



*Florida Department of Transportation*

**RICK SCOTT**  
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

**MIKE DEW**  
SECRETARY

August 31, 2018

The Honorable Kathy Bryant  
Marion County Board of County Commissioners, Chair  
601 SE 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Ocala, FL 34471

Re: Coastal Connector

Dear Commissioner Kathy Bryant:

On June 29, 2018, the Florida Department of Transportation announced that it will not proceed with the recommendations from the Coastal Connector Alternative Corridor Evaluation Study and will instead focus on direct improvements to I-75. I would like to elaborate on that announcement.

The Coastal Connector and the I-75 Master Plan studies were high-level planning studies. Before a prospective alternate new corridor to I-75 could actually be identified, a full Project Development and Environment study would need to be completed, which would include identification of a locally preferred alternative. PD&E studies evaluate alternate locations for a potential facility as well as the potential that a "no-build" option should be pursued. "No-build" options are required by law to be a viable consideration all through a PD&E process. Neither of the studies included what is required for a PD&E study and nothing in the work performed for the studies should be construed to equate to identification, designation or reservation of a transportation corridor for any future Department transportation facility.

At this time, the Department has determined that the best approach to addressing traffic issues in the area is to abandon the new corridor concepts that were preliminarily discussed in the planning studies. The Department is not continuing with the steps that would be necessary to develop the alternate new corridors identified in either the Coastal Connector Alternative Corridor Evaluation Study or the North I-75 Master Plan Study. With the rapidly evolving nature of the area and the number of different alternatives that have been proposed, the Department believes that it is appropriate to step back and refocus on improvement of I-75.

The Department understands the potential impact of any proposal on the economically important equine and realty industries in Marion County. Further, the Department is committed to continuing conversations with the region's local governments and stakeholders to provide acceptable solutions that meet the region's transportation needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Dew". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mike Dew  
Secretary