

I. INTRODUCTION

THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

On December 6, 2001, the Hernando County Metropolitan Planning Organization (known as the MPO) adopted the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for Hernando County. Every three years the MPO is required to update its Long Range Transportation Plan. For the next three years, the 2025 Long Range Multi-Modal Transportation Plan will serve as the blueprint for all major transportation improvements for Hernando County.

MPO PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES

Under current federal regulations known as the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), each MPO is required as part of its transportation planning responsibility, to address the following seven factors:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.
4. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.
5. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.

6. Promote efficient system management and operation.
7. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

LONG RANGE PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the above factors, each MPO is responsible for developing, in cooperation with the state and affected transit operators, a long-range transportation plan which:

- Identifies transportation facilities, including but not limited to major roadways, transit systems, and intermodal facilities, that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system.
- Provides details on how the Plan can be implemented, including public and private resources available to carry out the plan, and recommendations for innovative financing techniques to fund needed projects.
- Assesses capital investment needed to preserve the existing system and make the most efficient use of existing facilities to relieve congestion and maximize mobility.
- Shows proposed transportation enhancement activities.

TEA-21 also requires each MPO to provide citizens and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the plans prior to final approval. Furthermore, as an air quality attainment area,

Hernando County is not required to address related requirements for short range attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards under the Clean Air Act of 1990.

THE HERNANDO COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

The MPO was formed in 1992 as a result of the Spring Hill urbanized area designation from the 1990 census; however, the MPO study area covers all of Hernando County. Membership on the MPO Board is composed of the five Hernando County Commissioners, a representative from the Brooksville City Council and the FDOT District VII Secretary. MPOs are charged with the responsibility for the planning and prioritization of transportation improvements and with setting policy on transportation matters. The MPO Board meets every other month and has two standing committees that were used throughout the long range planning process: the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

Hernando County lies on the Gulf coast of West Central Florida (Figure 1) and contains 477 square miles (312,000 acres) of land area within its borders. The county's western boundary is its coast line along the Gulf of Mexico; the eastern boundary is Sumter County; the northern boundary is Citrus County and the southern boundary is Pasco County. The distances between its borders are roughly 37 miles from east to west and 18 miles from north to south. There are only two incorporated areas within the County:

- 1) the City of Brooksville; located approximately in the center of the County.
- 2) the City of Weeki Wachee; located in the west-central area.

Brooksville is the County seat and, as such, serves as a major commercial and employment center. With 7,798 persons living in Brooksville in 1997, the City of Brooksville has approximately 6 ½ percent of the County's population. However, the main population and

employment center of Hernando County is Spring Hill. Boundaries of the unincorporated Spring Hill urban area encompass approximately 89.5 square miles in southeastern Hernando County, generally located east of US Highway 19 and south of State Road 50. The eastern boundary is primarily formed by a major utility easement running north/south through the entire urban area. The south boundary is formed by County Line Road, which runs east/west on the Pasco County border. In 2000, the population of the Spring Hill urbanized area was estimated to be 85,000 persons.

Hernando County is a community of neighborhoods and communities, all of which have their own identity and character. Figure 2 depicts the names and locations of these communities. Planning activities often focus on these areas with the intent of building a consensus within a particular community, and then linking these communities through common concerns over infrastructure needs. However, residential infill is beginning to blur the distinction between traditional neighborhood boundaries. Additionally, new transportation linkages, coupled with increased volumes of traffic, are reducing the historical isolation of many communities.

Figure 1

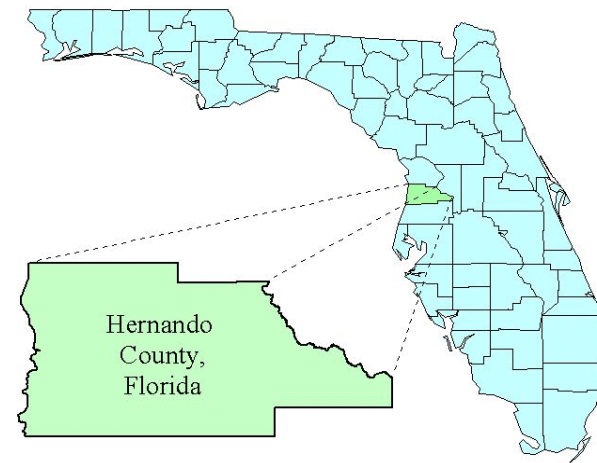


Figure 2

Neighborhoods and Communities of Hernando County

