

May 30, 2018



L.K. Nandam, P.E.
FDOT District One Secretary
801 N. Broadway Ave.
Bartow, Florida 33830

RE: PD&E Central Manatee Network Alternatives Analysis/Desoto Bridge

Secretary Nandam,

The Manatee Chamber of Commerce represents approximately 2,000 member businesses and nearly 70,000 employees. The Chamber's Transportation Committee, Downtown Redevelopment Committee, and Board of Directors have held engaged discussions regarding the Central Manatee Network Alternatives Analysis (CMNAA).

The Chamber has concluded the Florida Department of Transportation should expedite the PD&E Study to replace the Desoto Bridge and to consider all capacity alternatives identified in the CMNAA; this includes bridge crossings on the 9th Street East, 15th Street East, and 27th Street East corridors and the elevated throughway concept on 1st Street West/US 41.

The Desoto Bridge is at the end of its service life (built in 1957). The bridge's antiquated design and age create safety concerns and transportation inefficiencies, particularly with the bridge connecting two major municipalities with walkable riverfronts while we strive to create more multi-modal options for the community. Replacement of the Desoto Bridge remains a top transportation priority of the Sarasota/Manatee MPO, Manatee County Government, City of Bradenton, City of Palmetto, and the Chamber.

An additional bridge crossing alternative has been identified as a necessary improvement to address the existing transportation capacity demands within the central Manatee study area. Studied for well over 50 years, such capacity alternatives need to be expedited due to downtown redevelopment, growth, congestion and Manatee Memorial Hospital's emergency care access/needs.

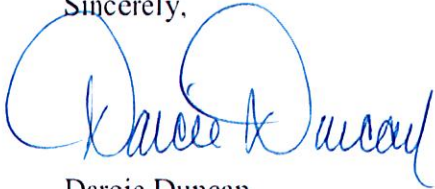
The replacement/modification of the Desoto Bridge is tethered to at least one of the capacity alternatives under consideration in the CMNAA study. It is necessary that FDOT make a determination on a preferred bridge crossing expeditiously in order to avoid delayed replacement of the Desoto Bridge.

Additionally, we recommend FDOT address the impact on economic development and mobility in the Cities of Bradenton and Palmetto. This impact includes the east-west traffic congestion on the SR 64 corridor, additional traffic congestion on the 9th Street West corridor in Bradenton, the traffic congestion on the Green Bridge that affects the City of Palmetto and the antiquated design of the US301/ US41 interchange in Palmetto. All of the affected roads and locations are within

the CMNAA study area and adversely affect the quality of life in our community as well as our region as a whole. This is a high priority for our community, and we respectfully urge that FDOT consider all ideas to alleviate these traffic issues.

The Chamber appreciates your consideration of our recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darcie Duncan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Darcie" and last name "Duncan" clearly distinguishable.

Darcie Duncan
Chairman of the Board