ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

TYPE 2 CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Florida Department of Transportation

SR 70 FROM LONESOME ISLAND RD TO SOUTHERN LEG OF CR 721

FDOT District 1

County: Highlands County

ETDM: 14490

Financial Management Number: 449851-1-22-01

Federal-Aid Project Number: D123-016-B

Project Manager: Cothern, Kathern, Corridors Program Development Project Manager IV

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. §327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT.

This action has been determined to be a Categorical Exclusion, which meets the definition contained in 40 CFR 1508.4, and based on past experience with similar actions and supported by this analysis, does not involve significant environmental impacts.

Signature below constitutes Location and Design Concept Acceptance:

Director Office of Environmental Management
Florida Department of Transportation

For additional information, contact:

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Prime Consulting Firm:

Consor North America, Inc.

Consulting Project Manager:

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This document was prepared in accordance with the FDOT PD&E Manual.

This project has been developed without regard to race, color or national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended).

On 03/01/2023 the State of Florida determined that this project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program.

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1. Project Information

1.1 Project Description

This roadway project proposes the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along 7.6 miles of State Road (S.R.) 70 from Lonesome Island Road to the southern leg of County Road (C.R.) 721 in Highlands County. Travel lane widths may be widened from 10 feet to 12 feet as part of the project. Multimodal facilities will also be considered along the project segment, where appropriate. A project location map is provided in **Figure 1-1**.

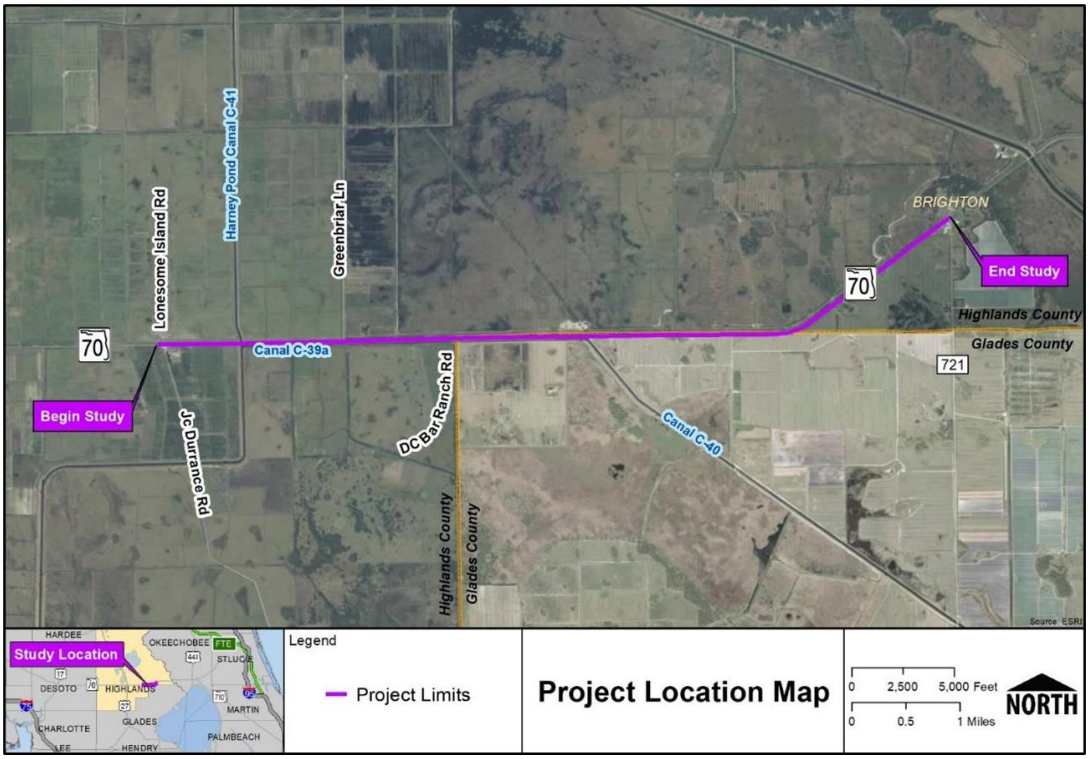

Figure 1-1: Project Location Map

Existing Conditions

S.R. 70 is part of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) highway network and designated state hurricane evacuation route network. As part of the National Highway System, S.R. 70 is critical in the transportation network as it facilitates local and regional traffic and the movement of goods/freight. SR 70 is functionally classified as "Rural Principal Arterial - Other" within the project area, and the project segment of the roadway has an existing context classification of C2-Rural.

The existing typical section consists of a two-lane undivided facility with 10-foot travel lanes. There are 8-foot shoulders, four (4) feet of which are paved; however, there are no designated bicycle lanes or sidewalks present on either side of the existing roadway. The posted speed limit along the project corridor is 60 miles per hour (mph). The existing (ROW) width along S.R. 70 project segment varies from 50 feet

to 70 feet. A deep canal runs intermittently along the southern border of the project limits. The existing roadway typical sections are shown as **Figure 1-2** and **Figure 1-3**.

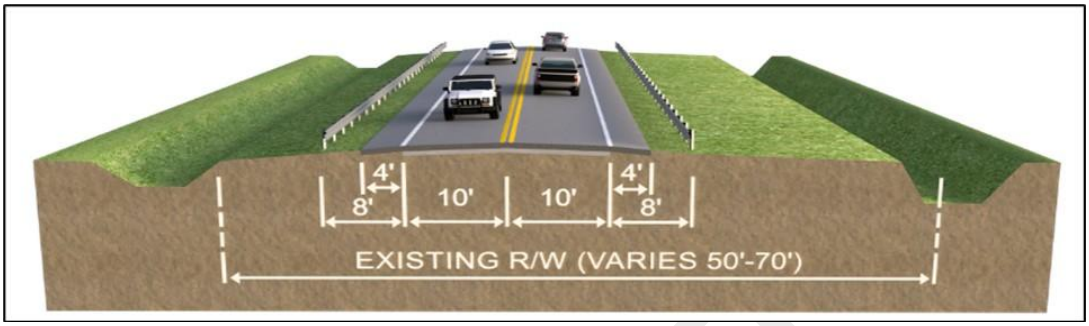

Figure 1-2: Existing S.R. 70 Typical Section from Lonesome Island Road (Begin Project) to Harney Pond Canal C-41 and From Indian Prairie Canal C-40 to C.R. 721 (End Project)

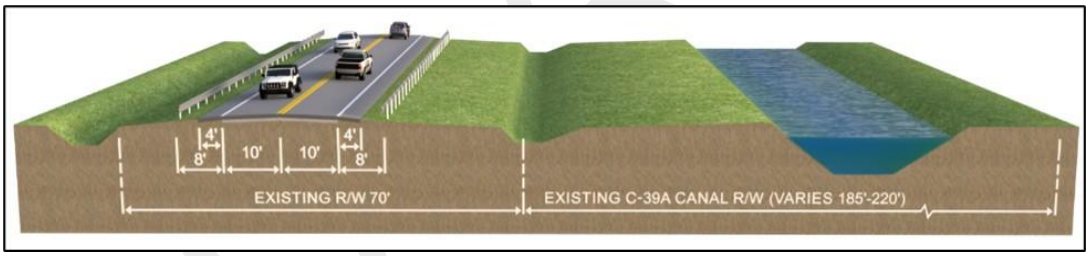

Figure 1-3: Existing S.R. 70 Typical Section from Harney Pond Canal C-41 to Indian Prairie Canal C-40

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative includes widening the existing two-lane undivided rural arterial to a four-lane divided arterial with a 40-foot grass median throughout the project limits. Full paved shoulders and drainage ditches are proposed on the outside and a 12-foot-wide shared use path is proposed along the south side of the road for bicycles and pedestrians. The proposed typical sections are shown on **Figure 1-4** and **Figure 1-5** from the western limits of the project, where the widening is to the south of the existing roadway, to the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Harney Pond Canal (C-41) where the widening shifts to north of the existing roadway**.**

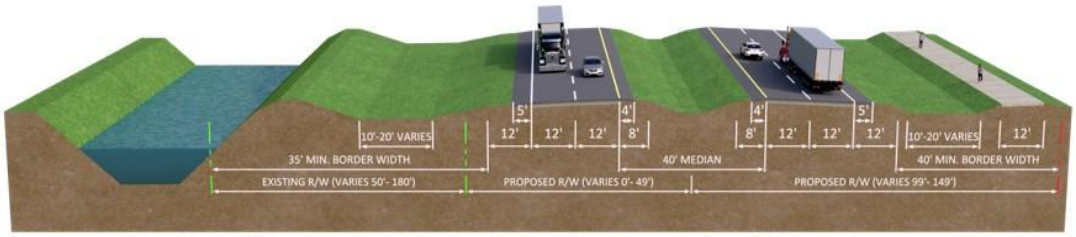

Figure 1-4: Preferred Alternative Roadway Typical Section: Lonesome Island Road (Begin Project) to West of Harney Pond Canal C-41

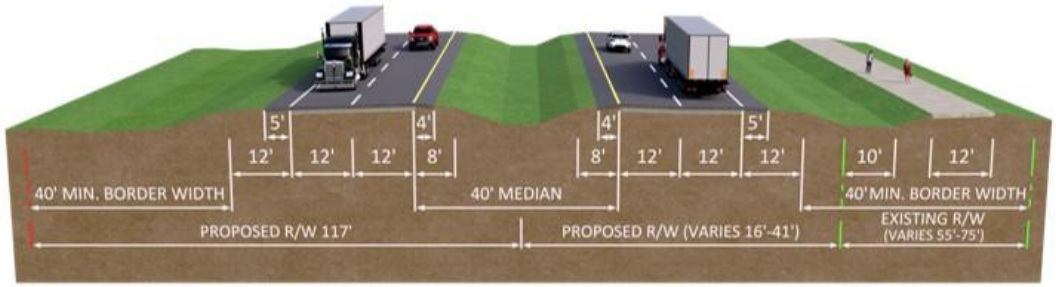

Figure 1-5: Preferred Alternative Roadway Typical Section: West of Harney Pond Canal C-41 and East of Indian Prairie Canal C-40

Moving east, the proposed alignment continues east with widening to the north side of existing S.R. 70 pavement as it traverses the Harney Pond Canal (C-41) and follows immediately north of and parallel to the C-39A canal as shown on **Figure 1-6**. The alignment remains to the north across the Indian Prairie Canal (C-40).

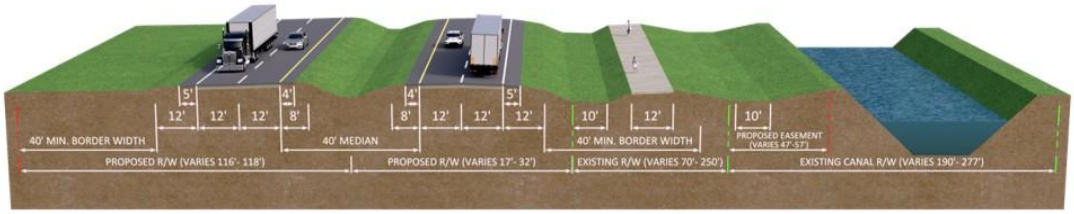

Figure 1-6: Preferred Alternative Roadway Typical Section: Harney Pond Canal C-41 to Indian Prairie Canal C-40

East of the Indian Prairie Canal continuing east towards C.R. 721, the alignment shifts back to the south side of existing S.R. 70 as shown previously in **Figure 1-4** to avoid impacts to an existing gas pipeline and overhead transmission line which are situated north of S.R. 70.

Approaching the Southern leg of C.R. 721, the Preferred Alternative shifts both proposed eastbound and westbound lanes starting approximately 1,000 feet west of the existing S.R. 70 and C.R. 721 intersection avoiding the businesses along existing S.R. 70. Access to the businesses will be connected to S.R. 70 through access from C.R. 721. The proposed typical section is shown in **Figure 1-7** and the realignment is shown in **Figure 1-8**.

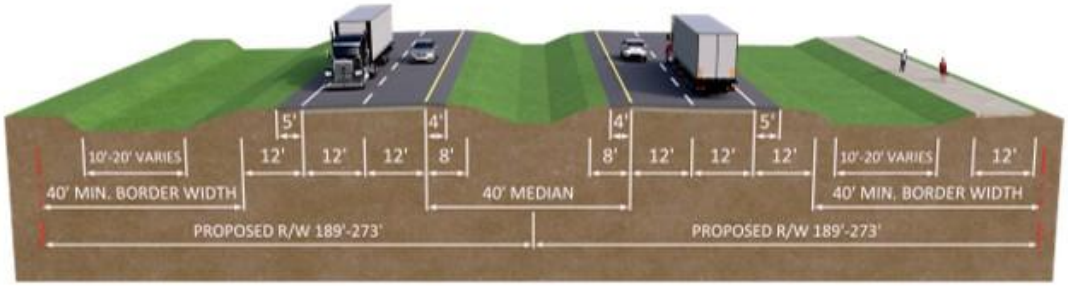

Figure 1-7: Preferred Alternative Roadway Typical Section: East of Indian Prairie Canal C-40 to C.R. 721 (End Project)

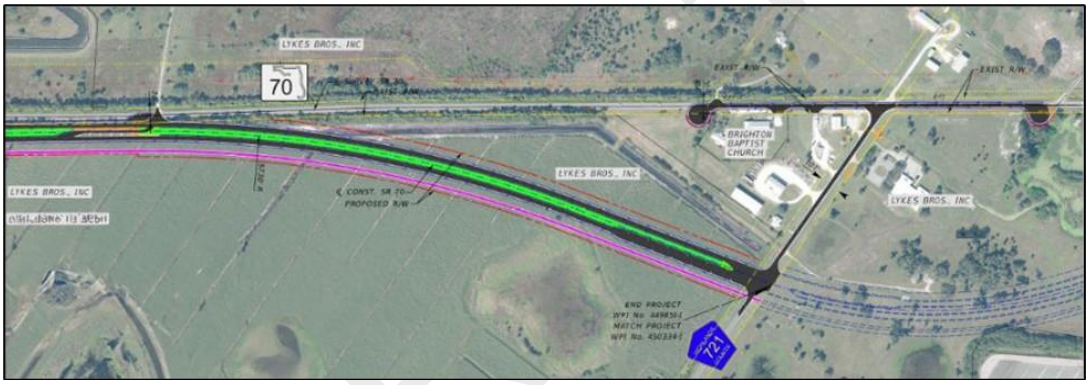

Figure 1-8: C. R. 721 Intersection Realignment

The S. R. 70 bridges over Harney Pond Canal (C-41) shown on **Figure 1-9** and over Indian Prairie Canal (C-40) shown on **Figure 1-10**, will be replaced. The bridges include a 12-foot wide shared use path on the south side. Horizontal widening alignments were adjusted to minimize ROW requirements, impacts and costs.

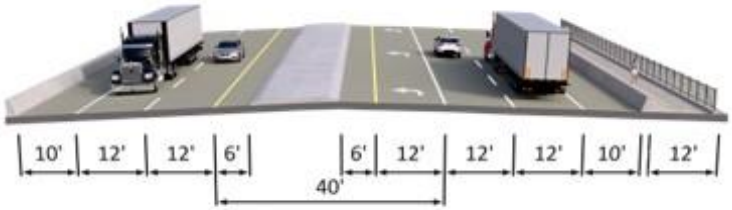

Figure 1-9: Preferred Alternative Bridge Typical Section - S.R. 70 over Harney Pond Canal C-41

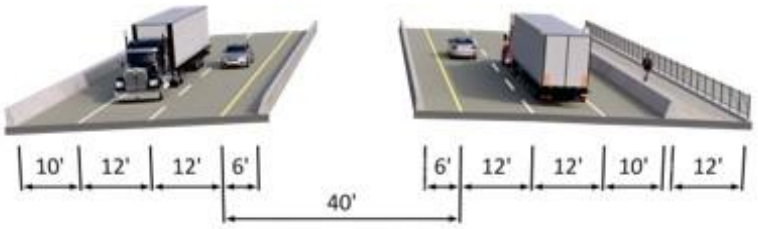

Figure 1-10: Preferred Alternative Bridge Typical Section - S. R. 70 over Indian Prairie Canal C-40

The Preferred Alternative includes construction of six new off-site stormwater management facilities (SMF) designated as SMF 1, 2A, 3A, 4, 5, 6 and linear sites LIN7L and LIN7R within the roadway ROW limits. Six new off-site floodplain compensation (FPC) sites, designated as FPC 1B, 2-3B, 4A, 5A, 6B and 7B are also proposed as part of the Preferred Alternative.

Additional ROW will be required for the Preferred Alternative for roadway widening (183.2 acres) and for off-site SMF and FPC sites (148.5 acres). The total additional ROW is approximately 331.7 acres and involves 7 parcels. The SMF and FPC sites are situated on parcels that are also included in the parcel count for roadway widening. In addition, approximately 20.7 acres of easements are needed from SFWMD for roadway widening along canals C-41, C-40 and C-39A.

The proposed improvements for the S.R. 70 project address the purpose and need by enhancing traffic safety and maintaining crucial connectivity. The widening will also provide a median to improve traffic safety by separating traffic and allowing room for vehicle movement to reduce vehicle conflicts and the likelihood of accidents. Additionally, median openings at critical intersections will alleviate congestion and minimize delays from large vehicles traversing the corridor, offering a much better alternative to the no-build scenario. The widened roadway will further streamline traffic flow, reducing the potential for vehicle maneuvering conflicts and enhancing overall road safety and efficiency.

1.2 Purpose and Need

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to address traffic safety conditions on S.R. 70 from Lonesome Island Road to the southern leg of C.R. 721 within Highlands County. Other goals of the project are to maintain important east-west connectivity within the regional transportation network and accommodate freight activity within the area.

NEED

This project is needed to improve traffic safety conditions including emergency evacuation, and incident response times, maintain important east-west connectivity within the regional transportation network and accommodate freight activity within the area.

PRIMARY NEED:

SAFETY: Improve Traffic Safety Conditions, Emergency Evacuation, and Incident Response Times

Crash data was collected for the years 2018 to 2022 from the Signal Four Analytics database. A total of 84 crashes were reported along the S.R. 70 project corridor during the five-year period. Of the 84 crashes along the project corridor, 13 (15%) were guardrail crashes and 13 (15%) were sideswipe, opposite direction crashes. The average crash rate for this section of S.R. 70 is 1.073, 36% more than the

statewide average of 0.789 and 19.4% higher than the Highlands County crash rate of 0.898 for similar facilities. Eight fatal crashes occurred in this segment of S.R. 70 during the five-year period. One of the fatal crashes was reported as a front-to-front crash that was caused by improper passing.

The project section of S.R. 70 presently features 10-foot travel lanes and 8-foot shoulders, with four feet paved. Guardrails along the roadway are also minimally set back from the travel lanes (less than seven feet). With a context classification of C2-Rural, the existing typical section does not meet FDOT Design Manual (FDM) standards. The substandard lane and shoulder widths and proximity of the guardrails to the travel lanes restrict the ability of drivers to avoid hazards within each directional travel lane without veering off the roadway causing direct impacts. According to "*Evaluation of the Safety Effectiveness of the Conversion of Two-Lane Roadways to Four-Lane Divided Roadways: Bayesian vs. Empirical Bayes*" referenced on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Crash Modification Factors (CMF) Clearinghouse, widening a rural two-lane roadway to a four-lane divided roadway can help decrease fatal and injury crashes by 45 percent. In addition, due to the roadway's current configuration, there is limited space for an emergency service vehicle to pass to respond to a situation during periods of congestion or to accommodate a disabled vehicle to prevent it from obstructing traffic flow. According to the Highlands County Sheriff's Office, one of the two travel lanes (if not both) is often blocked during traffic incidents.

S.R. 70 is part of the emergency evacuation route network designated by the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) as well as the network established by Highlands County. This roadway is critical in facilitating traffic during emergency evacuation periods as it connects to other arterials and highways of the state evacuation route network such as U.S. 27 (on the west) and C.R. 721 (on the east) and serves as only one of two east-west facilities with S.R. 66/U.S. 98 being the other that traverses Highlands County. Under various FDEM evacuation scenarios for different storm events, FDEM noted that S.R. 70 has some of the longest lasting vehicle queues in the Central Florida region, contributing to prolonged clearance times. Clearance time, comprised of time required for mobilization of the evacuating population, travel time, and the delay time caused by traffic congestion, is one input used by County emergency managers to determine when to recommend an evacuation order and is a key factor pertaining to public safety during an evacuation event.

The project is anticipated to address deficiencies of the roadway which may reduce crashes (including fatalities) and lead to enhanced emergency evacuation capabilities and incident response times.

SECONDARY NEEDS:

AREA WIDE NETWORK/SYSTEM LINKAGE: Maintain Important East-West Connectivity within the Regional Transportation Network:

S.R. 70 is one of four corridors connecting Central and South Florida's west and east coasts as it spans from U.S. 41 in Manatee County (west coast) to U.S. 1 in St. Lucie County (east coast). It also connects to several major north-south transportation facilities of the state, including U.S. 41, I -75, U.S. 17, U.S. 27, U.S. 441, Florida's Turnpike, I-95, and U.S. 1. With the nearest available parallel east-west facilities being located over 10 miles to the north and south, S.R. 70 is integral to facilitating east-west travel within the regional transportation network of Florida's heartland.

The project is intended to complement other S.R. 70 corridor safety and traffic operational improvements identified in the 2029 - 2045 SIS Long Range Cost Feasible Plan from C.R. 675 in Manatee County to U.S. 98 in Okeechobee County. In turn, the improvements are anticipated to maintain the corridor's function as a designated SIS highway corridor and important east-west connection for freight and commuters across the Central Florida region and state.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND: Accommodate Freight Activity

As part of Florida's SIS highway network, S.R. 70 connects regionally important routes (such as I-75, U.S. 27, Florida's Turnpike, and I-95) as well as serves as a regional through route for long-haul truck volumes and provides access to agricultural/ranching operations, industrial/commercial areas, and other intensive freight activity centers within Central Florida. The 2022 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volume for

the project corridor of is 5,600 vehicles per day, of which 32% is truck traffic. Truck volumes along S.R. 70 are expected to increase in the future as freight distribution and logistics activities continue to gain economic significance in Central Florida counties through the rapid growth occurring along the I-4 and I-75 corridors within the broader region. According to the HRTPO *2045 LRTP*, Highlands County is in the process of diversifying their economy, expanding the potential for freight distribution and logistics activity development. With the major metro markets of Orlando, Tampa, and Fort Myers being located nearly equidistant to Highlands County and more than 86 percent of Florida's population being located within a 150-mile (or two-hour) radius of Highlands County, the S.R. 70 improvements are intended to accommodate increased population and employment growth as well as support the vision of the county and larger region to grow as a trade hub.

According to the FDOT District 1, *Freight Mobility and Trade Study: Technical Memorandum 5 - Freight Improvements Prioritization*, improvements to S.R. 70 are the #1 long-term priority in Highlands County to facilitate the future growth of freight traffic in the region. Additionally, the HRTPO, its committees, and community stakeholders have identified S.R. 70 as the highest priority transportation facility in the region in need of improvements due to concerns pertaining to safety, freight mobility, and economic growth. The project improvements are aligned with the goals of these plans and SIS objectives of promoting interregional transportation linked to economic development.

PROJECT STATUS

The proposed improvements along S.R. 70 from East of Lonesome Island Road to NW 38th Terrace (near downtown Okeechobee) are identified in the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) 2045 *Long Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP) Cost Feasible Plan with Other Arterial (OA) Future Funding fiscal year (FY) 2031-2035 for safety improvements and/or a PD&E Study. The HRTPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Fiscal Years (FY) 2025/2026 - 2029/2030 was adopted on June 18, 2025, and has identified the project in the FY 2029/2030 Transportation Project Priorities list. Funding for the subsequent project phases, consisting of final design, ROW acquisition, and construction, are not yet programmed within the FDOT State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Five-Year Work Program. However, the next project phase, final design, is listed in the work program as "candidate" status funding. As noted, funding for the project as well as the project limits differ across plans; the identified plans will need to be modified to reflect consistency.

1.3 Planning Consistency

The HRTPO adopted the 2045 LRTP on March 10, 2021. Although SIS designated roadways are typically prioritized through the Florida SIS Plan, the 2045 LRTP looks to advance improvements on S.R. 70 with available OA funding. This project is listed in the 2045 LRTP as improvements funded with OA funds as "Safety Improvements and/or PD&E" but currently not for future phases. This project is also listed in the FDOT SIS Cost Feasible Plan 2035- 2050, 2024 edition, as cost feasible.

The HRTPO TIP for FY 2025/2026 - 2029/2030 was adopted on June 18, 2025, and has identified the project in the FY 2029/2030 Transportation Project Priorities list. The PD&E Study for the project is identified in the FDOT Work Program in FY 2025. Funding for the subsequent project phases, consisting of final design, ROW acquisition, and construction, are not yet programmed within the FDOT Five-Year Work Program. However, the next project phase, final design, is listed in the work program as "candidate" status funding.

Currently Adopted	Comments

CFP-LRTP	
No	This project is listed in the 2045 LRTP as improvements funded with OA funds as "Safety Improvements and/or PD&E" but subsequent project phases are not included. The HRTPO TIP for FYs 2025/2026 - 2029/2030 was adopted on June 18, 2025, and has identified the project in the FY 2029/2030 Transportation Project Priorities list. The STIP (adopted July 1, 2025) does not include funding for PE at this time.

	Currently Approved	**$**	**FY**	**Comments**
PE (Final Design)				
TIP	N			
STIP	N			
R/W				
TIP	N			
STIP	N			
Construction				
TIP	N			
STIP	N			

2. Environmental Analysis Summary

			Significant Impacts?*		
	Issues/Resources	Yes	No	Enhance	No Inv
3.	**Social and Economic**				
	1. Social	☐	☒	☐	☐
	2. Economic	☐	☒	☐	☐
	3. Land Use Changes	☐	☒	☐	☐
	4. Mobility	☐	☐	☒	☐
	5. Aesthetic Effects	☐	☒	☐	☐
	6. Relocation Potential	☐	☐	☐	☒
	7. Farmland Resources	☐	☒	☐	☐
4.	**Cultural Resources**				
	1. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act	☐	☒	☐	☐
	2. Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966	☐	☐	☐	☒
	3. Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund	☐	☐	☐	☒
	4. Recreational Areas and Protected Lands	☐	☐	☐	☒
5.	**Natural Resources**				
	1. Protected Species and Habitat	☐	☒	☐	☐
	2. Wetlands and Other Surface Waters	☐	☒	☐	☐
	3. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)	☐	☐	☐	☒
	4. Floodplains	☐	☒	☐	☐
	5. Sole Source Aquifer	☐	☒	☐	☐
	6. Water Resources	☐	☒	☐	☐
	7. Aquatic Preserves	☐	☐	☐	☒
	8. Outstanding Florida Waters	☐	☐	☐	☒
	9. Wild and Scenic Rivers	☐	☐	☐	☒
	10. Coastal Barrier Resources	☐	☐	☐	☒
6.	**Physical Resources**				
	1. Highway Traffic Noise	☐	☒	☐	☐
	2. Air Quality	☐	☒	☐	☐
	3. Contamination	☐	☒	☐	☐
	4. Utilities and Railroads	☐	☒	☐	☐
	5. Construction	☐	☒	☐	☐

USCG Permit

☒ A USCG Permit IS NOT required.

☐ A USCG Permit IS required.

*** Impact Determination:**Yes = Significant; No = No Significant Impact; Enhance = Enhancement; NoInv = Issue absent, no involvement. Basis of decision is documented in the following sections.

3. Social and Economic

The project will not have significant social and economic impacts. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed.

3.1 Social

The proposed roadway widening will enhance safety conditions for all roadway users. As previously mentioned, S.R. 70 serves as part of the emergency evacuation route network designated by the FDEM and plays a critical role in facilitating traffic during emergency evacuation periods as it is one of the few roadways connecting the west and east Florida coasts. It also connects to other designated state evacuation routes aligned in a north-south direction, including U.S. 41, U.S. 301, I-75, U.S. 17, U.S. 27, U.S. 98, U.S. 441, the Florida's Turnpike, I-95, and U.S. 1. The project will improve emergency response times and access for the people living and working in the project region and for freight traffic. In addition, the Preferred Alternative provides pedestrian and bicycle facilities to enhance multi-modal opportunities. No public controversy has occurred on the project, and a summary of the public involvement activities is included in **Section 9** of this document.

The project is located within unincorporated southern Highlands County and adjacent to the county line with unincorporated Glades County. The project area primarily consists of agricultural operations, including sod and cattle farms as well as field crops. There is one church, the Brighton Baptist Church, west of the intersection of S.R. 70 and C.R. 721 South. No other community features (such as schools, community centers, healthcare facilities, etc.) are within the vicinity of the project.

The S.R. 70 Preferred Alternative utilizes existing FDOT ROW and requires 183.2 acres of additional ROW for the roadway widening and 148.5 acres for the SMF and FPC sites. The total additional ROW is approximately 331.7 acres and involves seven parcels. The SMF and FPC sites are situated on parcels that are also included in the count for the parcels for roadway widening. In addition, approximately 20.7 acres of easements are needed from the SFWMD for roadway widening along canals C-41, C-40 and C-39A. There are no business relocations or residential relocations required or proposed with the Preferred Alternative.

Community Analysis
The demographics of the project study area were obtained through a *Sociocultural Data Report* (SDR-August 2025) analysis. Because of the rural project area and surrounding area, the *SDR* evaluated demographics within one quarter-mile (1,320 feet) of the study area, using the intersecting feature which allows the compiled data to include the full census block groups that intersect with the quarter-mile buffer. **Table 3-1** summarizes the demographics of the study area based on the 2010 Census data. This was the most current Census data available as listed in the *SDR*. More recent Census data for year 2020 as well as the American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023 is available for Highlands and Glades Counties as a whole, **Table 3-1** provides the ACS 2019-2023 Census data for the county level for comparison. The study area has a lower minority population, lower Hispanic population, lower population below poverty, and lower Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population as compared to the counties as a whole. Additionally, there is a lower elderly population as compared to the Highlands County and Glades County average. No disproportional impacts to distinct communities will occur.

Demographic Item	Project Area	Highlands County	Glades County
Minority Population (Race and Ethnicity)	31.25%	35.79%	44.90%

Median Age (years)	45	54.2	45.8
Population Under Age 5	6.25%	4.12%	2.96%
Population Age 65 and Over	25.00%	35.93%	26.56%
Median Household Income	$35,687	$55,581	$38,905
Population Below Poverty Level	0.00%	15.39%	21.15%
Households with Public Assistance Income	0.00%	1.92%	4.41%
Population Ages 20-64 with a Disability	0.00%	16.50%	13.84%
Owner-Occupied Units	55.56%	62.42%	54.96%
Occupied Units with No Vehicle	0.00%	5.50%	2.04%
Source: SDR, US Census 2010 data for Project Area, ACS 2019-2023 for Highlands & Glades County			

Table 3-1: Demographic Comparison - Project Area vs. Highlands & Glades Counties

*"Other" includes Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander Alone, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races

Community Cohesion
The impacts to parcels resulting from the Preferred Alternative will not impact community cohesion, community characteristics, special community designations, community goals, or quality of life as surrounding agricultural activities and land uses will remain in locations surrounding the project area. In fact, the Preferred Alternative includes one segment of new S.R. 70 roadway alignment to avoid impacts to community features that would result if the roadway widening were to remain on the existing S.R. 70 alignment in these areas. This location includes businesses and a church near at the east end of the project limits (S.R. 70 and C.R. 721 South intersection). Therefore, ROW impacts will not prevent community features from continuing to service the community.

3.2 Economic

S.R. 70 is part of the SIS highway network, providing regional access to employment centers, agricultural lands, and residential areas across the state as well as facilitating the movement of significant truck traffic. The project segment of S.R. 70 currently supports a number of agricultural operations. The project corridor is located within Highlands County, which is part of the six-county South Central Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO), a program defined under State of Florida legislature to encourage and facilitate the location and expansion of economic development projects of significant scale in rural communities to spur job creation (particularly high skill and high wage jobs). According to the HRTPO 2045 *LRTP*, Highlands County is in the process of diversifying their economy to expand opportunities to attract sectors beyond the traditional industries such as agriculture, business services, and natural resources. Freight distribution and logistics activities continue to gain economic significance in Central Florida counties including the S.R. 70 corridor.

Access to adjacent land uses will be maintained throughout and after construction of the proposed capacity improvements. There will be no adverse impacts to businesses, or the tax base within the project area; The project is expected to have minimal economic impacts along the project corridor.

3.3 Land Use Changes

The existing and future land use maps for the portion of Highlands and Glades Counties that encompass the project area are attached. Florida Land Use Cover and Forms Classification System (FLUCCS) data, and aerial photographs were utilized to determine current land use within the corridor. For evaluating land use within the study area, a 500-ft buffer was created from the existing centerline of S.R. 70 and surrounding preferred SMF and FPC sites.

Approximately 90% of the project study area is varied agricultural uses as shown in **Table 3-2**. The primary land use impacted by the roadway corridor is agricultural.

FLUCCS Code	Description	Acres	Percentage
118	Rural Residential	0.0	0.0%
140	Commercial And Services	8.1	0.4%
211	Improved Pastures	1,258.2	60.1%
212	Unimproved Pastures	81.1	3.9%
213	Woodland Pastures	31.6	1.5%
215	Field Crops	56.5	2.7%
221	Citrus Groves	258.1	12.3%
224	Abandoned Groves	12.5	0.6%
242	Sod Farms	9.2	0.4%
261	Fallow Cropland	160.4	7.7%
320	Upland Shrub and Brushland	18.0	0.9%
512	Channelized Waterways, Canals	36.8	1.8%
617	Mixed Wetland Hardwoods	0.7	0.0%
641	Freshwater Marshes/Gramanoid Prarie - Marsh	89.3	4.3%
643	Wet Prairies	17.3	0.8%
644	Emergent Aquatic Vegetation	3.3	0.2%
747	Dikes And Levees	51.3	2.5%
TOTAL		2,092.4	100.0%

Table 3-2: Existing Land Use by FLUCCS Code

According to the Highlands County and Glades County Future Land Use Maps, the project area will continue to support agricultural along with conservation land uses. However, as previously mentioned, Highlands County is in the process of diversifying their economy to expand opportunities to attract sectors beyond the traditional industries such as agriculture, business services, and natural resources. Freight distribution and logistics activities continue to gain economic significance in Central Florida counties including the S.R. 70 corridor. Therefore, while moderate changes to adjacent land uses will occur with the conversion of frontage areas to the expanded roadway, overall land use changes are not anticipated based on future land use maps and the HRTPO LRTP. Based on the future land use map and proposed improvements, the proposed project will not induce secondary development or change existing land use patterns.

Prime farmland is discussed in **Section 3.7**. In addition to potential impacts to prime farmland, approximately 82.8 acres of current agriculture use, consisting of rangeland and citrus row crops, are proposed for impact.

3.4 Mobility

The project is part of the S.R. 70 corridor which is the main west-east highway facility across the state of Florida, linking the west coast to the east coast. S.R. 70 serves as a major freight route facilitating connections to north-south facilities including I-75, U.S. 27, Florida's Turnpike and I-95. S.R. 70 is part of the SIS network of Highway Corridors and Connectors. The project segment of S.R. 70 is designated as an evacuation route by the FDEM, and the Highlands County Division of Emergency Management.

The Preferred Alternative will enhance mobility with widening of the S.R. 70 corridor to four lanes by
1) enhancing operational capacity of the corridor, thereby improving emergency evacuation/response times as well as access for standard roadway maintenance;
2) improving safety conditions by dispersing traffic;
3) providing a continuous four-lane connection and up-to-standards SIS highway corridor across the state by complementing other sections of S.R. 70 to be widened up to four lanes; and
4) supporting initiatives of the South Central RAO.

Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is anticipated to enhance mobility within the project study area.

There is no impact to mobility for non-driving populations as there are no transit routes along the project corridor. Also, there are no existing sidewalks or shared use paths within the project area. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative will enhance mobility for non-driving populations by providing a shared-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists to use in lieu of the SR 70 roadway or shoulder.

3.5 Aesthetic Effects

The project area primarily consists of agricultural activities (pasturelands, sod farms and field crops). According to the attached Highlands County Future Land Use Maps, the area encompassing the project segment will continue to support agricultural activities and objectives of the Conservation Partnership Areas of the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. The proposed improvements to S.R. 70 are intended to support the agricultural operations of the area and RAO initiatives. As such, the project is consistent with the future land use vision and aesthetic character of the corridor.

3.6 Relocation Potential

The proposed project, as presently conceived, will not displace any residences or businesses within the community. Should this change over the course of the project, a Right of Way and Relocation Assistance Program will be carried out in accordance with Section 421.55, Florida Statutes, Relocation of displaced persons, and the Uniform

Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646 as amended by Public Law 100-17).

3.7 Farmland Resources

This project is subject to the provisions of the *Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981* because the project is located in a non-urbanized area with designated farmlands. There are properties containing farmlands that are proposed to be impacted with the Preferred Alternative. Therefore, a *Farmland Impact Rating Form* was completed and coordination with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was requested on 1/31/2025 and 3/4/2025 to complete form *NRCS-CPA-106*. A *Farmlands Memo* (March 2025) is in the project file which includes the coordination with NRCS. The project's total number of points indicated in Part VII is 117.7. Since the corridor received a total score of less than 160 points, no additional consideration for farmland or coordination with NRCS is required.

4. Cultural Resources

The project will not have significant impacts to cultural resources. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed.

4.1 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

A Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS), conducted in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800, was performed for the project, and the resources listed below were identified within the project Area of Potential Effect (APE). FDOT found that these resources do not meet the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with this determination on 10/06/2025 Therefore, FDOT, in consultation with SHPO has determined that the proposed project will result in No Historic Properties Affected.

The *CRAS* was published for the project in August 2025, and includes the proposed roadway improvements along S.R. 70 and the preferred SMF and FPC sites. The archaeological APE is limited to the footprint of construction and the area contained within the proposed pond sites. The historic/architectural APE includes resources located within 500 ft from the edge of the proposed ROW where road widening and new road construction will occur, as well as resources located within 200 ft from the existing ROW on the opposite side of the road widening where no ROW acquisition is anticipated. In addition, the historic/architectural APE for the pond sites includes the footprint of construction and immediately adjacent parcels as contained within 100 ft. The fieldwork for the corridor was conducted from September to October 2024 and for the ponds in March 2025.

The archaeological survey consisted of pedestrian survey and systematic shovel testing within the archaeological APE. There were no archaeological sites that have been previously recorded within the current APE. A total of 250 shovel tests were excavated during the archaeological survey, with four shovel tests positive for cultural material.

As a result of the survey, evidence of one new archaeological site (8HG01682) and one archaeological occurrence (AO) was discovered. FDOT determined the archaeological site is not eligible for listing in the NRHP as found within the archaeological APE and AO's are not considered sites. No other archaeological sites, features, or occurrences were identified, and no further archaeological work is recommended.

The architectural history background research indicated three historic resources (8HG01125, 8HG01126, and 8GL00476) were previously recorded within the APE. These include segments of three linear resources - the Harney Pond Canal (C-41) (8HG01125), the Indian Prairie Canal (C-40) (8HG01126), and the C-39A Canal (8GL00476) - all of which have were found to have insufficient information to make a determination of NRHP eligibility by the SHPO. In addition, unrecorded segments of S.R. 70 (8HG01306), S.R. 70 Canal (North) (8HG01722), and S.R. 70 Canal (South) (8HG01723) were identified within the APE.

Historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of 17 historic resources within the APE. Of the 17 historic resources identified within the APE, FDOT determined that 15 are ineligible for listing in the NRHP. FDOT determined that two historic resources within the APE are eligible or appear eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Agriculture. These include segments of the Harney Pond Canal (C-41) (8HG01125) and the Indian Prairie Canal (C-40) (8HG01126/8GL00560). Based on the scope of work at each location, the Preferred

Alternative will include the construction of a new bridge carrying a divided four-lane highway to the north of the existing bridges (Bridge No's. 090920 and 090009). Although this will result in a new bridge footprint and alteration to the earthen bank along the linear resources, these alterations are in keeping with the existing conditions within the APE. Therefore, FDOT recommended that the proposed undertaking will have no adverse effect on the Harney Pond Canal (C-41) (8HG01125) or the Indian Prairie Canal (C-40) (8HG01126/8GL00560). No further architectural history work is recommended for the proposed corridor work.

The SHPO concurrence letter, dated October 6, 2025, is attached and the *CRAS* (September 2025) is part of the project file.

4.2 Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, as amended

There are no properties in the project area that are protected pursuant to Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966.

4.3 Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965

There are no properties in the project area that are protected pursuant to Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund of 1965.

4.4 Recreational Areas and Protected Lands

There are no other protected public lands in the project area.

5. Natural Resources

The project will not have significant impacts to natural resources. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed:

5.1 Protected Species and Habitat

The following evaluation was conducted pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended as well as other applicable federal and state laws protecting wildlife and habitat.

The *Natural Resources Evaluation* (NRE) Report (August 2025) and *NRE Addendum* (October 2025) were prepared under separate cover and included in the project file. The project study area and preferred SMF and FPC sites were evaluated for the presence of federal and state listed species, protected species, and their habitat.

Literature review, database searches, field assessments, and species-specific surveys of the study area were completed to identify the potential occurrence of protected species and/or presence of federally-designated critical habitat. The *NRE* and *NRE Addendum* documented current environmental conditions along the corridor and assessed the potential for impacts to habitat and protected species. The *NRE* identified current environmental permitting and regulatory agency requirements for the project. Finally, the *NRE* was sent for review and comments from regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over the project study area.

The Preferred Alternative is located within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Consultation Area (CA) for the bluetailed mole skink *(Plestiodon egregius lividus)*, sand skink *(Plestiodon reynoldsi)*, Audubon's crested caracara *(Caracara plancus audubonii)*, Everglade snail kite *(Rostrhamus sociabilis)*, Florida grasshopper sparrow *(Ammodramus savannarum floridanus)*, Florida scrub-jay *(Aphelocoma coerulescens)*, Florida bonneted bat *(Eumops floridanus)* and Lake Wales Ridge plants.

No designated critical habitat is present within the project action area. Therefore, it was determined that the proposed project "will not result in destruction or adverse modification" to designated critical habitat.

Species-specific surveys were conducted for the Audubon's crested caracara and Florida bonneted bat. The Audubon's crested caracara survey was conducted in January 2023 through May 2023, and the Florida bonneted bat acoustic survey was completed in May 2024. The surveys documented five Audubon's crested caracara nests along the project limits. Three of these nests located along the project limits are within the Audubon's crested caracara nest primary protection zone and two of the nests are located within the secondary protection zone. Additionally, the bat acoustic survey documented Florida bonneted bats foraging within the project study area.

The project area was generally surveyed for presence of applicable federal and state protected species in February and May of 2024.

Table 5-1 and **Table 5-2** summarize the effect determinations that have been made for each federal and state listed species based upon their potential for occurrence, results of species-specific surveys, and the use of implementation measures and/or commitments to offset any potential impacts to each species.

Project Effect Determination	Federal Listed Species and Listing Status (E = Endangered, T = Threatened, P = Proposed for Listing)
"Not Applicable"	Tricolored bat *(Perimyotis subflavus)* - P
"No effect"	Pygmy fringe-tree *(Chionanthus pygmaeus)* - E
	Pigeon wings *(Clitoria fragrans)* - T
	Short-leaved rosemary *(Conradina brevifolia)* - E
	Avon Park harebells *(Crotalaria avonensis)* - E
	Garrett's mint *(Dicerandra christmanii)* - E
	Scrub mint *(Dicerandra frutescens)* - E
	Snakeroot *(Eryngium cuneifolium)* - E
	Highlands scrub hypericum *(Hypericum cumulicola)* - E
	Scrub blazingstar *(Liatris ohlingerae)* - E
	Papery whitlow-wort *(Paronychia chartacea)* - T
	Lewton's polygala *(Polygala lewtonii)* - E
	Wireweed *(Polygonella basiramia)* - E
	Sandlace *(Polygonella myriophylla)* - E
	Carter's mustard *(Warea carteri)* - E
	Florida ziziphus *(Ziziphus celata)* - E
	Florida perforate cladonia *(Cladonia perforata)* - E
	Blue-tailed mole skink *(Plestiodon egregius lividus)* - T
	Sand skink *(Plestiodon reynoldsi)* - T
	Florida grasshopper sparrow *(Ammodramus savannarum floridanus)* - E
	Florida scrub-jay *(Aphelocoma coerulescens)* - T
"May affect, not likely to adversely affect"	Florida bonneted bat *(Eumops floridanus)* - E
	Eastern black rail *(Laterallus jamaicensis jamaicensis)* - T
	Wood stork *(Mycteria americana)* - T

	Everglade snail kite *(Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus)* - E
"May affect, likely to adversely affect"	Audubon's crested caracara *(Caracara plancus audubonii)* - T
	Eastern indigo snake *(Drymarchon couperi)* - T
	Florida panther *(Puma concolor coryi)* - E

Table 5-1: Federal Endangered Species Effect Determinations

Project Effect Determination	**State Listed Species and Listing Status (E = Endangered, T = Threatened)**
"No adverse effect anticipated"	Florida goldenaster *(Chrysopsis floridana)* - E
	Piedmont jointgrass *(Coelorachis tuberculosa)* - T
	Cutthroatgrass *(Coleataenia abscissa)* - E
	Hammock rein orchid *(Habenaria distans)* - E
	Florida hartwrightia *(Hartwrightia floridana)* - T
	Edison's ascyrum *(Hypericum edisonianum)* - E
	Thick-leaved water-willow *(Justicia crassifolia)* - E
	Small's flax *(Linum carteri smallii)* - E
	Lowland loosestrife *(Lythrum flagellare)* - E
	Toothed maiden fern *(Meniscium serratum)* - E
	Narrowleaf naiad *(Najas filifolia)* - T
	Yellow fringeless orchid *(Platanthera integra)* - E
	Redmargin zephyrlily *(Zephyranthes simpsonii)* - T
	Gopher tortoise *(Gopherus polyphemus)* - T
	Florida pine snake *(Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus)* - T
	Florida sandhill crane *(Antigone canadensis pratensis)* - T
	Florida burrowing owl *(Athene cunicularia floridana)* - T
	Little blue heron *(Egretta caerulea)* - T

	Tricolored heron *(Egretta tricolor)* - T
	Southeastern American kestrel *(Falco sparverius paulus)* - T
	Roseate spoonbill *(Platalea ajaja)* - T

Table 5-2: State Listed Species Effect Determinations

Federal Listed Species

Eastern Indigo snake (T): USFWS has historical documentation eastern indigo snake occurrences within the project study area. Due to a historical documentation of the eastern indigo snake along S.R. 70 and suitable habitat being present, the project resulted in an effect determination of "may affect, likely to adversely affect" for the eastern indigo snake. FDOT Office of Environmental Management (OEM) initiated formal Section 7 Consultation with USFWS, and a *Biological Opinion* was issued on November 25, 2025, and is attached. The *Biological Opinion* concluded that the project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the eastern indigo snake based on the FDOT commitment to implement eastern indigo snake standard protection measures during construction, and FDOT will provide 152.80 eastern indigo snake acre credits from Platt Branch Mitigation Bank (PBMB), which include land cover types that provide habitat for the eastern indigo snake. The FDOT will provide USFWS with a letter or email from the PBMB stating that the credit ledger for the bank has been revised to reflect the deduction of credits. The FDOT will not commence construction of the proposed project until a response email or letter from USFWS has been received stating that they have received the document. The following commitment was also added for the eastern indigo snake. Due to the project not currently being funded for construction, if eastern indigo snake credits are not available from PBMB, FDOT will contribute $78,000 to the Eastern Indigo Snake Conservation Fund or an agreed amount by USFWS if a portion of the credits are provided by PBMB.

Audubon's crested caracara (T): There is suitable nesting habitat for the Audubon's crested caracara and during the 2023 species-specific survey, five Audubon's crested caracara nests were documented along the project limits. The Preferred Alternative and pond sites are located within the Audubon's crested caracara nest primary protection zone of three nests. Therefore, the project effect determination resulted in a " may affect, likely to adversely affect" for the Audubon's crested caracara. Formal Section 7 consultation was completed with USFWS, and a *Biological Opinion* was issued based on the following commitments.

- FDOT will provide a financial contribution of $89,476.20 to the Crested Caracara Conservation Fund for the project's impacts to Audubon's crested caracara primary zones of three nests.
- A standard reconnaissance survey for Audubon's crested caracara nests will be completed prior to construction to identify any active nest location(s) to ensure accurate impact analysis.

Florida bonneted bat (E): There is suitable foraging habitat along the project corridor for the Florida bonneted bat, and it was documented during the project's acoustic survey completed in May 2024. Therefore, FDOT has made the following commitments for the Florida bonneted bat best management practices.

- In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #1: If potential roost trees or structures need to be removed, check cavities for bats within 30 days prior to removal of trees, snags, or structures. When possible, remove structure outside of breeding season (e.g., January 1 - April 15). If evidence of use by any bat species is observed, discontinue removal efforts in that area and coordinate with the USFWS on how to proceed.
- In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #5: Conserve open freshwater and wetland habitats to promote foraging

opportunities and avoid impacting water quality. Created/restored habitat should be designed to replace the function of native habitat.
- In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #7: Avoid or limit widespread application of insecticides (e.g., mosquito control, agricultural pest control) in areas where Florida bonneted bats are known or expected to forage and roost.
- In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #11: Avoid and minimize the use of artificial lighting, retain natural light conditions, and install wildlife friendly lighting (i.e., downward facing, and lowest lumens possible). Avoid permanent night-time lighting to the greatest extent practicable.

With the commitments for the Florida bonneted bat, the project effect determination resulted in a " may affect, not likely to adversely affect" the Florida bonneted bat.

Wood stork (T): Suitable habitat is present for within the project area for the wood stork and individuals were observed during field reviews in February and May of 2024. A wood stork foraging analysis was conducted, included in Appendix J of the *NRE*, to determine the amount of biomass lost from wetlands and surface waters due to the Preferred Alternative. The anticipated loss of 80.98 acres of suitable wood stork foraging areas. There project results in no loss of short hydroperiod wetlands and 80.98 acres of long hydroperiod wetlands being impacted. The analysis resulted in a net loss of 141.93 kilograms of total biomass (fish and crayfish). To offset impacts to wood stork suitable foraging habitat, the following commitment has been made; FDOT will provide mitigation for impacts to wood stork Suitable Foraging Habitat within the Service Area of a Service-approved wetland mitigation bank or wood stork conservation bank. Therefore, utilizing the wood stork key for south Florida, the project was determined to "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" the wood stork.

Everglade snail kite (E): The project area contains suitable foraging habitat for the Everglade snail kite but no suitable nesting habitat was documented adjacent to the project limits. Everglade snail kites were observed foraging in canals north of the project area, but no nesting activity or nests were observed. With the mitigation of the project's proposed wetland impacts, an effect determination of " may affect, not likely to adversely affect" the Everglade snail kite was made for the project.

Eastern black rail (T): The project area contains no suitable nesting habitat for the eastern black rail and there are no documented occurrences in the surrounding area. However, FDOT commits to; if eastern black rails are observed in the project's action area prior to or during construction, consultation with USFWS will be reinitiated. With the commitment, an effect determination of " may affect, not likely to adversely affect" the eastern black rail was made for the project.

Florida panther (E): While the project action area is not in the USFWS Florida Panther Focus Area or the Florida Panther Dispersal Zone, the project is within a Thatcher Dispersal Pathway, a designated area that provides suitable habitat for the Florida panther and is one of the most likely dispersal routes based on models. There were no observations of the Florida panther during field reviews. A Florida panther (UCFP456) road mortality was documented in 2024 within the project action area. Based on the Florida Panther Effect Determination Key and mortality in the Thatcher Dispersal Pathway, an effect determination of " may affect, likely to adversely affect" the Florida panther was made for the project. To assist with movement of the Florida panther north of S.R. 70 and to complete formal Section 7 Consultation with issuance of the *Biological Opinion*, FDOT made the following commitments:
- FDOT will mitigate habitat impacts to the Florida panther by providing 951 Panther Habitat Units (PHUs) from the Platt Branch Conservation Mitigation Bank.
- FDOT will design and construct wildlife shelves at the bridge crossings over the SFWMD canals (Canal C-40 and C-41), per current wildlife crossing guidelines.
- FDOT will coordinate with SFWMD to evaluate each canal crossing to determine locations and lengths of herpetofauna funnel fencing to be installed without precluding SFWMD canal access and maintenance of canals.

- FDOT will install landscaping utilizing native vegetation within the FDOT right-of-way and limits of funnel fencing.

For the remaining federal listed species in **Table 5-1**, an effect determination of "no effect" was made for these species as result of no direct observations or no suitable habitat being located in the project area. No specific-species surveys were done for these flora or faunas.

The monarch butterfly *(Danaus plexippus)* is proposed to be listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act by the USFWS. Further impact assessment and consultation with USFWS for this species will be required once a listing decision has been made. As a result, FDOT has made the following commitment: If the monarch butterfly is listed by USFWS as Threatened or Endangered, FDOT commits to reinitiating consultation with USFWS to determine appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for protection of the newly listed species.

On September 13, 2022, the USFWS announced a proposal to list the tricolored bat *(Perimyotis subflavus)* as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Due to the proposed listing of the tricolored bat and FDOT effect determination of "not applicable" the following commitment has been made. If the tricolored bat is listed by the USFWS as threatened or endangered prior to the completion of construction, FDOT commits to reinitiating consultation with USFWS to determine appropriate avoidance and minimization measures.

State Listed Species

For all the state listed species included in **Table 5-2**, there were no species-specific surveys done. During the February and May 2024 field work, any observations of state listed species were recorded. There is suitable habitat in wetlands and uplands for all state listed species in **Table 5-2**. As a result, an effect determination of "no adverse effect anticipated" was made for all the state listed species included in **Table 5-2**.

Other Protected Species

The project will not impact other protected species which include the bald eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)* and Florida black bear *(Ursus americanus floridanus)*. Since the bald eagle and Florida black bear are not listed, a project effect determination was not made. Bald eagles were observed flying over the project limits during field reviews. However, no bald eagle nests or 660-foot protective nest buffer are within the project area. No Florida black bears were observed during field reviews however there are multiple documentations of Florida black bear occurrences and two (2) road mortalities. Therefore, to avoid attracting Florida black bears to the roadway during construction, FDOT has made the following commitment. FDOT will require contractors to remove garbage daily from the construction site or use bear proof containers for securing of food and other debris from the project work area to prevent these items from becoming an attractant for the Florida black bear (Ursus americanus floridanus). Any interaction with nuisance bears will be reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Wildlife Alert hotline 888-404-FWCC (3922).

Agency Coordination

The NRE was sent to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), FDACS/Florida Forest Service (FFS), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), SFWMD, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on September 10, 2025, in order to obtain comments from each agency. FWC provided a response letter on October 10, 2025, stating FWC agrees with the determinations of effect and supports the project implementation measures and commitments discussed in the *NRE*. Review comments were also received from NMFS (9/10/25), FDEP (10/3/25), FDACS/FFS (9/25/25), SFWMD (10/2/25), and USACE (10/10/25) and included in the project file.

On September 5, 2025, FDOT OEM transmitted the *NRE* to USFWS and request initiation of Section 7 Formal Consultation for the project's effects on the Florida panther, eastern black rail, eastern indigo snake and Audubon's crested caracara. USFWS requested additional information to complete formal consultation. As a result, the *NRE Addendum* (October 2025) was prepared and included changing the project's effect determination on eastern black rail to "may affect, not likely to adversely affect". The USFWS issued a *Biological Opinion* on November 25, 2025 for the project which is attached.

5.2 Wetlands and Other Surface Waters

The following evaluation was conducted pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 11990 of 1977 as amended, Protection of Wetlands and the USDOT Order 5660.1A, Preservation of the Nation's Wetlands.

A *NRE* (August 2025) and a *NRE Addendum* (October 2025) were prepared under separate cover and are located in the project file.

The Preferred Alternative and preferred pond sites will result in 13.51 acres of wetland impacts (10.21 acres permanent and 3.30 acres secondary wetland impacts) and 72.20 acres of permanent impacts to other surface waters (ditches and canals). Wetlands to be impacted by the proposed improvements include freshwater marshes and wet prairies. A description of land use, dominant vegetation, soil type and other descriptors regarding these communities is provided in the *NRE*.

The Uniform Mitigation Assessment Methodology (UMAM) analysis was performed on representative wetland impact areas and resulted in a functional loss of 7.06 units (6.73 functional units for direct impacts and 0.33 functional units for secondary impacts). In 2024, the Lake Istokpoga Mitigation Bank was approved to sell federal and state freshwater wetland mitigation bank credits. Wetland impacts which will result from the construction of this project will be mitigated pursuant to Section 373.4137, F.S., to satisfy all mitigation requirements of Part IV of Chapter 373, F.S., and 33 U.S.C. 1344. The project area is located within the South Kissimmee Drainage Regulatory Basin. If wetland impacts cannot be mitigated in basin, then a cumulative impact analysis will be completed and coordinated with permitting agencies for review and approval of the project's required wetland mitigation.

Wetlands and surface waters are located within the jurisdictional boundaries of SFWMD and USACE. Due to the project's proposed wetland impacts, the project is anticipated to require a SFWMD Environmental Resource Permit and USACE 404 Permit.

Pursuant to Executive Order 11990 Protection of Wetlands, all federally funded highway projects are to protect wetlands to the fullest extent possible. In accordance with this policy, wetland and other surface water impacts have been minimized to the extent practicable by designing concepts within existing uplands, developed right-of-way and adjacent developed lands to reduce the project's footprint within adjacent wetlands and other surface waters. There is no practicable alternative to construction in wetlands. As avoidance and minimization measures have been applied with the development of the Preferred Alternative, and mitigation will be provided for any unavoidable wetland impacts. Therefore, the proposed project will have no significant short-term or long-term adverse impacts to wetlands or other surface waters.

The *NRE* was provided on September 10, 2025 to state and federal agencies as noted in **Section 5.1** , and all agency responses are included in the project file. The agencies either concurred or had minor comments.

5.3 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

There is no Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the project area.

5.4 Floodplains

Floodplain impacts resulting from the project were evaluated pursuant to Executive Order 11988 of 1977, Floodplain Management.

A *Pond Siting Report* (PSR) (December 2025) and *Location Hydraulics Report* (LHR) (August 2025) were prepared under separate cover and are located in the project file.

The project is mostly located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Zone A which are areas of the 100-year floodplain. There are no FEMA floodways within the project study area. A floodplain map is included in Appendix F of the *LHR* (August 2025). Floodplain impacts were identified to calculate the cup for cup required area needed for the project's floodplain compensation sites.

The proposed roadway and associated drainage improvements were evaluated and do not result in adverse floodplain stage increases. This is due to the addition of the preferred FPC sites (FPC 1B and FPC 2-3B, FPC 4A, FPC 5A, FPC 6B, and FPC 7B) and increasing sizes of existing cross drains (CD-1 through CD-7). The PSR and LHR included documentation on the floodplain calculations. The proposed addition of the FPC sites and modification to existing cross drains will improve overall watershed flow within the project corridor. Therefore, the risk assessment of the proposed improvements with applicable mitigation measures associated with the Preferred Alternative will have minimal encroachments on the floodplain and will not result in significant impacts.

The impacts to the 100 year floodplain resulting from construction of fill within the floodplain, the modification of existing drainage structures and bridges, impacts next to stormwater management facilities adjacent to wetlands and storage areas for this project will be mitigated by floodplain compensation where required. The proposed structures will perform hydraulically in a manner equal to or better than the existing structures, and backwater surface elevations are not expected to increase. These changes may cause minimal increases in flood heights and flood limits; however, will not result in any significant adverse impacts on the natural and beneficial floodplain values or any significant changes in flood risk or damage.

Therefore, it has been determined that the project's floodplain encroachment is not significant.

5.5 Sole Source Aquifer

Biscayne Aquifer

The proposed project is located in a recharge area for the Biscayne Aquifer, a designated sole source aquifer. Pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act, as amended, 40 C.F.R. 149, the proposed project requires a sole source aquifer impact review and concurrence to ensure there is no potential for contamination. The EPA Sole Source Aquifer Project Review Form was completed for the project. The FDOT has determined that through the implementation of stormwater treatment facilities and best management practices, the proposed project will not impact the sole source aquifer.

The project's Sole Source Aquifer Project Review Form Section B was emailed to EPA on May 15, 2025. The EPA provided concurrence with a Sole Source Aquifer Review/Concurrence letter on June 16, 2025. The EPA concurrence letter is attached. With proper implementation of BMPs for the roadway construction and/or dewatering operations, the EPA finds that the project should have no significant impact to the aquifer system. Therefore, the FDOT will utilize Best Management Practices for the roadway construction and/or dewatering operations.

5.6 Water Resources

A *PSR* (December 2025) and *LHR* (August 2025) were prepared to address the stormwater management needs resulting from the Preferred Alternative. In addition, a *Water Quality Impact Evaluation* (WQIE) (June 2025) was prepared under separate cover for the project file. The *PSR*, *LHR* and *WQIE* are located in the project file.

There are seven existing drainage basins within the project study area which ultimately outfalls to waterbody identification number (WBID) 3204, Harney Pond Canal, and WBID 3206, Indian Prairie Canal, which both are impaired for nutrients. There are no existing SMF sites for S.R. 70. Nutrient loading calculations were performed and show a net reduction for the recommended SMF sites. The preferred pond sites were selected based on hydraulic and environmental considerations as well as preliminary right-of-way costs.

Water quality treatment for linear pond alternatives will provide treatment for 50% of 1-foot over the contributing basin or 50% of 2.5 feet over the impervious area, whichever is greater. Water quality treatment for offsite and regional pond alternatives provides the greater of 1-foot over the contributing basin or 2.5 feet over the impervious area. An additional 50% of water quality treatment has been added since all basins discharge to impaired waterbodies (WBID 3204/3206). Therefore, dry retention is treating 0.8 feet over the basin or 1.88 feet over the impervious area and the wet detention is treating 1.5 feet over the basin or 3.75 feet over the impervious area.

The proposed discharge rate for the 25 year/72 hour storm is limited to the existing rate and the proposed discharge rate for the 10 year/72 hour storm is limited to 35.4 CSM (cubic feet per second per square mile) according to the C-41 Basin Requirement. Due to the CSM discharge rate controls, the CSM volume was subtracted from the Post 10 year/72 hour volume to obtain the required attenuation.

The preferred SMF are SMF 1, SMF 2A, SMF 3A, SMF 4, SMF 5, SMF 6, and LIN 7L & LIN 7R.

The *WQIE* checklist resulted in a determination that water quality regulatory requirements apply to this project. Therefore, water quality and stormwater issues will be mitigated through compliance with the design requirements of authorized regulatory agencies, and the project will require an Individual Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) to obtain the project's water quality certification.

During future project phases and prior to construction, a SFWMD ERP permit and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) FDEP Construction Generic Permit will be required to construct the project. Also, a Stormwater Runoff Control Concept (SRCC) will be developed during the design phase and the SRCC will include a conceptual layout for sediment and erosion control. Construction BMPs for erosion and sediment control are anticipated to include use of silt fence, turbidity fence and floating turbidity curtains. Additional BMPs may include the use of dewatering structures and containment devices that will minimize adverse effects to water quality during construction by controlling turbid water discharges outside construction limits.

5.7 Aquatic Preserves

There are no aquatic preserves in the project area.

5.8 Outstanding Florida Waters

There are no Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) in the project area.

5.9 Wild and Scenic Rivers

There are no designated Wild and Scenic Rivers or other protected rivers in the project area.

5.10 Coastal Barrier Resources

It has been determined that this project is neither in the vicinity of, nor leads directly to a designated coastal barrier resource unit pursuant to the Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982 (CBRA) and the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990 (CBIA).

6. Physical Resources

The project will not have significant impacts to physical resources. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed for these resources.

6.1 Highway Traffic Noise

The following evaluation was conducted pursuant to 23 CFR 772 Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise, and Section 335.17, F.S., State highway construction; means of noise abatement.

The project is identified as a Type I project pursuant to 23 CFR Part 772 and 335.17, F.S. A *Noise Contour Technical Memorandum* (NCTM) (June 2025) was prepared and is located in the project file. There is one receptor along the project limits, Brighton First Baptist Church. The existing S. R. 70 roadway segment in this vicinity just west of C.R. 721 S is being modified into a cul-de-sac with the Preferred Alternative, resulting in reduced traffic volumes and corresponding decrease in noise levels . Since this single noise sensitive site will not be impacted by the proposed roadway, a Noise Study Report is not required. The *NCTM* documented the noise contours to support local agencies in land use planning along the corridor and the predicted noise level for Brighton First Baptist Church.

Under existing conditions (2022), exterior traffic noise levels are predicted to be 64.5 decibels on an A-weighted scale [dB(A)], and 66.2 dB(A) with the future no-build condition. In the design year (2052) with the Preferred Alternative, traffic noise level is are predicted to be 53.3 dB(A). Traffic noise levels are not predicted to approach, meet, or exceed the Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) of 66 dB(A) for Activity Category C at the Brighton First Baptist Church.

The traffic noise analysis produced noise contours for the Preferred Alternative. **Table 6-1** includes distances from the proposed improved roadway edge of travel to the predicted traffic noise impact area for each noise land use activity category in decibels dB(A).

Table 6-1: Noise Contours

Activity Category (NAC)	**Distance to Approach (within 1 dB(A)) of NAC for Activity Category (feet)***
A [56 dB(A)]	255 feet
B & C [66 dB(A)]	80 feet
E [71 dB(A)]	30 feet
Note	
*Distance is approximate and is referenced to the nearest through lane. Distance does not account for any reduction in noise levels that may be provided by berms, privacy walls or intervening structures. Distance does not account for any increase in noise levels that may be caused by a variation in the noise path, increase roadway elevation or increased elevation of the noise sensitive sites (i.e. second floor patio).	

Based on the existing land use within the limits of this project, construction of the proposed roadway improvements will not have any noise or vibration impact. If noise-sensitive land uses develop adjacent to the roadway prior to construction, additional impacts could result. It is anticipated that the application of the FDOT *Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction* will minimize or eliminate most of the potential construction noise and vibration impacts. However, should unanticipated noise or vibration issues arise during the construction process, the Project Manager, in concert with the District Noise Specialist and the Contractor, will investigate additional methods of controlling these impacts.

6.2 Air Quality

This project is not expected to create adverse impacts on air quality because the project area is in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and because the project is expected to improve the Level of Service (LOS) and reduce delay and congestion on all facilities within the study area.
Construction activities may cause short-term air quality impacts in the form of dust from earthwork and unpaved roads. These impacts will be minimized by adherence to applicable state regulations and to applicable FDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction.

6.3 Contamination

A Level-I contamination evaluation was completed for the project and a *Contamination Screening Evaluation Report* (CSER) (August 2025) was prepared under separate cover and is included in the project file. It documents potential contamination concern along the project corridor. Based on the methodologies performed as part of this study, 39 potential contamination sites were identified as having the potential for hazardous material or petroleum impacts. Of these 39 sites, none (0) received an initial risk rating of "No", 7 sites received an initial risk rating of "Low", and 32 received an initial risk rating of "Medium". **Table 6-2** lists each potential contamination site and a map exhibit is attached.

Facility Site ID Number	Facility Name	Potential Contamination Type	Approximate Distance From Project (feet)	Risk Rating
22	Classic Turf	Hazardous Waste	1,000	Low
23	Woerner South Inc	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Low
28	Aaron Ranch Corp	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Low
29	Lykes Bros Inc	Pesticides, Hazardous materials	Within proposed concept	Low
30	Aaron Ranch Corp	Petroleum, Herbicides, Pesticides, Arsenic, and PCBs	200	Low

31	Lykes Bros Inc	Pesticides, Heavy metals	190	Low
39	Lykes Bros Inc	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Low
1	Agra Products LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
2	3 W Ranch LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
3	Jerry L Emmert	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
4	South Wind Grove - Former Pump House	PCBs, Arsenic, Zinc, Pesticides	90	Medium
5	Jerry L Emmert	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
6	Legends Ranch Fl LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
7	South Wind Grove - Former Pump House	PCBs, Arsenic, Zinc, Pesticides	20	Medium
8	3 W Ranch LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals, Petroleum	Within proposed concept	Medium
9	3 W Ranch LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
10	Legends Ranch Fl LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals, Petroleum	Within proposed concept	Medium
11	Florida Power + Light Co	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
12	Suspected Cattle Dip Vat	Arsenic, DDT	230	Medium
13	Cattle Pen	Hazardous materials	200	Medium
14	Premier Citrus - Sunray Groves	Pesticides, Heavy metals	390	Medium
15	Above-Ground Storage Tank	Petroleum	100	Medium
16	Florida Power + Light Co	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
17	Bridge #090920	Asbestos Containing Materials	40	Medium
18	Archbold Expeditions	Pesticides, Hazardous materials	190	Medium

19	Legends Ranch Fl LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
20	Cattle Pen	Pesticides, Heavy metals	260	Medium
21	Panamanian Ranches LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals	190	Medium
24	Woerner South Inc	Pesticides, Heavy metals	50	Medium
25	Panamanian Ranches LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
26	Panamanian Ranches LLC	Pesticides, Heavy metals, Hazardous materials	Within proposed concept	Medium
27	American Tower L P	Pesticides, Heavy metals	350	Medium
32	Bridge #090009	Asbestos Containing Materials	100	Medium
33	Lykes Bros Inc	Pesticides, Hazardous materials	Within proposed concept	Medium
34	Lykes Bros Inc	Pesticides, Hazardous materials	Within proposed concept	Medium
35	Lykes Bros Inc	Pesticides, Hazardous materials, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
36	Lykes Bros Inc	Pesticides, Heavy metals	Within proposed concept	Medium
37	Brighton Baptist Church	Hazardous materials	Within proposed concept	Medium
38	Lykes Bros Inc	Petroleum	60	Medium
PCB=Polychlorinated Biphenyls				

Table 6-2: Potential Contamination Sites

For sites rated "No" and "Low" for potential contamination, no further action is required at this time. These sites/facilities have potential to impact the study area but based on variables such as current site operations and distance to the project area, have been determined to have low risk to the corridor at this time. Variables that may change the risk rating include a facility's non-compliance with environmental regulations, new discharges to the soil or groundwater, and modifications to current permits. Should any of these variables change an additional assessment of the facilities will be conducted.

For the site with a risk rating of "Medium", which consists of an underground petroleum storage tank that is undergoing cleanup activities for historic groundwater contamination due to a gasoline leak, the Project Manager (PM) and District Contamination Impact Coordinator (DCIC) will coordinate to determine if Level-II testing and/or Level-III support will be warranted. This may include determining if the FDEP/FDOT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) applies to any sites, conducting Level II activities or

recommending Level III or remedial activities, notes on the plans, design modifications and/or special provisions prior to or during construction.

Existing bridge structures were not physically evaluated or tested for hazardous materials as part of this contamination screening evaluation. However, as shown in Table 6-2, hazardous materials including asbestos-containing materials and metal-based coatings could exist at Bridge 090920, the S.R. 70 bridge over the Harney Pond Canal and Bridge 090009, the S.R. 70 bridge over the Indian Prairie Canal, given the age of the original infrastructure. The current scope of work proposes the removal of Bridges 090920 and 090009. A pre-construction hazardous material survey will be performed at these locations during final design.

6.4 Utilities and Railroads

The project's *Utility Assessment Package* (December 2025) was prepared and is located in the project file. The Utility Agency/Owners (UAOs) were determined using a variety of sources. A Sunshine 811 Design Ticket was requested and a field review was conducted. Above ground utility features were noted and verified with the utility providers and operators during the coordination process for the project. Base maps were sent to utility providers with a request to provide information on existing and planned utilities within the project area. The final source of data collection was from As-built plans along or adjacent to the study area.

Utility easements for the Florida Power and Light (FPL) high voltage overhead transmission line and Florida Gas Transmission (FGT) buried gas transmission are in the project limits. The FPL easement runs along the north side of S.R. 70, and FPL has plans to replace their poles and lines within their easement. The FGT line runs north of S.R. 70. The roadway widening associated with the Preferred Alterative was aligned to avoid direct impacts to proposed FPL transmission pole locations through coordination with FPL. The roadway widening will not impact the FGT line. There are several preferred pond sites (SMF 1, 2A, and 3A) and one FPC site (FPC 2-3B) are situated north of the FGT easement and conveyance crossings will be needed to convey stormwater to these preferred sites. Project design efforts will seek to avoid or minimize impacts to existing utilities to the extent feasible within the roadway ROW.

Table 6-3 summarizes utility type, location and name of utility company/owner.

Utility Agency/Company	Utility Description	Location
Florida Gas Transmission Company, LLC	30" Gas Main	Located on the north side of the study corridor
Glades Electric Coop	3-phase feeder supplying 7.2 kilovolt (kV)	Runs along the south side of the study corridor. All structures located outside of the existing FDOT ROW
Lumen/Century Link (National & Local)	Fiberoptic and Underground Copper	Runs along the south side through the S.R. 70 Corridor
Florida Power & Light (Transmission & Distribution)	19kV, 69 kV & 230kV Transmission Line	Runs along the north side of the study corridor. Structures located outside of the existing FDOT ROW

Table 6-3: Existing Utilities

There are no railroads within the project limits.

6.5 Construction

Construction activities for the proposed project may cause minor short-term air quality, noise, water quality, traffic congestion, and visual impacts for nearby residents and the traveling public. The air quality effect will be temporary, localized, and will primarily be in the form of construction exhaust emissions and fugitive dust generated from equipment during project construction. Air pollution associated with the creation of airborne particles will be effectively controlled through the use of watering or the application of other controlled materials.

Construction of the roadway improvements, with heavy equipment movement and other construction activities, is not expected to have a significant noise or vibration effect. Should unanticipated noise or vibration issues arise during the construction process, the Project Engineer, in coordination with a noise specialist and the contractor, will investigate additional methods of controlling these impacts.

Federal regulations (40 CFR Part 122) prohibit point source discharges of stormwater to waters of the U.S. without a NPDES permit. Under the State of Florida's delegated authority to administer the NPDES program, construction sites that will result in greater than one (1) acre of disturbance must file for and obtain either coverage under an appropriate generic permit contained in Chapter 62-621, F.A.C. or an individual permit issued pursuant to Chapter 62-620, F.A.C. The FDEP issues these permits. A major component of the NPDES permit is the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The SWPPP identifies potential sources of pollution that may reasonably be expected to affect the quality of stormwater discharges from the site and discusses good engineering practices (i.e., best management practices) that will be used to reduce the pollutants. The contractor will obtain the NPDES permit and prepare the SWPPP prior to construction. Additionally, the associated requirement to develop and implement a SRCC will be addressed during design.

Water quality impacts resulting from erosion and sedimentation will be controlled through the use of BMPs. All state water quality criteria will be met. Short-term construction related wetland impacts will be minimized through the use of BMPs such as the use of siltation barriers, dewatering structures, and containment devices to control turbid water discharges outside of construction limits.

Maintenance of traffic and sequence of construction will be planned and scheduled so as to minimize traffic delays throughout the project. Signage will be used as appropriate to provide pertinent information to the traveling public. The local news media will be notified in advance of road closings and other construction related activities to allow for the planning of alternate routes. Access to local properties, businesses and residences will be maintained to the extent practical through controlled construction scheduling and the implementation of the project's specific Traffic Control Plan(s). Aesthetic impacts will be temporary and could consist of the staging of construction equipment and materials.

Construction activities will be phased to maintain two lanes of traffic at all times, minimizing disruptions to motorists and adjacent properties. A portion of the roadway construction will occur on new alignment outside the existing travel lanes, such as in the east portion of the project at C.R. 721. This allows construction activities in these areas to proceed without affecting current traffic operations. In areas where the new roadway will be constructed along the existing S.R. 70 alignment, traffic will remain on the existing two-lane road while the contractor builds the two future eastbound lanes. This first phase also would consist of constructing the proposed stormwater facilities and cross drain extensions outside of the existing roadway. The second phase would shift the traffic to the newly constructed asphalt to enable the reconstruction of the existing travel lanes and completion of the cross drain widening. The third phase would involve completing the median construction, the final roadway friction course, and the final pavement markings.

7. Engineering Analysis Support

The engineering analysis supporting this environmental document is contained within the Draft Preliminary Engineering Report Displayed for Public Hearing (Jan 2026)

8. Permits

The following environmental permits are anticipated for this project:

Federal Permit(s)	**Status**
USACE Section 10 or Section 404 Permit	To be acquired
USACE Section 408 Permit	To be acquired

State Permit(s)	**Status**
DEP or WMD Environmental Resource Permit (ERP)	To be acquired
DEP National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit	To be acquired
FWC Gopher Tortoise Relocation Permit	To be acquired
WMD Right of Way Permit	To be acquired

9. Public Involvement

The following is a summary of public involvement activities conducted for this project:

Summary of Activities Other than the Public Hearing

A *Public Involvement Plan* (October 2023) was prepared under separate cover and is included in the project file. This plan details the public involvement approach for the project and documents public outreach methods including a project website, newsletters, a public meeting, and a public hearing. Agencies and elected and appointed officials were included in a mailing list as well as other project stakeholders. The *Comments and Coordination Report* (Date TBD), prepared under separate cover and included in the project file, fully documents the public and stakeholder involvement conducted for this project.

Public involvement activities include a June 2023 project kick-off newsletter sent to residents and stakeholders. The newsletter provided information on the need for the project and information about the PD&E study process. A project website, https://www.swflroads.com/project/449851-1, was created to provide the public with project specific information and give the public an opportunity to make comments and ask questions about the project.

An in-person Alternatives Workshop was held for the public on June 13, 2024, at the Town of Lake Placid Government Center in Lake Placid from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. The meeting followed an open house format and provided an opportunity for the public to review the proposed project layout and speak one-on-one with project team members. A virtual Alternatives Workshop was held on June 20, 2024 starting at 6:00 PM which included a meeting introduction, project video, and a question and answer period. Attendees typed-in questions, the virtual meeting moderator read the questions, and the project team provided answers while using concept plan maps for display purposes.

The in-person meeting was attended by 13 citizens and one (1) elected official from the Town of Lake Placid and the Lake Placid Police Chief who also provided security. All attendees were given the opportunity to provide written comments at the meeting or within the comment period following the meeting, ending July 5, 2024. The virtual meeting was attended by six (6) citizens including one (1) appointed official from Highlands County.

A total of 3 comments were submitted during the commenting period. The 2 comments from private citizens are in support of the project and widening S.R. 70 to four lanes. The third comment was provided by Archibold Station and provided information related to area's ecosystem, the western limits of the project where it meets the S.R. 70 segmetn to the west and their entrance location and u-turning for large vehicles, and conservation lands that exist in the area. FDOT provided responses to the comments that are included in the *Comments and Coordination Report.*

Following the Alternatives Public Workshop, the project was presented to the HRTPO staff and committees on October 2, 2024 to explain the study process and the alternatives for the multiple ongoing S.R. 70 corridor projects in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. During the meetings, general comments in support of the project were received. Regular project updates have been provided to the HRTPO through the FDOT liaison. Presentations are also planned to occur following the public hearing.
Date of Public Hearing: 01/27/2026

Summary of Public Hearing:
To be added following the public hearing.

10. Commitments Summary

1. The most recent version of the USFWS *Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake* will be implemented during construction.

2. A standard reconnaissance survey for Audubon's crested caracara nests will be completed prior to construction to identify any active nest location(s) to ensure accurate impact analysis.

3. FDOT will provide a financial contribution of $89,476.20 to the Crested Caracara Conservation Fund for the project's impacts to Audubon's crested caracara primary zones of three nests.

4. FDOT will provide 152.80 eastern indigo snake acre credits from Platt Branch Mitigation Bank (PBMB), which include land cover types that provide habitat for the eastern indigo snake. The FDOT will provide USFWS with a letter or email from the PBMB stating that the credit ledger for the bank has been revised to reflect the deduction of credits. The FDOT will not commence construction of the proposed project until a response email or letter from USFWS has been received stating that they have received the document. Due to the project not currently being funded for construction, if eastern indigo snake credits are not available from PBMB, FDOT will contribute $78,000 to the Eastern Indigo Snake Conservation Fund or an agreed amount by USFWS if a portion of the credits are provided by PBMB.

5. FDOT will provide mitigation for impacts to wood stork Suitable Foraging Habitat within the Service Area of a Service-approved wetland mitigation bank or wood stork conservation bank.

6. FDOT will mitigate habitat impacts to the Florida panther by providing 951 PHUs from the Platt Branch Conservation Mitigation Bank.

7. FDOT will design and construct wildlife shelves at the bridge crossings over the SFWMD canals (Canal C-40 and C-41), per current wildlife crossing guidelines.

8. FDOT will coordinate with SFWMD to evaluate each canal crossing to determine locations and lengths of herpetofauna funnel fencing to be installed without precluding SFWMD canal access and maintenance of canals.

9. FDOT will install landscaping utilizing native vegetation within the FDOT right-of-way and limits of funnel fencing.

10. In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #1: If potential roost trees or structures need to be removed, check cavities for bats within 30 days prior to removal of trees, snags, or structures. When possible, remove structure outside of breeding season (e.g., January 1 - April 15). If evidence of use by any bat species is

observed, discontinue removal efforts in that area and coordinate with the USFWS on how to proceed.

11. In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #5: Conserve open freshwater and wetland habitats to promote foraging opportunities and avoid impacting water quality. Created/restored habitat should be designed to replace the function of native habitat.

12. In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #7: Avoid or limit widespread application of insecticides (e.g., mosquito control, agricultural pest control) in areas where Florida bonneted bats are known or expected to forage and roost.

13. In accordance with the Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Key, FDOT will implement Best Management Practice #11: Avoid and minimize the use of artificial lighting, retain natural light conditions, and install wildlife friendly lighting (i.e., downward facing, and lowest lumens possible). Avoid permanent night-time lighting to the greatest extent practicable.

14. If eastern black rails are observed in the project's action area prior to or during construction, consultation with USFWS will be reinitiated.

15. If the tricolored bat is listed by the USFWS as threatened or endangered prior to the completion of construction, FDOT commits to reinitiating consultation with USFWS to determine appropriate avoidance and minimization measures.

16. If the monarch butterfly is listed by USFWS as Threatened or Endangered prior to the completion of construction, FDOT commits to reinitiating consultation with USFWS to determine appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for protection of the newly listed species.

17. FDOT will require contractors to remove garbage daily from the construction site or use bear proof containers for securing of food and other debris from the project work area to prevent these items from becoming an attractant for the Florida black bear *(Ursus americanus floridanus)*. Any interaction with nuisance bears will be reported to the FWC Wildlife Alert hotline 888-404-FWCC (3922).

11. Technical Materials

The following technical materials have been prepared to support this environmental document.

Farmland Memo (March 2025)
Sociocultural Data Report (August 2025)
Cultural Resources Assessment Survey (August 2025)
Draft Pond Siting Report (2025) - Pre Public Hearing Version
Natural Resources Evaluation Addendum (October 2025)
Water Quality Impact Evaluation Checklist (June 2025)
Natural Resources Evaluation (August 2025)
Location Hydraulics Report (August 2025)
Contamination Screening Evaluation Report (August 2025)
Noise Contour Technical Memorandum (June 2025)
Utility Assessment Package (Dec 2025)
Project Traffic Analysis Report (January 2025)
Draft Preliminary Engineering Report Displayed for Public Hearing (Jan 2026)
Public Involvement Plan (October 2023)
Alternatives Workshop Scrapbook (July 2024)

Attachments

Planning Consistency

Planning Consistency Documentation (Nov 2025)

Social and Economic

Existing and Future Land Use Maps

Cultural Resources

SHPO Concurrence Letter (October 2025)

Natural Resources

Biological Opinion (November 2025)
Sole Source Aquifer EPA Concurrence Letter (June 2025)

Physical Resources

Potential Contamination Site Maps (August 2025)

Planning Consistency Appendix

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Social and Economic Appendix

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Cultural Resources Appendix

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