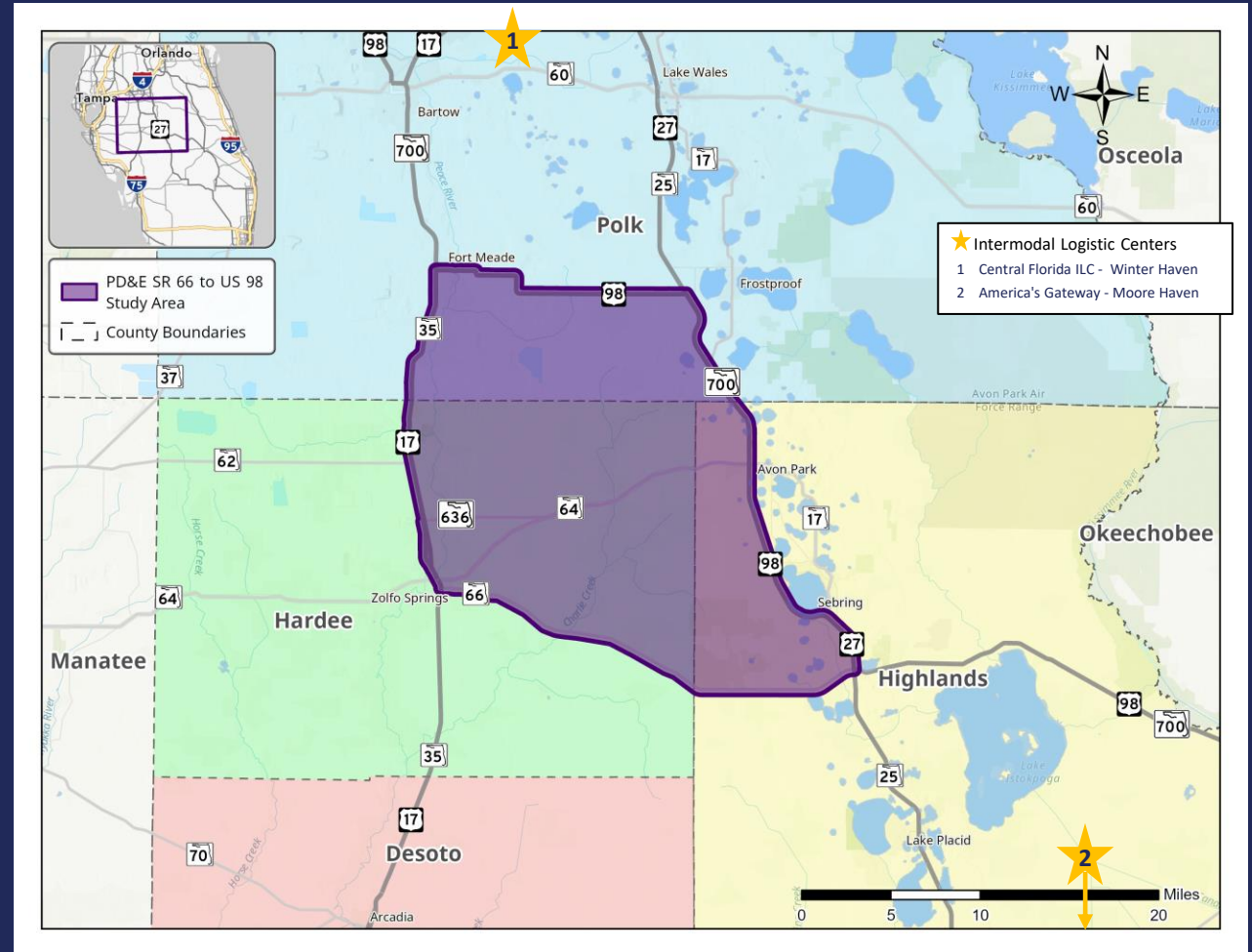
LAND USE CHANGES



TRAFFIC CONGESTION



SAFETY



**FEASIBILITY STUDY**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PD&E Study from SR 70 to SR 66**

The need for the project is based on:



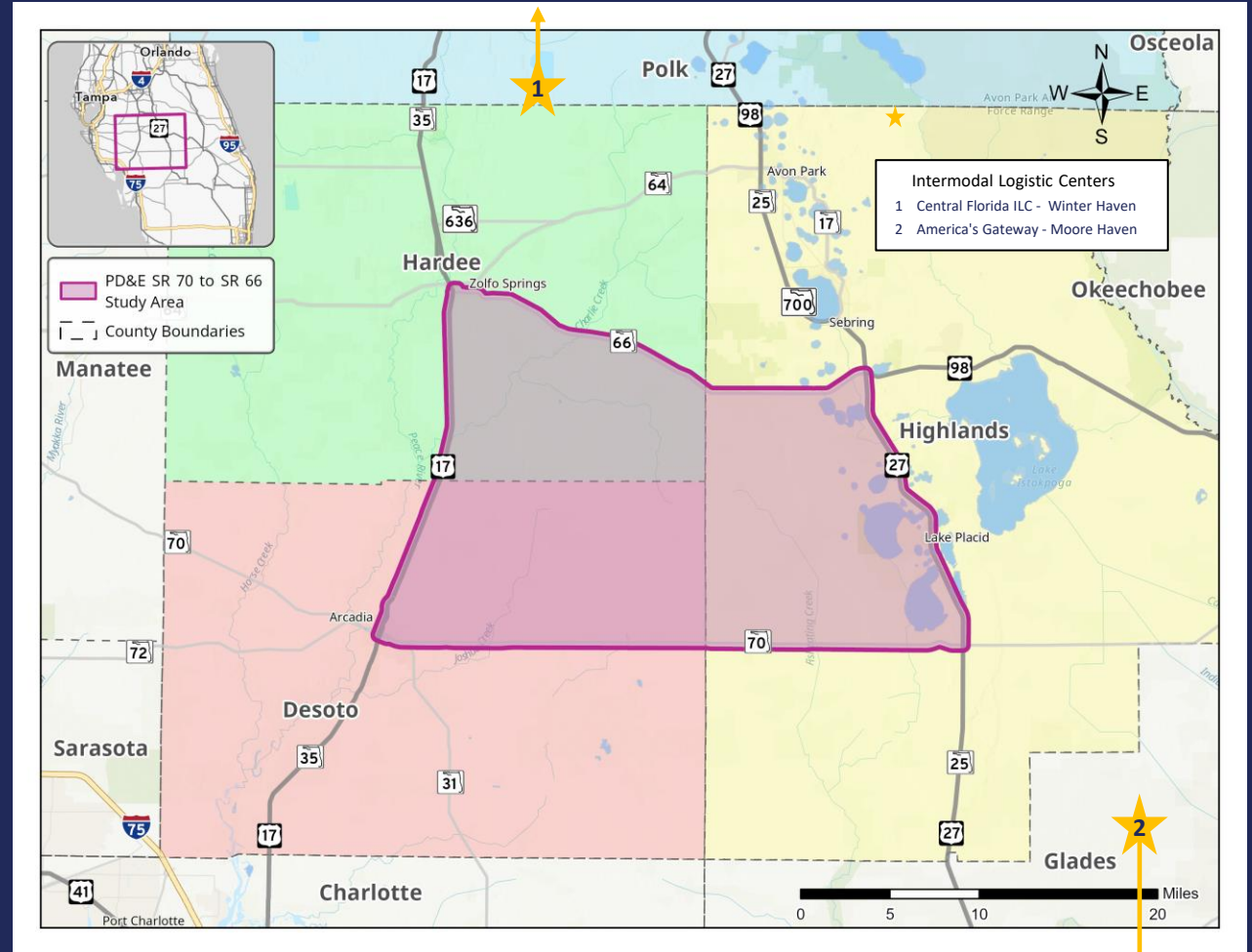
**NETWORK RESILIENCY**



**EMERGENCY EVACUATION**



**FREIGHT MOBILITY**



**FEASIBILITY STUDY**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

## Mobility Analysis



- Identify operational improvements on US 27
- Integrated adjacent project coordination
- Setup for future change in character





# Community Engagement

## September – 2024

### Highlands County Feasibility Study Public Meeting:

- In Person – September 17<sup>th</sup>
- Virtual – September 19<sup>th</sup>

## November 2024 – May 2025

### Visioning Workshops

- In Person & Virtual
- Four Locations: Two PD&Es & Two Mobility Analysis Visioning Workshops

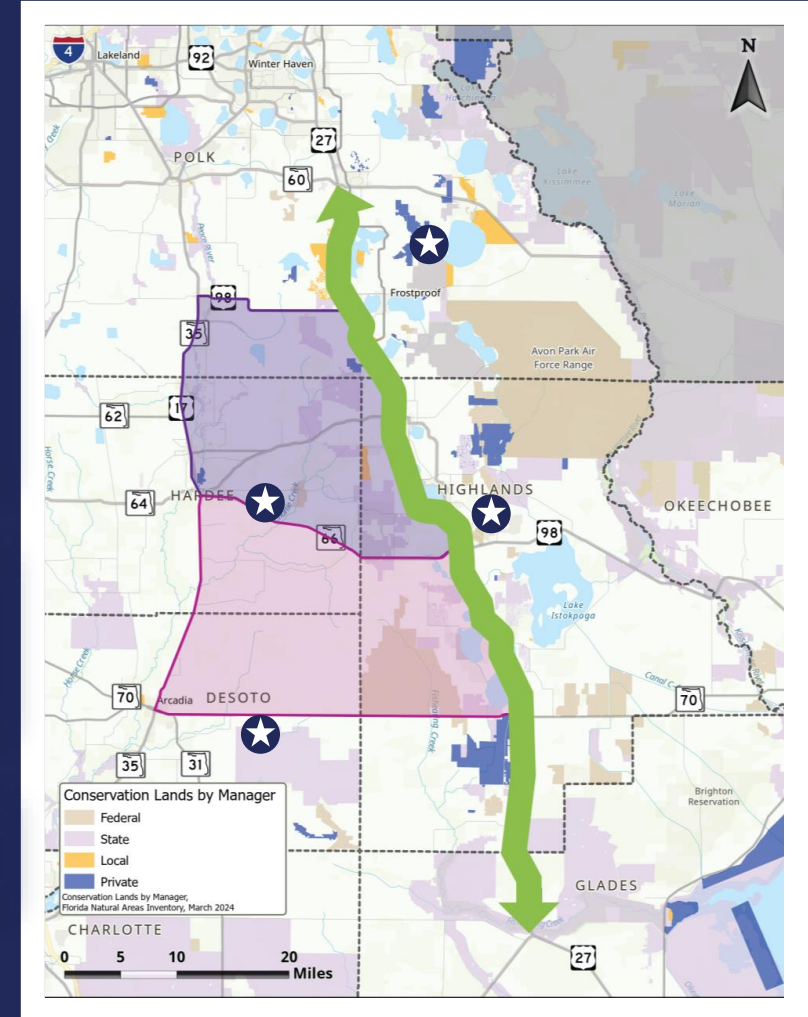
## Workshop Locations

- Lake Wales ★
- Sebring ★
- Wauchula ★
- Arcadia ★

PD&E Study from  
SR 66 to US 98

PD&E Study from  
SR 70 to SR 66

Mobility Analysis



# Next Steps



- ✓ PD&E SR 70 to SR 66 Visioning Workshop
  - ❑ In-Person - November 19, 2024  
Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 NE Roan St, Arcadia, FL 34266
  - ❑ Virtual Self-Guided - November 20 – December 4, 2024
  
- ✓ PD&E SR 66 to US 98 Visioning Workshop
  - ❑ In-Person / Virtual – Early 2025 (Location and Dates: TBD)
  
- ✓ Mobility Analysis Visioning Workshops
  - ❑ In-Person / Virtual – Spring 2025 (Location and Dates: TBD)

# For Project Information Contact:



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***Project Website:***

**<https://www.swflroads.com/project/000000-2>**



**Distracted driving is just as dangerous as drunk driving.  
Keep your eyes on the road, not on your phone.**