



Florida Department of Transportation

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GOVERNOR

3400 West Commercial Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309

JIM BOXOLD
SECRETARY

March 27, 2015

Ms. Rebecca Grohall, AICP, Planning Manager
City of Fort Pierce
100 N. U.S. Hwy 1
Fort Pierce, FL 34954

Dear Ms. Grohall:

SUBJECT: Proposed City of Fort Pierce Plan Comprehensive Plan Amendment, DEO #15-1ESR

The Department has reviewed the proposed future land use amendment to the City of Fort Pierce Comprehensive Plan for the Village at Midway. In accordance with ss. 163.3184(3)(b), Florida Statutes, the focus of our review was on major transportation issues, including adverse impacts to the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). Local governments with transportation concurrency are required under ss. 163.3180(5)(h)1.a., Florida Statutes, to consult with the Department when proposed amendments affect facilities on the SIS. The SIS enhances economic prosperity and competitiveness by moving people and goods efficiently over long distances within and across regions and the state.

It appears likely that future adverse impacts will occur to the SIS at the I-95/Midway Road interchange based on trips from cumulative development impacts and with traffic contributed by the proposed amendment. No capacity analysis was done for the performance of the interchange ramps.

A review of the traffic analysis provided with the proposed amendment revealed issues with the methodology used to analyze traffic impacts. The traffic impact analysis does not take into account the potential for unmitigated adverse impacts from added trips to I-95 via the Midway Road interchange. The methodology that was used relies on a significance threshold to ultimately assign impact mitigation. As a result, the only roadway identified for link analysis in Table 5 is Midway Road. This methodology is typically used at the DRI and site impact levels of development review. At the comprehensive plan amendment level of review, the analysis should focus on the long term cumulative impacts of development on the roadway network with the proposed amendment and the process the local government will undertake to ensure that the necessary transportation facilities and services will be available to serve the planned land uses.

The City's proposed amendment analysis does not address the issue of future annexations beyond the current Urban Service Area boundary. If such changes are possible and anticipated, the City should include a long range traffic network map in the Comprehensive Plan showing how the MXD (Mixed Use) future land use designations, and other applicable properties west of I-95, will be served by an adequate transportation network. This functional characteristics of this network should minimize impacts to the SIS and alleviate future level of service deficiencies on Midway Road approaching I-95. Facilities needed to mitigate adverse impacts to I-95 and applicable segments of Midway Road are not included in the Cost Feasible component of the St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization's (TPO) 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

The Department offers the following recommendations for the City to consider prior to adoption of the proposed change in future land use designation for the Village of Midway:

1. The City should plan for an interconnected roadway network west of I-95 to provide access to the Village of Midway and to other properties currently outside of the existing Urban Service Boundary but that could be annexed in the future. A more connected network would include certain roadway facilities that are parallel to I-95 that would enable local trips to choose from multiple travel paths and not rely on the SIS for local trips.
2. The City should work with the St. Lucie TPO, as part of its update to the LRTP (2040), to ensure that the above referenced interconnected roadway network and the socio-economic/zonal data (SE or Z-Data) for transportation modeling accurately reflect the anticipated future land use pattern for the area west of I-95 along Midway Road. This will yield proposed projects needed to provide optimum levels of mobility. The LRTP update will ultimately influence project development and funding decisions for transportation facilities and services needed to accommodate growth envisioned by the City.
3. Transportation infrastructure needed to serve the Midway Road area may require future interchange modifications. It is important for the City to recognize that the process of modifying interchanges to I-95 involves a detailed analysis, review, and approval process. Proposed interchanges are carefully evaluated for compliance with design, safety, and operational standards established by the Department and the Federal Highway Administration. To proceed, the applicant or City would need to request the interchange modification and work with the Department to begin the process of determining what changes are justified. The applicant or City also would need to coordinate with the TPO to include the interchange modification into its LRTP.

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4. The Town and the applicant should consult with the Department regarding potential adverse impact avoidance or mitigation strategies for SIS impacts. This can be accomplished by inclusion of the Department in the City's development review/site plan approval process. That would include seeking our input on methodologies used for traffic impact analysis, and the associated results. The City can assist the Department in determining long-term growth trends for SIS facility planning and other purposes by monitoring the individual and cumulative impacts of development approved by the City. The Department can serve as a source of technical guidance as needed.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to participate in the review process. We remain committed to working with the City and other partners in pursuing mobility solutions. If you have any comments or questions about this letter, please contact Larry Hymowitz at (954) 777-4663. A contact for more information on SIS facilities, related SIS studies, interchange modifications, and SIS proportionate share opportunities is Lisa Dykstra at (954) 777-4360.

Sincerely,



Steven C. Braun, P.E.

District Planning & Environmental Engineer
District Four

SB:lh

cc: Peter Buchwald, St. Lucie TPO
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