



The Corridor Task Force Process

Updated May 9, 2020

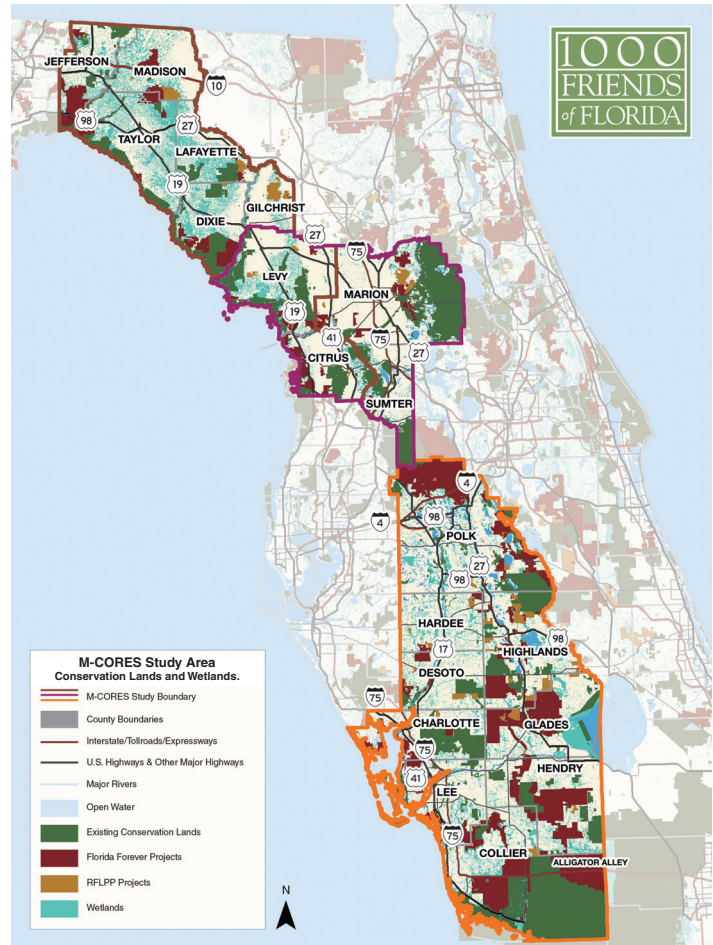
M-CORES Task Force Meetings and Open Houses were postponed starting in mid-March and in April the meetings began to be held online due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The tentative date to submit the Task Force reports to the Governor and Legislature was extended to November 15, 2020. Sign up for 1000 Friends' email alerts at 1000fof.org/alerts to stay abreast of what is happening.

During its 2019 session, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 7068, and Governor DeSantis later signed it into law. This sweeping legislation authorizes the design, funding and construction of “M-CORES,” a system of three toll roads extending 340 miles from Jefferson County in the Florida Panhandle south to Collier County on the fringes of the Everglades.

The stated objective of M-CORES is to “advance the construction of regional corridors that are intended to accommodate multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure.” Goals outlined in the legislation include to address hurricane evacuation, congestion mitigation, trade and logistics, broadband, water and sewer connectivity, energy distribution, autonomous and other vehicle technology, mobility as a service, availability of trained workforce.

Project goals also include “protection or enhancement of wildlife corridors or environmentally sensitive areas,” and “protection or enhancement of primary springs protection zones and farmland preservation areas designated within local comprehensive plans adopted under chapter 163.” More details on the M-CORES process is available at **Citizen Primer 1: An Overview** at 1000fof.org/mcores/primer1overview.

But instead of establishing an objective process to determine how to facilitate the movement of people and goods, provide other needed infrastructure, facilitate economic development, and promote and enhance wildlife corridors and environmentally sensitive areas in this region, the M-CORES legislation proceeds under the



Based on maps from the Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, University of Florida

1000 Friends has prepared a series of maps identifying significant natural resources in the M-CORES corridors, available at www.1000fof.org/mcores/maps

To Find Out More About M-CORES Visit:

- FDOT – floridamcores.com
- 1000 Friends of Florida – 1000fof.org/mcores/

assumption that toll roads in the three designated corridors provide the best solution to all of these challenges.

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The Task Force Process

A separate task force has been established for each of the three corridors, with their reports due to the Governor and Legislature, now November 15, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each task force:

... shall evaluate the need for and the economic and environmental impacts of, hurricane evacuation impacts of, and land use impacts of, the related corridor ...

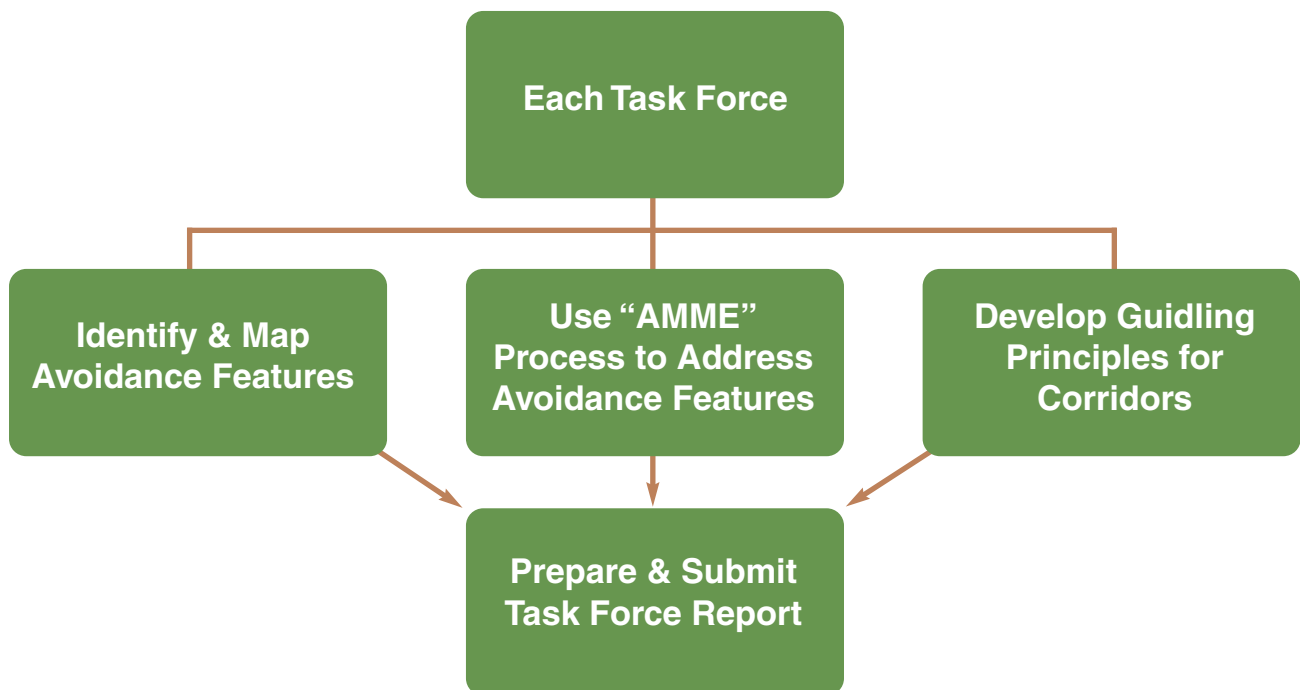
Also, to the maximum extent feasible they “may consider and recommend innovative concepts to combine right-of-way acquisition with the acquisition of lands or easements to facilitate environmental mitigation or ecosystem, wildlife habitat, or water quality protection, or restoration. The department, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection, may incorporate those features into each corridor during the project development phase.”

The task forces are preparing a series of products related to the planning process including:

Avoidance Features: First, they are charged with understanding and identifying natural, cultural, social

and physical resources in their respective regions to identify and map “Avoidance Features” for each corridor. This process has begun in each of the three corridors. With regard to avoidance features, the legislation specifies that, “to the greatest extent practical, corridor configuration, project alignment, and interchange locations shall be designed so that project rights-of-way are not located within conservation lands acquired under the Florida Preservation 2000 Act as established in s. 259.101, and the Florida Forever program as established in s. 259.105.”

AMME Recommendations: Second, they identify how to address the identified avoidance features resources using the “AMME” process. This entails **Avoiding** significant direct impacts to resources to the extent feasible, **Minimizing** or reducing impacts when avoidance isn’t feasible (such as limiting access in areas not appropriate for new development), **Mitigating** or offsetting impacts where possible (such as creating new wetlands to offset negative project impacts), and **Enhancing** or creating net benefits (such as creating a bridge in the corridor to restore water flow).



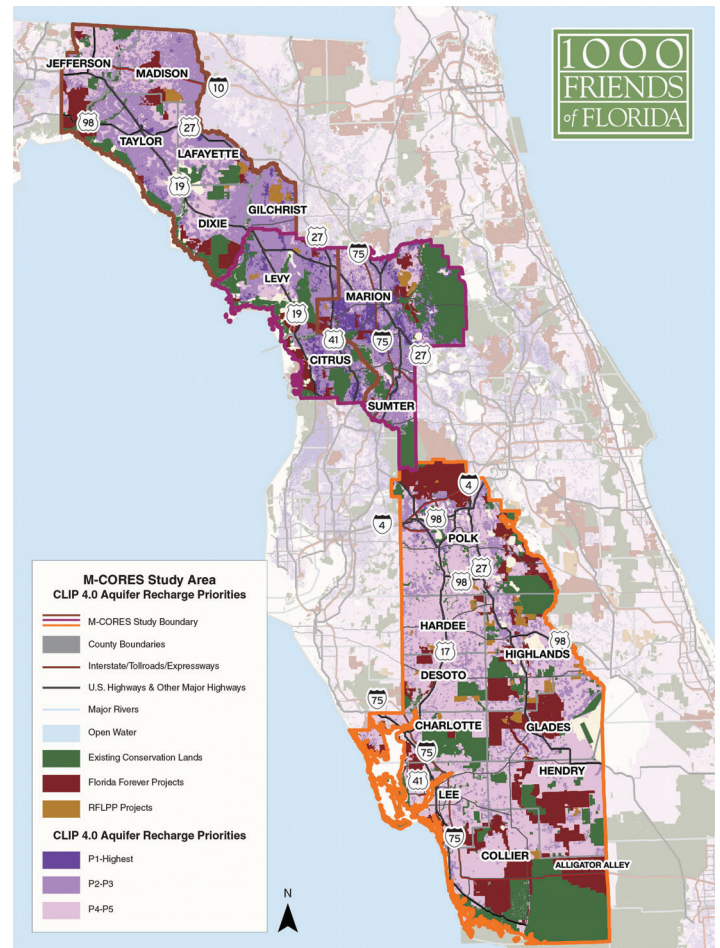
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Attraction Areas: At the April 2020 M-CORES task force meetings, FDOT added a new assignment for task force members. It introduced upgraded GIS maps of the three corridors, including a new layer, “attraction areas.” These include hospitals, fire stations, schools, emergency shelters and shopping centers; transportation features such as airports, rail centers and trails; infrastructure related to water supply, wastewater, electricity, gas, and broadband; major employment hubs, and more. The layers also include select Future Land Use Maps (FLUM) categories for the impacted counties. The intent is for the task force members to analyze this information to determine areas best suited to the new toll road corridors.

Guiding Principles: Fourth, they develop “Guiding Principles” for corridor planning and development. Again, initial drafts of these principles are being prepared for each corridor.

The avoidance features, results of the AMME Process and guiding principles will provide the foundation for each of the three task force reports to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature. The M-CORES legislation notes that “to the maximum extent feasible, the department shall adhere to the recommendations of the task force created for each corridor in the design of the multiple modes of transportation and multiple types of infrastructure associated with the corridor.”

The bulk of the task force work to date has been spent on identifying environmental resources. Time must be allocated to identifying need, addressing both positive and negative economic impacts of the roads, and assessing hurricane evacuation and land use impacts of the project if they are to meet their mandate shown in the first paragraph of this section.



Based on maps from the Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, University of Florida

The corridors include significant aquifer recharge areas essential to cleansing and storing Florida’s vulnerable water supply.

Next Steps

With the task force reports to be finalized in late summer for submission to the Governor and Legislature, in November the clock is ticking. It’s essential to share your input as soon as possible to help shape the outcome. Here’s how you can help:

- **Continue to share your input on M-CORES** at the task force meetings and open houses, on FDOT’s website at floridamcores.com and to your local elected officials and State legislators.

- **Work with receptive M-CORES task force members** to continue to identify avoidance areas and guiding principles to protect special qualities in your community and region.
- **Share your thoughts** in opinion pieces and letters to the editor and on social media.

Visit 1000fof.org/mcores to find out more!