# Florida Seaport System Plan

*Working Group Recommendations to the Department of Transportation*

final

# report

*prepared for*

**Florida Department of Transportation**

*prepared by*

**Seaport System Plan Working Group**

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# 1.0 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Overview

Florida is home to fourteen deep water seaports. These facilities represent a critical component of Florida's multi-modal transportation system, functioning as domestic and international trade gateways and regional economic engines. With ten of the fourteen seaports designated as part of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), and an eleventh designated as a planned emerging SIS hub, Florida recognizes the critical contributions these transportation hubs provide in helping achieve the goals defined in Florida's Transportation Plan (FTP).

Over the last five years, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has laid the groundwork for a comprehensive statewide seaport planning program. Work has focused on documenting current seaport conditions, measuring state benefits in seaport investments, developing an investment framework to support state investment decisions, and exploring the implications of changing trends in global trade. These initiatives are described in the following reports and are available on the FDOT Seaport Office's website:

- Florida's Seaports: Conditions, Competitiveness, and Statewide Policies;
- Evaluate Florida's 14 Deepwater Seaports' Economic Performance and the Return on Investment of State Funds;
- Strategic Seaport Investment Framework; and
- Global Trade Trends: Challenges and Opportunities for Florida's Ports.

The next logical step has been to develop the first FDOT-sponsored Seaport System Plan (the Plan). Creation of the Plan will build on previous efforts, fill critical data gaps and provide FDOT with a framework, consistent with information available for Florida's other transportation modes, to support multi-modal transportation planning activities and make informed investment decisions. The Plan will build off of and coordinate with the comprehensive master planning activities completed by each of the seaports.

Each of Florida's public seaports is independently owned, operated, managed, and planned, with collective efforts coordinated through the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic Development Council (FSTED) (of which FDOT is a member) and the Florida Ports Council (FPC). FSTED has allocated state funds to seaports since 1991. It has successfully allocated investments consistent with the priorities of the seaports as outlined in the individual seaport master plans. These allocations require a 50 percent seaport match. Each seaport establishes priorities within a pool of projects that have been found consistent with FDOT transportation impact requirements, consistent with Florida Department of

Community Affairs (DCA) land use impact requirements, and consistent with Office of Trade, Tourism and Economic Development (OTTED) economic impact requirements. Once funding allocations are approved by FSTED, each port allocates its funding to its priority project(s). The FSTED program is focused primarily on on-port projects.

State programs, other than FSTED, provide additional funding to Florida's seaports and seaport connectors. FDOT Seaport Office/District staff, in partnership with their seaports, identify eligible projects by specific funding program. Seaport funding matches vary by project type and program. The other state programs (including SIS) focus primarily on off-port connector or intermodal projects.

As described above, the elements of the state's seaport program work together to support a statewide seaport system. Blending these elements into a comprehensive system-wide approach helps ensure the necessary capacity is in place throughout Florida to handle the anticipated growth – growth both from Florida's increasing population and from the ability of its seaports to compete for discretionary cargo. Over the past two decades, there have been tremendous changes with respect to global and intermodal freight logistics, trading partners and services, trade volumes and cargo handling types, vessel design and deployment, marine infrastructure development and ownership, and inland transportation systems. While the recent economic downturn has led to reduced port volumes and a yet undefined recovery period, the long-term prospect for growth is still strong. As one of the seaports' funding partners, FDOT is responsible for ensuring available state transportation dollars are allocated to seaport projects that maximize regional and statewide public benefits.

## 1.2 Plan Development

The Plan will provide a blueprint that identifies potential demands, necessary investments, and possible funding scenarios; and formulates recommendations for future state transportation investments in our seaports. This blueprint will incorporate input from each of Florida's seaports and other stakeholders. The Seaport System Plan Working Group, described in more detail below, was formed specifically to engage these key stakeholders in the Plan, including the formulation of policy recommendations that reflect their input on a variety of technical issues.

The Plan will consider and integrate, as appropriate, the related work undertaken by FDOT, the FPC, and individual seaports. The Plan will be designed to build on the success of the FSTED program, as well as the other state programs. While the majority of on-port seaport infrastructure investments come from the seaports themselves, the state plays a critical role in cost sharing to promote passenger and freight mobility and economic prosperity throughout Florida, particularly through its significant investments in rail and highway connectors to the seaports. The development of the Plan provides an opportunity to further enhance the seaport system by growing the elements that work well and modifying and expanding those that can be improved. The Plan also provides an additional opportunity to promote the importance of Florida's seaports by providing a system-wide

program that allocates state transportation funds to seaport projects in a manner comparable to other modes of transportation.

Preparation of the Plan will include the following activities:

- Develop outreach and consensus-building;
- Develop state seaport system goals and objectives;
- Identify critical issues;
- Develop an overview of current seaport infrastructure and operations;
- Emphasize impact of seaport activity on Florida's economy;
- Compile/develop cargo and passenger capacities by port;
- Develop passenger and cargo forecasts for seaports by region, and evaluate various potential demand scenarios and investment strategies; and
- Develop recommendations for state transportation investment priorities for Florida's seaport system.

## 1.3 Seaport System Plan Working Group

The Seaport System Plan Working Group was formed to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the plan development process. Members are listed in Table 1. The group specifically was charged with developing policy recommendations for consideration and use by FDOT during its preparation of the Plan. The use of working groups has been an established practice of FDOT for other key initiatives, including the development of transportation policy and modal plans. It has proven an effective mechanism to engage public and private partners in a dialog about FDOT's role in identifying and addressing transportation system needs.

The Working Group met several times in person and via teleconference to develop policy recommendations to guide the Plan, to develop recommendations for the SIS Leadership Committee regarding the SIS update currently underway, and to review and discuss technical material to be used as input to the Plan. The Working Group has agreed to remain involved in Plan development through review of draft documents. Members further agreed to remain available to FDOT on an as-needed basis for the foreseeable future to advise on key issues that may arise.

This document describes the Seaport System Plan Working Group's policy recommendations presented to FDOT for consideration and use, as appropriate, during the development of the Plan. It also summarizes input provided to the SIS Leadership Committee and areas of technical discussion. It concludes with a description of next steps in development of the Plan.

## Table 1 Seaport System Plan Working Group Members

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# 2.0 Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations presented below are organized into five key areas, based upon Working Group input. These areas include:

- Capacity and Funding;
- Competitiveness and Business Opportunities;
- Permitting and Environment;
- Implications of Other Modal Plans and Connectivity; and
- Planning.

Recommendations for each area were developed by the Working Group through a consensus-building process. All members had equal opportunity to provide input and to participate in ranking discussions designed to revise policy statements until they captured the overall concurrence of the Working Group. The material presented in this section provides the final version of those statements, with a short narrative designed to further illustrate the purpose of each statement.

## Capacity and Funding

*Florida's seaport system planning program should continue to include two principal components, each of which should be grown over time: 1) the FSTED process should continue to be the primary focus for state investments in on-port improvements; and 2) other state investments in seaports (including SIS) should be focused principally on seaport intermodal and connector improvements.*

Florida's seaports receive state funds from several programs, primarily consisting of FSTED and SIS and Intermodal. Each of these programs has been developed to meet defined objectives, and as such operates most efficiently when meeting those objectives. The FSTED program was created by the Florida Legislature to provide Florida's fourteen deepwater seaports with a matching program to support a full range of on-port improvements (maintenance, capacity, operations, intermodal, etc). This program allows the seaports to identify and prioritize their eligible projects. FDOT participates in the review and evaluation of projects to help determine the eligible pool of projects. The SIS was created to prioritize state investments in inter-regional, interstate, and international movements of passengers and freight. SIS seaport investments focus on connectors (water, roadway, rail) and on–port intermodal projects. It is important these two elements remain distinct yet complementary moving forward.

*FDOT should provide an investment framework that prioritizes state seaport investments based on clear strategies and criteria, while ensuring equitable consideration of needs and priorities across all modes.*

FDOT is responsible for investing public dollars in transportation systems throughout Florida, across all modes of transportation. It is critical these investments be focused on projects that provide the greatest public benefits. This applies both within and across modes. To ensure the dollars FDOT invests in Florida's seaports represent the greatest public benefit, identified needs must be prioritized based on clear strategies and criteria that quantify economic, transportation, and environmental impacts. Application of FDOT's framework should be modified to reflect each of the two elements defined above. Within the FSTED program, FDOT should use the framework to help confirm the public benefit of projects, with each port continuing to prioritize its own projects. For all other state funding, the framework should be used to help prioritize improvements. In addition, a framework should be developed for each mode.

*FDOT should participate in individual seaport master plan development processes as a stakeholder to facilitate an understanding of and coordination with seaport investment decisions, particularly as they pertain to state investments in transportation infrastructure.*

Florida's seaports engage in a detailed master planning process that defines needs, improvement plans, and in some instances, a longer-term vision. These master plans are used to develop capital improvement programs (CIPs), which are updated annually. FDOT should be engaged in these activities as a stakeholder to ensure awareness of seaport and seaport connector needs, and to ensure an understanding of seaport growth plans. This coordination will enhance FDOT's ability to plan for Florida's seaport system, streamline its consistency review of 311 applications, and make more informed decisions about other seaport and seaport supportive investments of state transportation infrastructure dollars. There should be consistent participation across FDOT Districts; no new or expanded authority is suggested.

*FDOT should consider impacts on the supply chain when evaluating and prioritizing state seaport investments to improve efficiency and connectivity of seaport-related transportation movements.*

Seaports are transportation hubs connecting markets and modes. To evaluate the specific needs of a seaport, it is necessary to understand the patterns of the cargo passing through the seaport gateway. Our global economy is driven by the effective use of supply chains – which is, the combination of suppliers, processes, and modes used to move products to market. Logisticians develop supply chains based upon availability, cost, and reliability of services. Seaports, and their connection to landside transportation networks, are a critical component in a supply chain. It is important for FDOT to work with the seaports to determine the impact specific projects would have on key supply chains as part of its evaluation process. This will help prioritize specific projects, as well as the phasing of multiple projects to alleviate bottlenecks.

*FDOT should promote flexibility in existing and new seaport-related funding programs to help ports effectively and competitively respond to economic development opportunities.*

Seaports are economic development engines that require an ability to respond quickly to new business opportunities. While seaports develop a five-year capital improvement program, priorities are subject to change quickly as new opportunities arise. FDOT's funding program, based on the work program, is designed to allocate five years of funding. While there are mechanisms in place to allow for changes to the work program, FDOT strives to minimize the number of changes, particularly in the first few years. As a result, FDOT funding allocated to seaports is less flexible in some cases than the seaports would prefer. Increased flexibility of state funding sources and strategic planning will enhance the ability of seaports to achieve their missions, providing economic growth opportunities for Florida in response to changing market needs. This is particularly true for the FSTED program, which deals with on-port improvements in real-time to support new business opportunities. The FSTED program element should receive the greatest amount of flexibility; other state funding programs are better suited for incorporation into the state's work program.

*The Plan should provide statewide and regional cargo and passenger projections, in coordination with seaport master plans, demographic trends, and shifts in global trade patterns, to help guide state investment priorities.*

Each of Florida's seaports develops volume forecasts for cargo and passengers, as appropriate. These forecasts vary by base and forecast years across the seaports, and reflect projections based on "point-in-time" conditions and market capture. The purpose of developing statewide and regional projections is to provide the state with an understanding of capacity and need by type of cargo for Florida's seaport system. Key assumptions will be reviewed and evaluated to determine realistic regional and statewide totals. Seaports will be given the opportunity to review and comment on the forecasts and the assumptions used. FDOT will incorporate port-specific data, as appropriate, into the regional and state estimates to help guide state investment decisions. These forecasts will be updated as part of each Plan update. Seaports will be encouraged to review and use the regional and state forecasts as appropriate in their planning activities.

*FDOT should work with Florida's seaports to expand existing and pursue new funding sources to improve the competitiveness of Florida's diverse seaport system.*

Florida's seaports have developed a list of unfunded needs that exceeds current funding program capacity. As with all other transportation modes, needs outweigh available resources. The FPC, on behalf of the seaports, works through legislative initiatives (federal and state) to identify new funding opportunities. Many seaport and seaport connector projects have been funded through the SIS and are programmed for future funding as well. Currently, several seaports are pursuing grants through various federal economic stimulus programs. FDOT, with the seaports, should ensure existing programs are maximized and explore and support pursuit of new funding sources. Both elements of the existing seaport program (FSTED and other state investments) should be "grown" by the state over time to support on and off port improvements.

## Competitiveness and Business Opportunities

*FDOT should strive to ensure the seaport system has efficient and reliable access to SIS transportation corridors and hubs to facilitate competition for new business opportunities that provide public benefits.*

The SIS represents the foundation or backbone of Florida's transportation system. It focuses on providing interregional, interstate, and international mobility to Florida residents and businesses. Florida's seaports rely on the SIS for the movement of cargo and passengers to and from their facilities – whether it be through waterway, rail, or roadway connectors. As access to the SIS is a critical factor in a seaport's ability to provide competitive service to both domestic and international customers, it is important for FDOT to facilitate efficient and reliable access.

## Permitting and Environment

*FDOT should work in partnership with Florida seaports and other stakeholders to support facilitation of saltwater mitigation opportunities.*

Saltwater mitigation represents a significant challenge to seaports, both due to the cost and the limited options available. FDOT experiences the same challenges for its highway and bridge projects involving saltwater. While no mitigation banks exist today for saltwater mitigation activities, FDOT and the seaports should work together to share experiences and approaches, as relevant, to facilitate each others' initiatives. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is the lead agency for mitigation in Florida. FDOT and the seaports should continue to work with FDEP to promote acceptable solutions to mitigation requirements.

*FDOT should encourage seaport investments in green technologies – particularly those that complement state and national environmental programs and address climate change initiatives.*

Green technologies across all industries will continue to expand over the coming decades. Florida has begun to define a strategy to address climate change issues and the national energy policy continues to move towards one of sustainability. Opportunities exist at seaports to further the cause with programs like shore-side power, which significantly reduces vessel emissions by eliminating idling while at port. FDOT should encourage and support, as practical, seaport investments in green technologies and programs. This will contribute to both seaport and state goals of sustainability and quality of life.

## Implications for Other Modal Plans and Connectivity

*FDOT should use comparable methodologies and criteria to assess project impacts and establish priorities for state investments across modes.*

FDOT is responsible for selecting and prioritizing the state's transportation system investments. While each mode has its own characteristics, necessitating a customized methodology to measure the benefits of a particular project, it is important each state investment be evaluated with the same level (comparable) of vigor. This will ensure the state's resources are allocated to the best set of projects across modes.

*FDOT should establish and implement a multi-modal systems approach that strengthens modal connectivity and promotes the most effective use of the system.*

Florida's seaports function as transportation gateways and rely on other modes for the distribution of cargo. As a result, efficient intermodal connections are critical for seaports. With the creation of the SIS, the Florida Legislature acknowledged the importance of each mode and how each fits into the overall transportation system. SIS Connectors have been defined and designated to ensure these connections are a priority within the state's investment program. As FDOT continues to refine its transportation program, there should be a continued, and perhaps expanded, focus on multi-/inter-modalism. This would include ongoing coordination among the SIS and the modal plans, all of which are updated regularly.

*FDOT should support the development of a comprehensive freight program – with local, regional, and state components – that provides seaports with competitive access to markets.*

The global supply chain relies on an integrated, efficient, reliable freight transportation system that minimizes the impact of modal transfers and provides access to suppliers and consumers. Seaports rely on this system for the marketing of their services and the movement of their cargo. FDOT developed a Freight and Goods Mobility Plan that provided a profile of the state's freight transportation system in 2008 and now maintains current modal plans for each mode. The SIS includes corridors, connectors and hubs for all modes and guides state capacity investments. FDOT should use these resources, along with local and regional freight initiatives, to develop a comprehensive freight system.

*FDOT should work with seaports to coordinate state work program and port master plan development activities.*

FDOT updates its five-year work program annually. This involves creating a new "5th year" and making any required modifications to years one through four. There is an established schedule for this process. Understanding the schedule and opportunity for changes within the process is critical for FDOT partners. Florida's seaports update their master plans periodically and their CIPs annually. Projects identified for potential state match are submitted for consideration through the SeaCIP application process. While the work program and SeaCIP application processes overlap, there could be better coordination to ensure existing flexibility is used to the fullest extent possible.

## Planning

*FDOT should provide regional freight forums, in coordination with its partners, as part of modal system plan updates and other freight mobility initiatives, to support ongoing enhancements and improvements to Florida's freight transportation system.*

Outreach is an important element in statewide freight planning. It provides modal and community partners with the opportunity to identify key needs and opportunities. Freight transportation typically involves more than one mode. Regional forums bring all freight stakeholders together and provide opportunities for intermodal and multi-modal solutions to transportation issues. FDOT should use such forums to support modal system plan updates and an overall freight transportation program.

*FDOT should support and participate in the Florida Chamber's planned trade flow analysis to identify key opportunities and needs driving Florida's competitiveness and to support on-going investments in Florida's seaport system.*

The Florida Chamber currently is working to develop a scope of work for a statewide trade flow analysis. This analysis is anticipated to cover domestic and international trade flows across all modes. It will identify key trading partners and key commodity flow patterns, which will be used to help identify opportunities for the state and help determine investment priorities.

*FDOT should integrate seaport system planning activities into a state-wide multimodal freight mobility planning program that addresses overall freight mobility needs, with an emphasis on connectivity between modes.*

Each modal office currently develops and maintains its own system plan. These plans identify system characteristics and current conditions and identify and evaluate needs at the regional and state level in partnership with their system providers and stakeholders. In 2008, the Seaport Office developed a Freight and Goods Mobility Plan, which integrated system characteristics from each mode to develop a comprehensive description of the freight transportation system as a resource to be used in SIS planning, as well as for updates of the FTP. While it provided a one-stop shop for a system description at one point in time, individual modes have their own modal planning requirements and operate independently in the development of needs and priorities. In addition, seaports, airports, railroads, and some local/regional transportation agencies (MPOs, FDOT Districts, etc.) have developed lists of freight needs through completion of freight plans, capital improvement programs, and master plans. FDOT should consider integrating seaport system planning activities (along with freight planning components from other modes) into a comprehensive freight mobility planning program that recognizes and builds off the significant volume of work completed at the regional level by its transportation partners.

# 3.0 SIS Update Recommendations

In 2009, the FDOT began its first major update to the SIS. Annual minor updates have been used to evaluate hubs and corridors as they relate to established thresholds. This major update is the first time since creation of the SIS in 2003 that the thresholds themselves are being reviewed. The SIS Leadership Committee was formed to help guide this process. As part of their outreach activities, the Seaport System Plan Working Group was asked to provide recommendations relating to Florida's seaport system. The Working Group developed the following recommendations, which have been presented to the SIS Leadership Committee for review and consideration.

## Designation Issues

**Should changes be made to the number of ports designated as SIS or Emerging SIS?**

Florida's seaports represent strategic infrastructure for freight and passenger movements in Florida. To many Working Group members, all seaports currently designated are strategic and should be included in the SIS, while others suggested a reduction in the number of seaports should be considered to meet the original intent of the SIS.

*Ultimately, the Working Group believes the SIS should include those ports playing a strategic role today as well as those which have the potential to do so in the future. Ports unable to meet criteria and thresholds over the long term should not be included.*

**Should SIS and Emerging SIS remain separate designations?**

The Working Group questioned the origin of the Emerging SIS, as well as the need for two categories. Most felt there was no practical need for two categories from a designation perspective, but specified if they were merged into one category it would require new thresholds which ensured emerging facilities with long term viability remained designated.

The Working Group recommends retaining SIS and Emerging SIS components and recommends consideration of thresholds which change over time to ensure a strategic focus; in addition, the Working Group recommends funding be prioritized and allocated across designated ports based on criteria which measure strategic value.

## Hubs

**Should new freight facilities be designated?**

New types of freight facilities are being proposed and/or developed at various locations in Florida. These include freight villages, inland ports, and intermodal logistics centers (ILCs). There are no existing criteria for these types of facilities, although there are for specific elements of them (rail intermodal terminals). In some cases these facilities are linked to or associated with existing SIS hubs. Flexibility will be required to evaluate relevance to the SIS.

*The Working Group recommends the department adopt SIS criteria and thresholds during this SIS Update to be used to evaluate new facility types in the future; designation should focus on needed connectors or on-facility transportation components (rail intermodal terminal). The criteria should be consistent with other modal thresholds. For example, an intermodal container transfer facility (ICTF) developed at an ILC should be evaluated the same as other ICTFs (rail intermodal terminals).*

**Are the cruise thresholds now established in SIS adequate?**

Cruise passenger thresholds are based upon a percentage of the total number of cruise passengers in the U.S. Florida's seaports dominate the cruise industry nationally and internationally. As such, it is not difficult for many Florida seaports to meet the current cruise passenger thresholds for SIS (> 250,000 passenger per year) and/or Emerging SIS (> 50,000 passengers per year).

*The Working Group recommends the thresholds SIS and Emerging SIS designation be revised. A higher threshold of 500,000 for SIS and 250,000 for Emerging SIS is suggested to better represent the amount of cruise passengers frequenting Florida's main cruise ports annually. SIS ports would be represented by the national/international leaders; Emerging SIS would capture the second tier of cruise operations, focused on ports showing a viable cruise operation over the long term.*

**Should designation criteria be developed for ports which do not have home-ported cruise ships?**

Currently there are no criteria specifically for ports-of-call. Most Working Group members questioned the need to change the current process. However, if criteria were developed, landside connectors should not be eligible for funding. Waterside connectors (channels, turning basins, berths) should be considered.

*The Working Group recommends port-of-call cruise facilities remain ineligible for SIS designation.*

**Should SIS eligibility continue to include both private and public facilities at a SIS port?**

Ports consist of a mix of public and private facilities. Private companies often develop the terminals, sometimes leasing the land, and sometimes owning the land. The port authorities focus on the transportation infrastructure, including channels, turning basins, berths, bulkheads, rail yards, internal roadways, and security. Deepwater seaports are defined as the fourteen ports identified by Chapter 311 in Florida Statutes. Each port has a defined jurisdictional area consisting of a mix of public and private components.

*The Working Group recommends SIS eligibility continue to be limited to terminals and connectors meeting specific thresholds which fall within a defined port jurisdictional area, as defined in port master plans.*

## Connectors

**Should designation criteria for highway connectors to ports be adjusted?**

Florida ports have a range of highway connector requirements. Some have separate passenger and freight terminals, others have multiple freight terminals. Currently, ports can have multiple connectors if they have separate cargo and cruise operations and/or one way street pairs providing terminal access. Concern exists about the lack of eligibility for additional connectors within a port's jurisdictional area. On one hand, there are concerns about diluting the SIS by designating additional connector facilities; from the other perspective, connectors should be provided to any terminal or complex meeting designation criteria.

*The Working Group recommends the impact of adding additional connectors be evaluated. Few ports have a need for additional connectors; those representing major ports anticipate significant growth in the coming years. This would require the development of additional criteria to identify terminal thresholds or truck traffic thresholds which justify SIS connector designation.*

**Should drayage routes be designated as SIS connectors?**

Connectors currently provide hubs with connections to corridors. For seaports, direct roadway connections to other SIS hubs (rail intermodal terminals) can represent a significant movement – a movement which should be supported by public policy makers.

*The Working Group recommends connectors between a SIS seaport hub and a SIS rail hub acting as a drayage route be designated as SIS connectors. The criteria and thresholds for this type of connector should be determined during this SIS Update.*

**Are there any other new connectors which should be considered?**

Connectors currently provide hubs with connections to corridors. For seaports, direct roadway connections to other SIS hubs (international airports, rail passenger stations) can represent a significant movement in support of cruise operations, such as the proposed

People Mover between Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and Port Everglades.

*The Working Group recommends hub to hub connectors for seaport/air/rail movements be considered; this would include transit oriented projects which focus on moving international, interstate, or interregional passengers; new designation criteria would need to be developed.*

## Waterways

**Should changes be made to current designation criteria for waterways?**

Some of Florida's waterways currently designated as part of the SIS were not designated for meeting passenger or freight volume thresholds, but because they were a coastal shipping lane and/or intracoastal waterway. Other inland waterways were evaluated based upon specific volume thresholds. Continued inclusion of low volume waterways was supported, as long as investments focused on measurable public benefits.

*The Working Group recommends the existing thresholds and criteria be maintained as is; funding allocation criteria should focus investments on high priority public benefit projects.*

## Funding and Eligibility Issues

**How should funding for SIS connectors be reviewed and prioritized?**

Seaports are hubs connected to their markets by water, rail, and highway connectors. These connector types should be evaluated on a level playing field to ensure the best overall project is prioritized. Connector projects currently are funded out of modal allocations (within the SIS); for example, roadway connectors are funded by the highway program; dredging projects are funded out of the seaport program; rail projects are funded out of the rail program. Within each of these programs, different priorities will be established based upon district-wide and statewide needs. For a particular port with multiple connector needs (across modes), one may be more of a priority (bottleneck) than another.

*The Working Group recommends the SIS evaluate individual port connector projects (water, rail, and highway) as a group to ensure the greatest need is prioritized for a particular port. This will allow the highest priority (bottleneck) be addressed first.*

**Should funding eligibility for SIS-designated seaports be changed?**

Florida's seaports meet specific criteria to be designated as part of the SIS. Once designated as "strategic facilities" there are restrictions on the types of projects which are eligible for funding. Questions arose as to why there was a need for limiting projects if the

facility was designated as strategic. The primary responsibility of the SIS program is to fund capacity expansion projects. Ownership and maintenance responsibility was discussed; FDOT's primary responsibility is to maintain the infrastructure it owns; other facilities' owners are responsible for maintenance of their facilities.

The Working Group recommends SIS project eligibility be expanded to include on- and off-port transportation facilities which expand capacity at a SIS port. This would include all currently-eligible projects such as on-port roadway and rail improvements as well as dredging, and would expand the eligibility to include bulkhead projects which expand capacity.

# 4.0 Other Working Group Input and Next Steps

## 4.1 Other Working Group Input

While the reason for the creation of the Seaport System Plan Working Group was to provide policy recommendations to FDOT to help guide the development of the Plan, the Working Group has been asked to provide input and expertise on a variety of more technical topics. The input provided during these discussions is not summarized in this report, but will be used by FDOT to support the Plan development. In addition, the Working Group will be engaged, on an as-needed basis, in the process as the Plan is developed. Key areas of input, received to date, include:

- **Regional and statewide forecasts.** Regional and statewide forecasts were developed and presented to the Working Group. The forecasts were based on the latest data available from master plans and CIPs. Seaports were engaged in a review process to ensure consistency with port specific numbers as well as review possible futures for Florida. This included discussion about the length of the current downturn and the subsequent recovery period.
- **Competitive niches for Florida's ports.** Similar growth data were prepared for domestic competitors in the Gulf and South Atlantic regions; these numbers were compared to Florida's numbers. Working Group members provided (and still are providing) input on the potential opportunities for Florida ports based upon shifts in global trends and the developments planned and underway by competing states.
- **Funding program alternatives.** Funding program alternatives were identified as a key area of concern by the Working Group. Four key areas identified include: flexibility of the program as it relates to work program development and modification; eligibility of improvements by funding source (on/off-port, capacity/maintenance); responsibility for project prioritization based upon funding program in question (confirm positive benefit to state for 311/FSTED vs. developing a prioritized list of projects for other state funding sources); and funding level by program (ability to grow individual funding programs impacts all other considerations).
- **Evaluation criteria for state seaport investments.** Ports are known to be strong economic development entities, often representing one of the largest economic generators within their respective communities. They also play a critical role in international and domestic trade, serving as gateways to Florida's multimodal transportation system. The Working Group provided input and discussion on the

types of criteria which should be used to evaluate the impacts of seaport improvements to help document the public benefits and prioritize state investments.

## 4.2 Next Steps

The Working Group's scheduled meetings are complete with the adoption of the Policy Recommendations report on September 29, 2009. However, the Working Group has agreed to remain available to comment on the draft Plan, as well as be available to FDOT for the foreseeable future to provide advice and input on seaport-related issues which may arise. Foreseeable activities include:

- Submit Final Policy Recommendations report to FDOT Secretary for consideration during development of the Seaport System Plan;
- Stakeholder review of draft Seaport System Plan (policy and implementation elements) in late 2009;
- Stakeholders' continued input on key technical issues through end of 2009;
- Review results of Trade Flow Study in Spring 2010;
- Remain available on-call to FDOT for future consultation and Plan updates.