

Repeal M-CORES: Protect Rural Communities

The widely unpopular M-CORES, the proposed 330 miles of new toll roads through rural Florida, will drain our state's tax dollar coffers and inflict irreversible harm to Florida's rural and agricultural communities. **The Florida Legislature should repeal M-CORES and redirect the funding to existing priorities for the people of Florida:**

- **There is no documented need for these roads.** The final report for each of the three appointed Task Forces states that "The Task Force did not reach a conclusion based on the information available at this time that there is a specific need for a completely new greenfield corridor or modification of existing facilities through the study area to achieve the statutory purpose."
- **Florida rural communities value their cultural, historical, agricultural, and archaeological resources.** They view these attributes as significant factors in sustaining communities' rural lifestyles and heritage. Many rural communities across the state view M-CORES as "forced sprawl."
 - This "forced sprawl" will:
 - result in low wage and/or temporary jobs
 - not address the lack of a trained and ready workforce
 - cause a decline in sales and decreased business activity to existing local businesses
 - redirect local dollars toward national chain businesses which will profit owners and shareholders outside of the local community
 - not address the issues of lower incomes and higher unemployment
- **Improved broadband service, a real need in rural Florida, is not contingent upon the building of new roads** — in fact, aerial broadband is cheaper and faster to install.
- Coupled with the future development and sprawl these toll roads will inevitably generate, **M-CORES could turn many of the remaining rural downtown areas into ghost towns.** The three toll roads would slice through some of the remaining natural and agricultural areas, permanently severing connectivity.
- **M-CORES is not needed to accommodate growth:**
 - The number of people moving to Florida each day is not a reason for new roads. These roads will open up rural lands to development and become urban and rural sprawl; **this is bad planning.**
 - **Good planning builds strong towns** by incentivizing more compact, mixed-use development, infill development, and redevelopment in urban and rural areas that take advantage of and support existing infrastructure

including roads, sewer, water, and schools. This is how we build a better Florida for all who want to call Florida home.

- Florida needs public transit and conservation programs to protect the urban/rural boundary and limit sprawl. **Land is a finite and precious resource.**
- **Sprawl resulting from these roads poses a threat to our state's farms and ranches and the rural way of life;** development readily creeps across the landscape when regulations make it easier and cheaper to build on unspoiled land than investing in existing cities, towns, and rural communities.
- **Funding for M-CORES will drain money from transportation programs for rural communities.** Programs like the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, Small County Road Assistance Program, and Small County Outreach Program automatically roll into the M-CORES Trust Fund, if not used. In FY 2019-20, the overall M-CORES budget increased from \$90 to \$117 million through this mechanism.
- Main Street Program projects are already suffering from the prioritization of the M-CORES program. Main Street communities serve as the social and economic hearts for their residents. Many of these communities are named for the iconic natural features on which they depend for their outdoor recreation-based economies:
 - Southwest-Central Corridor: Bartow, Winter Haven, Lake Wales, Arcadia, Wauchula, Moore Haven, LaBelle and Sebring.
 - Suncoast Corridor: Monticello, Madison, Perry, Mayo, Cross City, Trenton, Chiefland, Bronson, Inglis, Cedar Key, Yankeetown, Crystal River, Inverness, and Homosassa.
 - Northern Turnpike Corridor: Citrus Springs, Crystal River, and Homosassa, Cedar Key, Yankeetown, Rosewood, Inglis, Dunnellon, Hernando, Lecanto, Suwannee, and Ocala.
- Rural local governments will need to amend their comprehensive plans to plan for the “forced sprawl” M-CORES will spur. Those plan amendments will go through an expedited state review process which will limit the ability for future public participation and agency oversight.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of the public that provided comments to FDOT (over 10,000 comments) opposed building the toll roads.

Repeal M-CORES and redirect the funding to the true needs of our state. Protect agricultural areas, keep the rural character of our communities, maintain boundaries between urban and rural communities, discourage sprawl, protect the ecosystems that provide Floridians the air and water upon which we depend, and support the health of all Floridians.

