

# Chapter 6: Regional Transportation

*Continued growth and development throughout the region magnifies the significance of connections to surrounding counties as economic and social interactions continue to expand beyond the County's boundaries. As people and goods move into and out of the County, demands are placed on transportation facilities that extend into neighboring jurisdictions and beyond. For this reason, transportation planning takes place on a region-wide scale that includes not only Hillsborough County, but all counties in the West Central Florida area.*



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## Regional Transportation Planning Coordination

After the 1990 Census, the U.S. Department of Transportation designated Pinellas, Pasco and Hillsborough counties a single Transportation Management Area (TMA). This provided the impetus for a formal process of coordinating regional transportation planning among the region's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). In 1993, the Governor mandated a comprehensive and coordinated planning process that included the MPOs, the FDOT, and other agencies. Specifically, the MPOs in the TMA, as well as the Hernando County MPO, were requested to coordinate in the development of their LRTPs, including a regional travel demand forecasting model.

### *The Chairs Coordinating Committee*



West Central Florida Metropolitan Planning Organizations  
**Chairs Coordinating Committee**



*Providing Transportation Planning for Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota Counties*

Coordination among the MPOs is accomplished through the West Central Florida Chairs' Coordinating Committee (CCC). In 2000, the Florida Legislature extended the coordinating function to Manatee, Sarasota and Polk counties by providing representation for the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO. FDOT, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council and adjoining regional planning councils also participate in this process in a non-voting capacity. Citrus County is a voting member of the CCC for Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) issues only.

The legislative mandate gives the CCC four principal tasks:

- Coordinate transportation projects that are deemed to be regionally significant by the committee.
- Review the impact of regionally significant land use decisions on the region.
- Review all proposed regionally significant transportation projects in the respective transportation improvement programs which affect more than one of the MPOs represented on the committee.
- Institute a conflict resolution process to address any conflict that may arise in the planning and programming of such regionally significant projects.

The CCC has adopted a set of Regional Transportation Strategies to provide guidance in the development of each MPO's LRTP and assurance that each plan addresses a common set of regional issues. The strategies cover five main planning areas dealing with the development and maintenance of long-range plans:

- Planning activities.
- Transportation system development.
- Plan implementation activities.
- Goods movement concerns.
- Financial concerns and project funding.

## *Other Regional Coordinating Mechanisms*

In addition to the CCC, several other agencies, organizations and studies function to address transportation and related issues at the regional scale, including:

### **Regional Transportation Analysis**

The Regional Transportation Analysis (RTA) provides a forum for the coordination of proposed transportation improvements within the counties that make up the Tampa Bay region. Another important function is to develop a regional travel demand-forecasting model, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Model.

### **Tampa Bay Regional Goods Movement Study**

Produced by FDOT District Seven, the *Tampa Bay Regional Goods Movement Study* covers Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties. It is described in Chapter 4. A Goods Movement Advisory Committee has been formed to guide and inform the development of a regional strategic freight plan.

### **West Central Florida Air Quality Coordinating Committee**

The purpose of the West Central Florida Air Quality Coordinating Committee (WCFAQCC) is to promote air quality planning and coordination among pollution control agencies, MPOs, industries and other governmental entities involved in air quality management. It serves as a forum for sharing knowledge, experience and information.

WCFAQCC was formed following the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) designation of the Tampa Bay Airshed as an air quality non-attainment area in 1977. After the committee successfully assisted in restoring the region's air quality attainment status, it dissolved. However, the EPA's air quality standards were revised in 2008, and the Tampa Bay Airshed is anticipated to be designated as a non-attainment area once again. In light of these developments, WCFAQCC will be reconvened to address regional air quality issues.

### **Transit Advisory Group for FDOT District Seven Transit Program**

The Transit Advisory Group is a collection of transit professionals from throughout FDOT District Seven that meet to discuss state-funded transit corridor projects. This group establishes goals and objectives, evaluates successes and/or failures and provides recommendations for regional transit projects.





## Transportation Management Organization Coordinating Group

There are four Transportation Management Organizations (TMOs) in the West Central Florida region. Bay Area Commuter Services serves the counties of FDOT's District Seven, the other three represent specific areas within Hillsborough County: the Tampa Downtown Partnership, the Westshore Alliance, and the New North Transportation Alliance. Through the TMO Coordinating Group, these entities work together along with local transit agencies to develop transportation demand management (TDM) strategies for reducing peak hour traffic congestion.

## Continuing Florida Aviation Systems Planning Process

The Continuing Florida Aviation Systems Planning Process (CFASPP) was established by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the FDOT as a method for continually monitoring and maintaining a viable statewide aviation environment and determining the development requirements to best meet projected aviation demands. The West Central Florida Metropolitan Area Aviation System Plan Steering Committee contributes to the CFASPP by reviewing aviation activity forecasts, air transportation demands for each community and other regional aviation issues for the Tampa Bay area as part of the statewide aviation planning process.<sup>i</sup>

## Bay Area Commuter Services

Bay Area Commuter Services (BACS) is a commuter assistance program whose purpose is to promote transportation alternatives to single-occupant vehicles in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties. BACS works with the region's businesses and communities to develop programs and materials that focus on shifting work commutes to different times of the day through telecommuting or alternate work hour programs, and to other modes of transportation including public transit, carpooling, vanpooling or bicycling. In 2010, BACS was integrated into the operations of TBARTA.

## Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority

The Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) was created by the Florida State Legislature in 2007 to develop and implement a *Regional Transportation Master Plan* for the seven-county region consisting of Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas and Sarasota counties. The Authority specifically focuses on improving mobility and expanding multi-modal transportation options for passengers and freight throughout the seven-county region. TBARTA is governed by a 16-member board appointed by the County Commissions, the Governor, FDOT (non-voting), the CCC, the largest municipalities in the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit and Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority service districts, and the largest municipality in Sarasota/Manatee.

TBARTA's legislative mandate focuses on coordinating transportation and land use planning between existing agencies, municipalities, local governing bodies and FDOT. To this end, the Authority was required to develop a conflict resolution process by July 1, 2008 to address consistency between transportation and land use plans in the region and adopt a *Regional Transportation Master Plan* by July 1, 2009. The adopted TBARTA plan is available at [www.tbarta.com](http://www.tbarta.com). The *Master Plan* must be updated every two years. The Authority also has financial and legal powers that it may exercise to implement the *Master Plan*.

Each of these regional coordination efforts informs the CCC to identify regionally significant transportation infrastructure and mobility needs in the development of its Regional Long Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP). The RLRTP has been developed against the backdrop of the TBARTA *Master Plan* and concurrent with this update to the Hillsborough MPO *2035 Plan*. These complementary transportation planning efforts are the result of close coordination and collaboration.

## Regional Transportation Needs

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Despite the recent economic downturn, steady population growth is predicted for the Tampa Bay region in the coming decades. This growth will place great demands on our transportation system to move people to employment, educational, and entertainment destinations. More goods and services will also be needed to support this growth requiring improved accessibility for trucks and trains to transport goods to markets. An integrated regional network of roadways, railways, multi-use trails and waterways will be needed to accommodate the multitude of travel purposes of our residents, visitors and freight suppliers. Technical reports on Regional Multi-Use Trails and Water Transit are available as separate documents.

### *Regional Travel Markets Analysis*

As part of the planning process to define regional transportation needs, the CCC analyzed future travel demand in eleven travel markets throughout the West Central Florida region. The travel markets generally reflect predominant travel patterns and flows in the region along major regional corridors, such as I-4, I-75, I-275, the Veterans Expressway and Suncoast Parkway. Four of the eleven defined travel markets originate or end in Hillsborough County. The analysis of future travel conditions and transportation infrastructure needs within these regional travel markets is primarily based on the RTA modeling process and the extensive planning process undertaken by TBARTA to define a rail and BRT system that would serve the regional employment and population centers. The CCC also defined additional transit corridors not considered by TBARTA.

The Regional Transportation Needs Assessment identifies the roadway and transit improvements needed to resolve the region's most pressing problems for regional mobility and accessibility. The travel markets that include Hillsborough County and their future transit and roadway needs are described below and presented in the map series that follows:

**Hillsborough/Pasco Travel Market  
Priority Corridors**

*Interstate 75*

*Veterans Expressway*

*Bruce B. Downs Blvd*

*Downtown Tampa to Wesley*

*Chapel Light Rail*

**Hillsborough/Pasco Regional Travel Market:** The Hillsborough/Pasco travel market generally parallels I-75 from the Hernando/Pasco county line to downtown Tampa and in addition to I-75 includes the Veterans Expressway, Dale Mabry Highway, I-275, US 41 and US 301. This travel market is characterized by significant commuter travel between the northern communities of Connerton, Zephyrhills, Dade City, Wesley Chapel, Land O Lakes, New Tampa and North Tampa to the major employment centers of downtown Tampa and Westshore.

Population and employment in the corridor are expected to increase by over 50 percent by 2035. Miles travelled on roads will grow accordingly, and vehicle hours of delay on roads will increase even faster because of increased congestion. Congestion is forecast along I-75, I-275 and the Veterans Expressway, as well as on east-west roads, including Hillsborough Ave and SR 54.

Passenger rail is proposed as an alternative in the southern half of the travel market, where there is a higher density of residents and jobs. Rail is proposed to connect the major employment centers of downtown Tampa and the University of South Florida area to residents of Wesley Chapel, New Tampa and North and Central Tampa. In the longer term, commuter rail service to Land O Lakes, Connerton and Brooksville is also proposed.

The Regional Needs Assessment network calls for new managed lanes on I-275 and I-75 in Hillsborough and Pasco counties. The lanes can be used for special travel purposes, such as transit, freight and high occupancy vehicles and may be tolled. The lanes would be managed using Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) to adjust access and toll rates based on real time conditions. The addition of managed lanes will help to ensure regional system continuity and enhance connectivity between major activity centers. Express bus service is proposed to provide speedy connections between these activity centers, taking advantage of faster travel times on the managed lanes.

Additional regional transportation improvement needs in Hillsborough County include the expansion of the Veterans Expressway from four to eight lanes as well as significant improvements to US 301, US 41 and Bruce B. Downs Blvd.

The Needs Assessment network includes a comprehensive fixed guideway and BRT system providing connectivity to the major employment centers of downtown Tampa and Westshore, Tampa International Airport and suburban communities in northern Hillsborough and Pasco counties.

A map illustrating highway and transit needs improvements in this travel market can be found as **Map 6.1**.

Map 6.1







**Tampa/Lakeland Regional Travel Market:** The Tampa/Lakeland travel market is generally centered along I-4 from Lakeland to downtown Tampa and includes I-4, SR 60 and the Lee Roy Selmon Crosstown Expressway as regionally significant roadways. This is a regionally significant corridor providing connection between the suburbs and communities of eastern Hillsborough County and communities of Polk County to the employment center of downtown Tampa. The Tampa/Lakeland travel market is also a significant regional freight corridor providing connectivity between the Port of Tampa and the numerous industrial and distribution centers of eastern Hillsborough and Polk counties.

Population and employment are forecasted to increase significantly within the corridor between now and 2035 resulting in an increase in VMT and vehicles hours traveled (VHT). Much of the increase in delay is caused by congestion on I-4 between Lakeland and downtown Tampa. SR 60 will continue to experience rising levels of traffic congestion through Brandon.

The population densities within the market area reflect urban nodes of development around Tampa, Brandon, Plant City and Lakeland. Future densities are forecast to be high enough in each of these nodes to support express bus and commuter rail transit. Express bus is proposed between downtown Tampa and Lakeland, taking advantage of speedy travel times on the proposed managed lanes on I-4. In the longer term, commuter rail service is also proposed between Lakeland, Plant City, Brandon and Tampa. Regional transit improvements include future high-speed rail along the I-4 corridor that would stop in Orlando, Tampa and Polk County. The addition of these premium transit connections would complement the proposed capacity enhancements to I-4 and SR 60.

Emphasis should also be given to the accommodation of increased future freight traffic in the corridor. Plant City and Polk County will continue to grow in their role as freight distribution centers for the region and beyond. These distribution activities, including a proposed major Intermodal Logistics Center in Winter Haven, will result in increased truck traffic to and from the urban areas of Hillsborough County as well as the Port of Tampa.

From an emergency evacuation standpoint, the reversible lanes on the Lee Roy Selmon Crosstown Expressway provide a distinct clearance time benefit in conjunction with the interstate that makes this travel market a primary route from the coastal areas to inland destinations.

A map illustrating needed highway and transit improvements in this travel market can be found as **Map 6.2**.

**South Brandon Regional Travel Market:** The South Brandon travel market is generally located along I-75, US 301 and US 41 from downtown Tampa to the Manatee county line. This is a regionally significant travel market that connects Brandon and the suburban communities of southern Hillsborough and northern Manatee counties to the employment center of downtown Tampa.

### *Tampa/Lakeland Travel Market Priority Corridors*

*Interstate 4*

*SR 60*

*US 92*

*Tampa - Orlando High Speed Rail*

*Tampa - Lakeland Commuter Rail*

### *South Brandon Travel Market Priority Corridor*

*Interstate 75*



### **Cross Bay Travel Market Priority Corridors**

*Interstate 275*

*Gandy Blvd*

*Downtown Tampa to Downtown St.*

*Petersburg Light Rail*

*Oldsmar Connection Light Rail*

This travel market serves a significant role in regional freight movement. Regional transportation facilities in the South Brandon travel market provide connectivity to a number of important freight activity centers including the Port of Tampa and the port facilities along US 41 including Port Redwing, Big Bend, Pendola Point, Port Sutton and Port Manatee.

The population is expected to increase by 61 percent between 2000 and 2035 and employment will increase by 105 percent. Travel demand and delay will increase accordingly on the regional roadways in the corridor, with VMT increasing by 67 percent and VHT by an even greater percentage. Delay will increase during the next 20 years due primarily to congestion on US 41, I-75 and US 301. These trends are expected to continue through 2035 as well.

Because congestion is expected on all three regional roads in the travel market, strategies that shift traffic will not provide relief. In order to accommodate the increase in person and freight movement demand, additional capacity is needed within the I-75 corridor. The Regional Needs Network includes the addition of special use lanes along I-75 resulting in an expansion to 10-12 lanes within the travel market, as well as additional capacity along US 301 and US 41.

The Needs Assessment transit network includes express bus and commuter rail transit in the South Brandon travel market. The addition of premium transit service in this market may decrease the need for enhanced highway capacity improvements.

A map illustrating highway and transit needs improvements in this travel market can be found as **Map 6.3**.

**Cross-Bay Regional Travel Market:** The Cross-Bay travel market extends from downtown Tampa to the beaches of Pinellas County and includes SR 580, SR 60, I-275 and US 92. Transportation facilities in this travel market provide connectivity to the employment centers of downtown Tampa, Westshore and Gateway (in Pinellas County) making this one of the most rapidly growing areas for jobs and commercial activity.

But even these significant projects will not fully accommodate future travel demand in this market. Analyses conducted by TBARTA and the CCC point to demand for rail connecting the major activity centers of Downtown St. Petersburg, downtown Clearwater, the Gateway Business District, and downtown Tampa. Though rail will not eliminate congestion, it will provide an alternative to congested roads between these major destinations, and is forecast to attract a significant number of passengers. Express bus services are also needed in this travel market, both to feed and complement rail and to provide interim transit connections before rail is constructed.

Population is expected to increase by 14 percent and employment by 30 percent over the next 25 years. VMT is expected to increase by approximately 25 percent, consistent with population and employment increases, but VHT is expected to increase by an even greater percentage due to significant congestion in the corridor.

A map illustrating highway and transit needs improvements in this travel market can be found as **Map 6.4**.

Map 6.2 , 6.3, 6.4



# Regional Transportation Strategy

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Regional transportation priorities were defined based on the effectiveness of the proposed strategies to accomplish regional mobility and growth objectives. A regional implementation strategy was developed based on existing and projected funding that can be reasonably expected to be available to implement the regional transportation priorities by 2035. The regional implementation strategy includes a system of roadway, transit and multi-use trail improvements.

The core component of the implementation strategy is a passenger rail transit system that connects the region's major economic activity centers. The transit system includes high-speed rail service connecting the Tampa and Orlando metropolitan areas. Downtown Tampa is the epicenter of a regional light rail system that spokes out to activity centers within Hillsborough County and the Tampa Bay region. The Cost Affordable transit system, shown on **Map 6.5**, includes a light rail system that connects downtown Tampa, Westshore, Tampa International Airport, and the University of South Florida with destinations outside the County including downtown Clearwater and St. Petersburg in Pinellas County and Wesley Chapel in Pasco County. The rail system is complemented with a system of express bus routes and BRT serving the urban areas within the region.

The Cost Affordable Plan also includes improvements to the regional roadway system serving the seven-county Tampa Bay area. **Map 6.6** depicts the regional roadway improvements planned to be implemented by 2035. The improvements are focused in the priority corridors to improve mobility within the defined travel markets in the region.

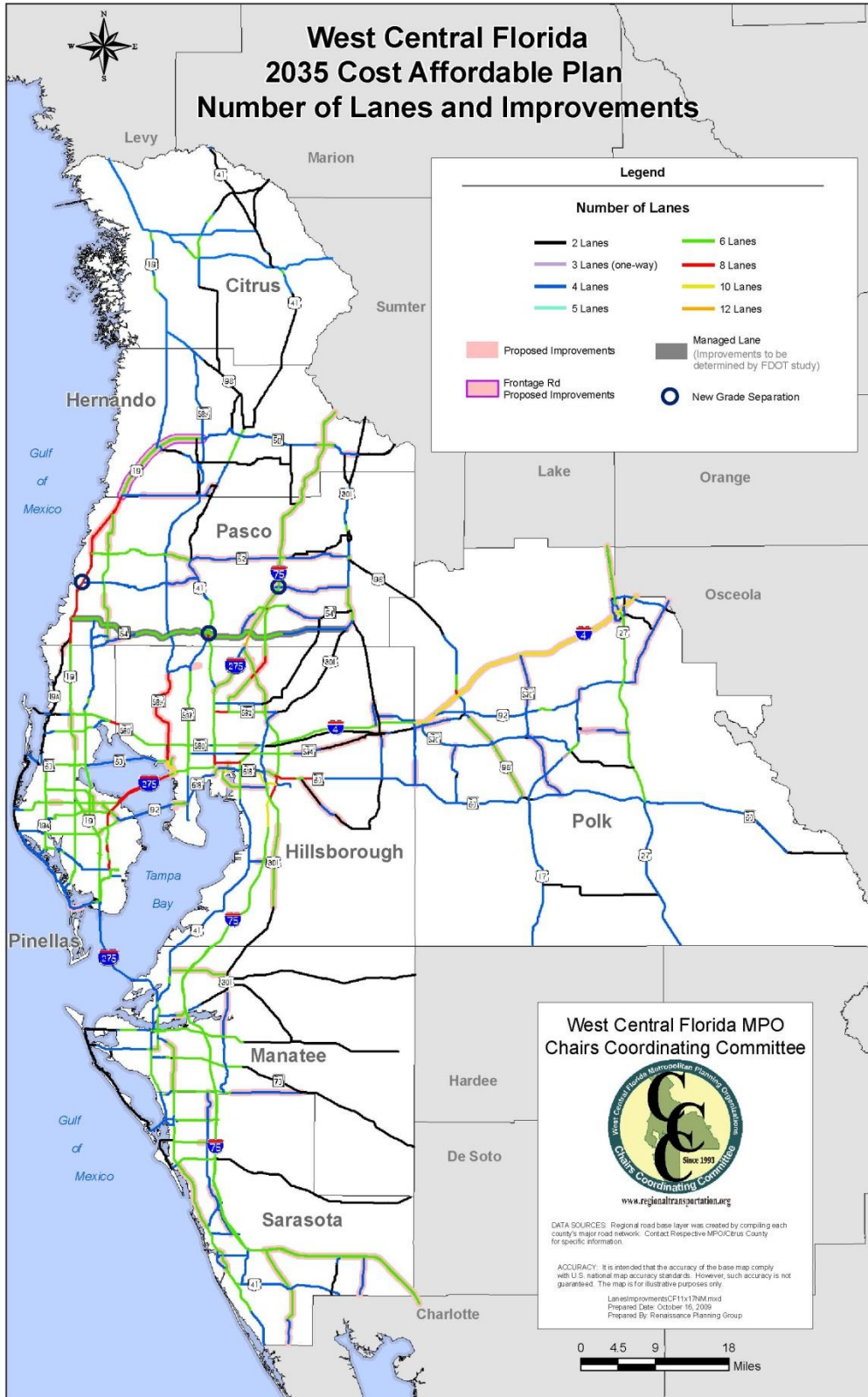


Map 6.5: 2035 Regional Cost Affordable Plan Transit Improvements.





Map 6.6: 2035 Regional Cost Affordable Plan Roadway Improvements



## Florida's High Speed Rail Program

Florida has been a strong candidate for high speed rail development since the 1980s. Our flat terrain, high growth rates, large number of tourists and distances between our major cities make Florida an ideal place for high speed rail implementation. In 1992, President George Bush selected Tampa-Orlando-Miami as one of the nation's first federally designated high speed rail corridors.

On January 28, 2010, President Obama announced a \$1.25 billion award to Florida in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to start construction of the Tampa-Orlando leg of the designated Tampa-Orlando-Miami high speed rail corridor.

### *Tampa-Orlando on Track to be America's First High Speed Rail Express Corridor*

The Tampa-Orlando line will run 84 miles from downtown Tampa to Orlando International Airport. The project will be built for the most part in the median of I-4 where a 44-foot envelope has been preserved for this purpose. Bridges were also built higher and wider to accommodate high speed trains. Other portions of the project outside of I-4 will primarily follow existing public rights of way. The project is expected to cost \$2.6 billion to build.

Trains will operate at speeds of up to 168 mph. Florida is planning five stations along this corridor. Travel time between downtown Tampa and Orlando International Airport (OIA) including stops at all intermediate stations is projected to be under an hour. The system will be designed to allow the operator to set schedules to maximize ridership and satisfy market demand including the operation of non-stop trains between Tampa and Orlando.



Tampa-Orlando-Miami HSR showing route options for ORL/MIA



FLORIDA HIGH SPEED RAIL  
TAMPA-ORLANDO

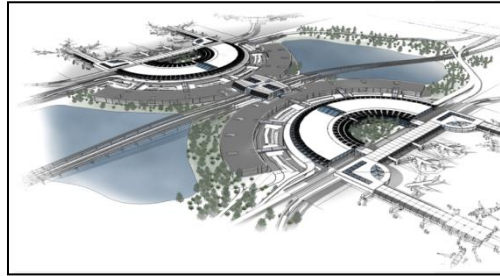


Florida Rail Enterprise



## *Stations and Connectivity*

The Tampa-Orlando line will have strong connections with existing road, bus and transit systems. Plans at OIA call for high speed rail to stop at a new southern terminal which it would share with a proposed extension of SunRail commuter system. The Convention Center stop will be served by both the I-Ride Trolley and Lynx. The Tampa station is at the north end of the HART bus transit mall. Proposed light rail service in Tampa would run directly to the high speed rail station. All stations will feature parking and rental car facilities and will have a full set of rail passenger services available.



Concept Design for OIA HSR station

## *Funding High Speed Rail – Capital and Operations*

The federal government is the principal funding source for the project and the FRA is responsible for administering the \$1.25 billion award of ARRA funds. FDOT applied to the FRA in August, 2010 for approximately one billion dollars in additional funding available through the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008. The required 20 percent state match for PRIIA funds comes from the Florida Rail Enterprise fund established by the Florida Legislature in special session in 2009. FDOT projects that operating revenues will cover operating costs based upon two independent ridership forecasts. These forecasts will be updated in 2010.

## *Project Development*

FDOT is responsible for building the project with oversight by the FRA. Florida received \$66.7 million in ARRA funds in May, 2010, the largest award in the nation. This allows FDOT to take the project to 30 percent design, update ridership projections and prepare for issuance of bid documents in early 2011.

Project construction will likely occur in two phases. The first phase is a proposed Early Works Safety Project which will involve elimination of I-4 median obstacles and construction of at-grade permanent safety barriers. This work is expected to begin in early 2011.

Private ventures will be asked to submit bids to complete the design of the system, then build, operate and maintain it. FDOT's goal is to secure firm construction bids and have the private sector cover operating costs. FDOT expects to select a vendor in 2011. Construction is projected to start in 2012 with system operation in 2015.

FDOT is investing \$2 million to begin the evaluation of the costs and environmental impacts of various alignments in the Orlando-Miami corridor, the first step towards moving forward with this phase of the program. FDOT has applied for \$8 million in PRIIA funding to match its investment in this corridor to further advance this work.

**REFERENCES**

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.cfaspp.com/>