



# Hillsborough TPO

## Transportation Planning Organization

Commissioner Gwen Myers  
Hillsborough County  
TPO Chair

Mayor Andrew Ross  
City of Temple Terrace  
TPO Vice Chair

Paul Anderson  
Port Tampa Bay

Commissioner Harry Cohen  
Hillsborough County

Councilman Joseph Citro  
City of Tampa

Councilmember Lynn Hurtak  
City of Tampa

Commissioner Pat Kemp  
Hillsborough County

Mayor Nate Kilton  
City of Plant City

Adelee Marie Le Grand, AICP  
HART

Joe Lopano  
Hillsborough County  
Aviation Authority

Councilman Guido Maniscalco  
City of Tampa

Commissioner  
Michael Owen  
Hillsborough County

Hemant Saria  
Planning Commission

Greg Slater  
Expressway Authority

Commissioner  
Joshua Wostal  
Hillsborough County

Jessica Vaughn  
Hillsborough County  
School Board

Beth Alden, AICP  
Executive Director



**Plan Hillsborough**  
[planhillsborough.org](http://planhillsborough.org)  
[planner@plancom.org](mailto:planner@plancom.org)

813 - 272 - 5940  
601 E Kennedy Blvd  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Tampa, FL, 33602

Kimberly Byer, Assistant County Administrator – Hillsborough County  
Danni Jorgensen, Transportation Engineering Manager – City of Tampa  
Julie Ham, Planning & Zoning Manager – City of Plant City  
Michael Sherman, Community Development Director – City of Temple Terrace  
Bob Frey, Planning Director – Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority  
Brian Hunter, Government Liaison Administrator – FDOT District 7

March 8, 2023

Re: Wildlife Crossings

Dear Colleagues:


Due to the safety and environmental benefits of wildlife crossings, the Hillsborough TPO directed its staff and encourages its local governments and partner agencies to incorporate wildlife crossings into their planning processes. Wildlife crossings are structures through, over, and under which wildlife can traverse the transportation network, and there are more than 60 wildlife crossings in the state of Florida. We encourage studies and plans for wildlife crossings, such as the FDOT I-4 Wildlife Permeability Study. Furthermore, the TPO directed staff and advises partners of the opportunity to coordinate with local and state planning agencies as well as environmental agencies and organizations, such as the Jan K. Platt Environmental Land Acquisition and Protection Program and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), to identify ideal locations for wildlife crossings.

In the context of transportation, the primary challenges are to improve safety conditions for drivers, passengers, and wildlife and to decrease habitat fragmentation. Vehicle collisions with wildlife have steadily increased since 2000 in Florida and are expected to continue to increase with population growth. Collisions can be life-threatening and are detrimental to drivers and passengers, as well as wildlife populations, particularly endangered species. Wildlife crossings decrease the number of collisions and expand habitat connectivity to improve survival, reproduction rates, and genetic diversity among wildlife as growth and development continue.

Many conservation lands across Hillsborough County and Florida are fragmented and intersected by multilane roads, which wildlife must cross to access suitable habitats and necessary resources. For example, in the case of Florida panthers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Species Status Assessment for the Florida Panther report suggests reducing risks of vehicle collisions and habitat expansion are ways to decrease extinction probabilities. FWS identified the Green Swamp, north of I-4 as a potential future habitat capable of supporting reproducing females; however, the Green Swamp is surrounded by interstates. In addition to panthers, many other animals also benefit from wildlife crossings and habitat corridors, such as Florida back bears, deer, bobcats, alligators, turtles, etc.

The population of Hillsborough County is expected to reach 2 million by 2045, 39% higher than in 2020, which suggests interactions between people and wildlife will also increase. In planning for our shared future, the TPO supports the Hillsborough County

Comprehensive Plan Mobility Policy that wildlife underpasses and overpasses shall be used to address transportation infrastructure's potential impact on wildlife corridors and habitats. We stand ready to assist and coordinate with our local government and agency partners. For further information please contact me, or Lizzie Ehrreich at [ehrreichl@plancom.org](mailto:ehrreichl@plancom.org).

DocuSigned by:  
  
6C119FD111E9454...

Beth Alden, AICP  
Executive Director  
813.547.3318 (o)  
[aldenb@plancom.org](mailto:aldenb@plancom.org)

CC:

Ross Dickerson – ELAPP  
John Patrick, AICP – C&IP  
Melissa Zornitta, FAICP – The Planning Commission  
Robert Wassum, PE – City of Plant City  
Brian McCarthy, PE – City of Temple Terrace  
Suzanne Monk, FCCM, Joel Johnson, and Brent Setchell, PE – FDOT