

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary presents the key findings of an analysis supporting the proposed interchange justification for Central Boulevard with Interstate 95 (I-95) in Palm Beach County, Florida, and a discussion of the eight Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Policies associated with justification.

### Project Description

The proposed project will improve regional mobility by constructing an interchange at I-95 and Central Boulevard in northern Palm Beach County. An interchange at this location was in the 2035 LRTP Needs Plan, and is shown in the 2040 LRTP Cost Feasible Plan. Central Boulevard currently crosses over, but does not provide access to, I-95 at this location.

The proposed Central Boulevard interchange would be located approximately 1.0 mile north of the existing Military Trail (SR 809) partial interchange, and 2.0 miles south of the existing Donald Ross Road interchange. The design year for this assessment is 2040. The area in which regional mobility would be improved is depicted in Figure ES-1.

### Introduction

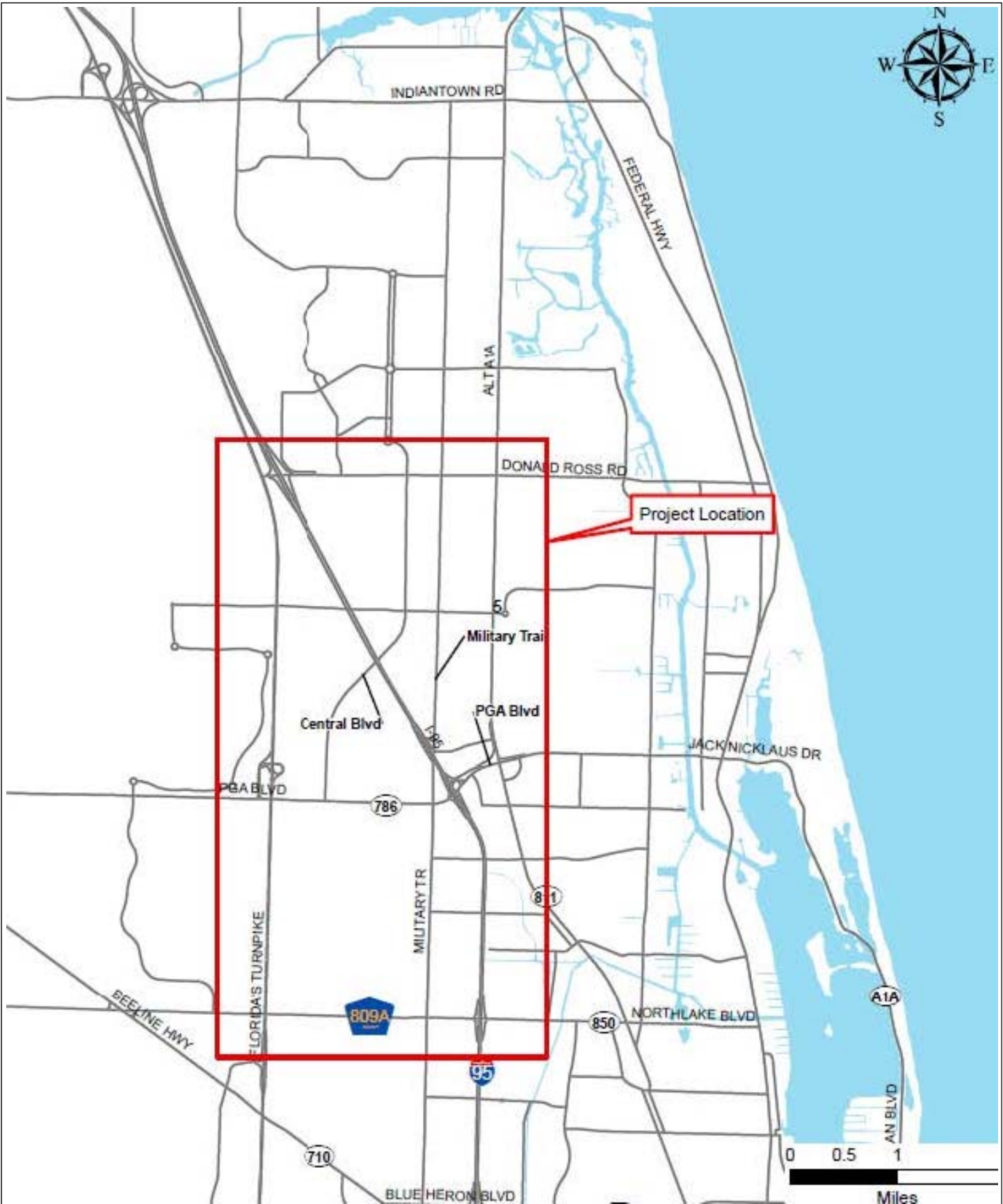
The Florida Department of Transportation (Department) is seeking infrastructure solutions that could reduce congestion and improve mobility in the northern Palm Beach County area, within the City of Palm Beach Gardens. As the major north-south artery in north Palm Beach County, Interstate 95/State Road 9 (I-95) (county section number 93220) access influences adjacent highway network roadway operating conditions. This combined with existing high density commercial/retail development of regional impact along with future planned development have created the need for additional transportation solutions. One solution that the Department is exploring is added interchange access within the City of Palm Beach Gardens.

This Interchange Justification Report documents study efforts to explore options for new interchange access along I-95 from PGA Boulevard

(Milepost 36.969) northerly to Donald Ross Road (milepost 40.385). The study area is shown on Figure ES-1. The study area is bounded on the south by Northlake Boulevard (milepost 34.783), on the north by Donald Ross Road (40.385), on the west by Florida's Turnpike and on the east by Lake Victoria Gardens Boulevard. Along I-95, existing interchanges exist at the following locations (Operational Spacing in Table ES-1):

- Full Access Interchange at Northlake Boulevard (milepost 34.783)
- Full Access Interchange at SR 786/PGA Boulevard (milepost 36.969)
- Partial Access Interchange to and from the north at SR 809/Military Trail (milepost 37.359)
- Full Access Interchange at Donald Ross Road (milepost 40.385)

An interchange on Florida's Turnpike at PGA Boulevard exists at the western edge of the study area.



Project Name:



**SR 9 / I-95 at PGA Boulevard/  
Central Boulevard**  
Project Development & Environmental Study  
FM No. 413265-1-22-01



Exhibit Name:

**Project Location Map**

Report Title:

**Interchange Justification Report**

Figure No.

**ES-1**

Page No.

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Date:

**Oct 13, 2015**

**Table ES-1 - Operational Interchange Spacing Along I-95 (SR 9)**

Cross Street	Centerline Milepost	Northbound Interchange Spacing	Southbound Interchange Spacing
Northlake Boulevard	34.783	1.553	1.599
PGA Boulevard	36.969		
Military Trail	37.359	2.158	2.034
Donald Ross Road	40.385		
Operational Interchange Spacing is defined as the distance between upstream on-ramp gore and downstream off-ramp gore locations.			

### Purpose and Need/Existing Condition

The positive economic growth in north Palm Beach County has brought, and will continue to bring, congestion and other associated stress to the regional transportation network. I-95 currently operates at an acceptable level-of-service; particularly with the newly widened mainline through the limits of this study. Other State Highways in the area, however, suffer significant congestion and delay, led by SR 786/PGA Boulevard and SR 809/Military Trail. A number of studies conducted by both Palm Beach County and the Department indicate that these congested conditions will continue and worsen into the future.

Palm Beach County has identified constrained facilities within their jurisdiction from both an intersection and segment standpoint. Within the study limits these constrained facilities are:

- Interchange of Florida’s Turnpike and PGA Boulevard;
- Intersection of Central Boulevard at PGA Boulevard;
- The intersection of Military Trail at PGA Boulevard; and
- PGA Boulevard from Florida’s Turnpike to US 1.

These Constrained Roadways At Lower Level of Service, referred to as CRALLS locations by Palm Beach County, are an indication of limitations to regional mobility. In addition to these documented findings of Palm Beach County, the Florida Department of Transportation performed an operational study of the roadway network in this area, entitled, "I-95 Area Wide Mobility Study", in 2011 and found that many of the roadway segments, because of intersection failures, as shown in Table ES-2, will continue to break down and have below acceptable levels of service.

Some of these capacity failures will begin as early as 2015, with major congestion issues coming on line in the early 2020's. Even with traffic operational improvements to maximize the capacity of the network in the region; levels of service will continue to fall below standards (Level-of-service D) for the state highway system in the area. Data collection conducted as a part of this study reinforces this increase in demand and decline in level of service (LOS).

**Table ES-2 - Findings of the I-95 Area Wide Mobility Study**

Intersection	Intersection Condition	Operating Condition
PGA Boulevard at Florida's Turnpike	No Build	Fails by 2025
	Short Term Improvements	Fails by 2035
PGA Boulevard at Central Boulevard	No Build	Fails by 2025
	Short Term Improvements	Fails by 2035
PGA Boulevard at Military Trail	No Build	Fails by 2015
	Short Term Improvements	Fails by 2025
PGA Boulevard at I-95 SB Off Ramp	No Build	Fails by 2025
	Short Term Improvements	No strategy identified
PGA Boulevard at I-95 NB Off Ramp	No Build	Fails by 2025
	Short Term Improvements	No strategy identified

### Build Alternatives Selection Process

In selecting build alternatives to consider, a tiered selection process was used to screen from a large (26) group of initial concepts to a finite number of distinct alternatives. Three (3) tiers were employed starting with Tier 1 which qualitatively screened concepts for flaws or other conditions that would eliminate that concept from further consideration. Tier 2 examined six (6) build alternatives surviving the Tier 1 process along with the No Build alternative. Tier 2 involved additional transportation related quantitative analysis including a comparison of arterial delay benefits compared to the No Build condition. The final Tier 3 distinguished between a limited number of build alternatives based on more complete quantitative measures.

The build alternatives thus selected and summarized below are depicted in Appendix O.

## Final Alternatives

### No Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative describes the conditions that will exist for the study area if no improvements are considered except for planned/committed improvements.

The only addition to existing lane calls within the study area for the future No-Build analyses was the improvement of Hood Rd. to a four lane section (FY17). Existing signal timing and phasing were preserved in all intersections.

The No-Build intersection geometries included improvements funded in adopted work programs.

### Alternative 2

Alternative 2 includes a new diamond interchange at Central Boulevard. It also creates a collector-distributor roadway system adjacent to northbound and southbound SR 9/I-95. This alternative removes the direct connection of the ramps at Military Trail to I-95. Northbound Military Trail on ramp traffic merges with northbound Central Boulevard off ramp traffic and the weaving movement between the two occurs on the northbound collector road. Similarly, Central Boulevard southbound on ramp traffic merges with southbound Military off ramp traffic and the weaving movement between the two occurs on the on the southbound collector road.

On the arterial street network within the study area, this alternative is projected to provide a reduction of 1.4 million hours of delay annually, of which 533,000 hours are at the existing interchange ramp terminal intersections.

### Alternative 3

Alternative 3 includes a new diamond interchange at Central Boulevard. It also includes braided ramps between Military Trail and Central Boulevard to eliminate the weaving sections there. In both directions the Central Boulevard ramps (northbound off, southbound on) pass over top of the Military Trail ramps (northbound on, southbound off). This alternative differs from Alternative 2 only in the treatment of ramp maneuvers on I-95. Consequently, as in Alternative 2, on the arterial street network within the

study area, this alternative is projected to provide a reduction of 1.4 million hours of delay annually, of which 533,000 hours are at the existing interchange ramp terminal intersections.

The resulting operational spacing including the new interchange is shown in Table ES-3

**Table ES-3 – Build Alternatives Operational Interchange Spacing Along I-95 (SR 9)**

Alternative 2			
Cross Street	Centerline Milepost	Northbound Interchange Spacing	Southbound Interchange Spacing
Military Trail	34.783	0.487	0.779
Central Boulevard	38.410	0.797	0.764
Donald Ross Road	40.385		
Alternative 3			
Cross Street	Centerline Milepost	Northbound Interchange Spacing	Southbound Interchange Spacing
Military Trail	34.783	0.345	0.310
Central Boulevard	38.410	0.797	0.764
Donald Ross Road	40.385		
Operational Interchange Spacing is defined as the distance between upstream on-ramp gore and downstream off-ramp gore locations.			



## Conclusions

The benefit of the build alternatives is the reduction in delay on the arterial streets that results from the shifting of traffic from the existing interchanges to the new one, an improvement in regional mobility. The estimated present value of that delay savings is such a substantial multiple of the estimated cost (3.6 to 6.5 – see Table ES-4) that it should be a warranting factor in the decision to add interchange access at Central Boulevard and I-95.

**Table ES-4 – Cost Benefit Relationship of Build Alternatives Based on 2040 Delay Benefits**

Alternative	Description of Alternative	Benefit- Cost Ratio		Recommendation
		Total Study Area	Interchanges Only	
2	Full Diamond Interchange at Central Boulevard and I-95 w C/D Roads	6.5	2.4	Consider This Build Alternative Further
3	Full Diamond Interchange at Central Boulevard with Braided Ramps	3.6	1.3	Consider This Build Alternative Further

Based on the above conclusions, it is recommended that new interchange access be provided at Central Boulevard and I-95. The specific interchange that should be implemented should be based on the conclusions reached once a NEPA study is completed. Both build alternatives provide similar transportation mobility benefits, and therefore the environmental issues should drive the decision making between the two build alternatives. Therefore it is recommended that both alternatives move forward into a Project Development & Environmental Study phase of development for analysis and final selection of the preferred alternative.

## FHWA 8 INTERSTATE ACCESS POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERSTATE 95 AND CENTRAL BOULEVARD

8.1 *The need being addressed by the request cannot be adequately satisfied by existing interchanges to the Interstate, and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the desired access, nor can they be reasonably improved (such as access control along surface streets, improving traffic control, modifying ramp terminals and intersections, adding turn bays or lengthening storage) to satisfactorily accommodate the design-year traffic demands (23 CFR 625.2(a)).*

### **Response:**

The primary need for the I-95 and Central Boulevard interchange is to provide improved regional connectivity to the population in northern Palm Beach County (PBC), and it is not being proposed to specifically address an existing or proposed interstate deficiency. The current number and locations of interchanges serving the Palm Beach Gardens area concentrates the demand for access and consequent congestion in the area of the PGA Boulevard interchange. This area is dominated by major commercial and office development east and west of I-95 and adjacent to SR 786/PGA Boulevard. These developments are dense with major shopping malls and other large “big box” shopping centers located east of I-95 and both north and south of SR 786/PGA Boulevard. West of I-95 significant office land uses exist adjacent to the SR 786/PGA Boulevard interchange with I-95.

Commercial/retail/leisure land uses exist further west of the I-95 interchange north and south of SR 786/PGA Boulevard. Development along SR 786/PGA Boulevard is near build out, but parcels do exist for additional development, North of SR 786/PGA Boulevard and west of I-95, single-family and multi-family residential properties dominate the land use. This includes a major golf course within the residential areas. This residential land use extends northerly to Donald Ross Road.

This intense mixed land use pattern produces heavy travel demand which exceeds or will exceed capacity within the next five to 15 years. In fact, two of the most congested roadway links in Palm Beach County fall within the study area. They are SR 786/PGA Boulevard from Florida’s Turnpike to the west to Lake Victoria Road to the east of I-95 and Military Trail from PGA Boulevard to Hood Road. PGA

Boulevard is on the congested roadway list that Palm Beach County calls CRALLS (Constrained Roadways at Lower Levels of Service). This designation and the absence of PGA Boulevard from the MPO's 2040 Desires Plan acknowledges that avoiding the damage to local businesses that flank the road that would be involved in any further widening must outweigh the congestion relief effect of such widening.

To support the current level of service for the roadways that fall within the study area the Florida Department studied the existing conditions of these roadways in 2011 and published a report (I-95 Areawide Mobility Study) on the existing, short-term and long-term anticipated operating conditions in the area. The report identified several area intersections that would be unable to provide acceptable level of service in the design year 2035 even with additional turn lanes.

The operational analysis conducted as a part of this interchange proposal reinforced the findings of the 2011 report. The area arterials and intersections will be over capacity now or in the near term and ITS, intersection improvements, or transportation system management strategies will not provide sufficient improvement to address this congestion.

In this study, there were no instances identified where adding interchange ramp lanes could benefit arterial congestion. The heaviest ramp volumes that end at signalized intersections show future demand volumes that provide acceptable level of service given their cross section.

In addition to the residential property a large tract of vacant land exists from Hood Road north to Donald Ross Road. This property is planned for development and will include land uses compatible with the medical facilities at the Scripps Research Facility. This development will include research facilities and office space, as well as residential and retail/commercial development to support this area's land use.

An additional benefit of an interchange at Central Boulevard is improved emergency response time for incidents which occur on the stretch of I-95 between the PGA Boulevard and Donald Ross Road.

The No Build (without Central Boulevard interchange) operations analysis for the design (2040) year indicates that several links and intersections in the study area will operate no better than LOS E with a number of the major intersections at LOS F

for both AM and PM peak hours. The mainline of I-95 is projected to operate at acceptable levels of service for all sections from PGA Boulevard and Donald Ross Road. Some ramps and ramp terminals for I-95 will show unacceptable levels of service.

Central Boulevard is projected to operate with an acceptable level of service. However, a critical segment is southbound Central Boulevard just north of PGA Boulevard is projected to operate at LOS F for the No Build condition due to the conditions at PGA Boulevard. With intersection improvements at PGA Boulevard the LOS can be improved on Central Boulevard.

While the build alternatives continue to show sections of PGA Boulevard and Military Trail with LOS conditions less than LOS D, the build alternatives do show significant improvements in delay conditions along the study area arterials. The delay in the No Build condition amounts to approximately 3.6 million hours per year. The Build Alternatives improve that to approximately 2.2 million hours, an overall improvement in delay of 1.4 million hours each year. From a cost benefit perspective, this reduced delay provides at least a 3.6 benefit-cost ratio between Build and No Build alternatives. The Build alternative provides a 40 percent improvement in delay over the No Build conditions. These operating conditions demonstrate a significant benefit to regional mobility and warrant the addition of the Central Boulevard interchange.

*8.2 The need being addressed by the request cannot be adequately satisfied by reasonable transportation system management (such as ramp metering, mass transit, and HOV facilities), geometric design, and alternative improvements to the Interstate without the proposed change(s) in access (23 CFR 625.2(a)).*

**Response:**

This north Palm Beach County area has been studied by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) recently. This included a 2011 Mobility Study of I-95 and the adjacent arterial network. All of these prior studies concluded that the regional arterial network was over-burdened due to land use patterns and that anything short of major widening of these arterials will only lead to short term mobility improvements. The predominant problem discovered by these studies was the SR

786/PGA Boulevard corridor from Florida's Turnpike to east of I-95 suffered significant congestion in both the AM and PM peak periods. There were two improvement strategies that could address this congestion. They include this interchange proposal for new access at Central Boulevard or the widening of SR 786/PGA Boulevard over the entire length of PGA Boulevard within the study area.

Qualitative evaluation of these strategies shows significantly more cost and environmental impact associated with the widening of SR 786/PGA Boulevard as compared to a new interchange in the Central Boulevard location. These impacts associated with widening of PGA Boulevard included significant social impacts related to right-of-way acquisition and business relocation, physical environmental impact associated with potentially contaminated properties. The linear nature of the widening of PGA Boulevard would have miles of impact to one of the most significant corridors in northern Palm Beach County over a more localized improvement such as an interchange with minor right of way impacts.

*8.3 An operational and safety analysis has concluded that the proposed change in access does not have a significant adverse impact on the safety and operation of the Interstate facility (which includes mainline lanes, existing, new, or modified ramps, ramp intersections with crossroad) or on the local street network based on both the current and the planned future traffic projections. The analysis shall, particularly in urbanized areas, include at least the first adjacent existing or proposed interchange on either side of the proposed change in access (23 CFR 625.2(a), 655.603(d) and 771.111(f)). The crossroads and the local street network, to at least the first major intersection on either side of the proposed change in access, shall be included in this analysis to the extent necessary to fully evaluate the safety and operational impacts that [[Page 43745]] the proposed change in access and other transportation improvements may have on the local street network (23 CFR 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)). Requests for a proposed change in access must include a description and assessment of the impacts and ability of the proposed changes to safely and efficiently collect, distribute and accommodate traffic on the Interstate facility, ramps, intersection of ramps with crossroad, and local street network (23 CFR 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)). Each request must also include a conceptual plan of the type and*

*location of the signs proposed to support each design alternative (23 U.S.C. 109(d) and 23 CFR 655.603(d)).*

**Response:**

The analyses conducted for this proposal demonstrate that the proposed interchange at Central Boulevard & I-95 will have an overall improvement in regional mobility. This improvement in regional mobility will include no significant degradation of operating speeds on the mainline of I-95 within the study limits, for either of the two build alternatives evaluated as compared to the 2040 No Build condition. The ramps and ramp terminal intersections with Central Boulevard for the build alternatives will not generate queues that will affect the mainline of I-95, with more than sufficient storage capacity available in the future year to accommodate the anticipated demand.

The operational analyses demonstrate that the proposed ramps and ramp terminal at Central Boulevard will operate at acceptable Levels of Service in the design (2040) year. Further, with the construction of either of the proposed interchange alternatives at Central Boulevard, the operating Levels of Service for the ramp terminals at the adjacent interchanges of SR 786/PGA Boulevard and Donald Ross Road will operate at the same or improved levels of service over the No-Build condition.

Analysis of the area's arterials was also performed to identify the redistribution of traffic that would occur with a new interchange at Central Boulevard and the associated delay benefits. The result of this operational analysis of the arterials indicated that reduction of delay between the 2040 No-Build and Build alternatives will provide significant benefit to the traveling public. The preliminary estimate of the benefit/cost relationship of this delay reduction ranges from 3.6 to 6.5 depending on the Build alternative.

The interchange proposal demonstrates significant diversion of traffic from the congested areas along PGA Boulevard and Military Trail to the northern roadway network accessed by a new interchange at Central Boulevard. This proposed interchange at I-95 and Central Boulevard improves regional mobility and provides more direct connectivity for northern Palm Beach County, and more specifically, Palm Beach Gardens. Congestion on the arterial network, including SR 786/PGA

Boulevard and SR 809/Military Trail, cannot be mitigated by ITS, Transportation System Management techniques or other lane geometric improvements sufficiently to accomplish these goals.

It is well documented in engineering publications (eg. *Highway Safety Improvement Program Manual*) that safety is related to traffic exposure. The area arterials from which traffic is diverted should experience improved traffic safety conditions since both their traffic volumes and congestion levels will be reduced. This reduction in crash exposure should reflect a potential increase in safety along the study corridors.

A secondary but important benefit will be an improved emergency response to incidents along I-95 as well as all other health/safety emergency access time to the surrounding communities. The 40 percent reduction in delay along the area's arterials provides a reduction in travel time for fire and police responders, based on the location of area hospitals and police stations.

*8.4 The proposed access connects to a public road only and will provide for all traffic movements. Less than "full interchanges" may be considered on a case-by-case basis for applications requiring special access for managed lanes (e.g., transit, HOVs, HOT lanes) or park and ride lots. The proposed access will be designed to meet or exceed current standards (23 CFR 625.2(a), 625.4(a)(2), and 655.603(d)).*

**Response:**

The proposed interchange will connect to Central Boulevard, a County Road. The proposed interchange will also provide all traffic movements and be designed and constructed to meet all current and future standards issued prior to the preparation of design plans for the interchange.

*8.5 The proposal considers and is consistent with local and regional land use and transportation plans. Prior to receiving final approval, all requests for new or revised access must be included in an adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan, in the adopted Statewide or Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (STIP or TIP), and the Congestion Management Process within transportation management*

areas, as appropriate, and as specified in 23 CFR part 450, and the transportation conformity requirements of 40 CFR parts 51 and 93.

**Response:**

**Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**

The Palm Beach County MPO has included an interchange at Central Boulevard as one of its priorities since 2005, and has included it in their last two Long Range Transportation Plans. The proposed interchange was identified as a needed project in the 2035 LRTP, and the interchange is included in the Cost Feasible Plan in the 2040 LRTP adopted in October of 2014.

Funding for design is programmed in the MPO TIP and STIP for the 2015/2016 Fiscal Year (FM# 413265-1).

An interchange at the proposed location is consistent with the Goals and Objectives of the adopted 2040 LRTP. Numerous objectives indicate the need to implement the improvements identified in the LRTP. More specifically the interchange is consistent with the following.

**LRTP Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1:** Provide an efficient and reliable vehicular transportation system

**Objective 1.1:** Reduce the number of thoroughfare intersections with critical sum > 1400.

**Goal 5:** Preserve and Enhance Social and Environmental Resources

**Objective 5.5:** Decrease per capita daily Vehicles Miles Travelled (VMT/person)

**Comprehensive Plan**

The proposed interchange is consistent with the PALM BEACH COUNTY Comprehensive Plan. More specifically the interchange is consistent with the following Goals, Objectives, and Policies:



## **Goal – Transportation Element**

It is the GOAL of Palm Beach County to provide an interconnected multimodal transportation system which moves people, goods, and services in a safe, efficient, convenient and economical manner with minimal adverse impact to the environment.

**Objective 1.1:** Level of Service Standards - By 2035, the countywide transportation system shall operate at the adopted Level of Service standard.

**Policy 1.1-d:** The County shall continue to use FDOT's Generalized Level of Service Tables that address capacity standards

**Policy 1.1-e:** The County shall utilize the best available data and methodologies for the purpose of determining traffic circulation system needs.

**Objective 1.3:** Management of Transportation System

**Policy 1.3-i:** The County will maintain policies and programs which ensure that the overall transportation system meets the County's level of service criteria in order to provide viable alternatives to the Florida Intrastate Highway System & the Strategic Intermodal System, and to protect their interregional and intrastate functions.

## **Goal 4: Protection of Air Quality**

It is the GOAL of Palm Beach County to protect human life and native ecosystems by controlling air pollution through initiatives for the protection of air quality.

**Objective 4.1:** Air Quality

The County shall maintain federally adopted air quality levels, as identified by National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

## Strategic Intermodal System

The proposed interchange is included in the FDOT SIS Cost Feasible Plan, and is consistent with the following Goals and Objectives of the FDOT SIS Strategic Plan:

### SIS Goal

A safer and more secure transportation system for residents, businesses and visitors.

The proposed interchange will improve emergency response times to incidents that occur along I-95 between PGA Boulevard and Donald Ross Road. The interchange will also provide an additional opportunity for residents of northern Palm Beach County to access I-95 if an evacuation is ordered.

### SIS Goal

A stronger economy through enhanced mobility for people and freight.

#### **Objective:** Interregional Connectivity

Interregional trips that involve I-95 do not begin or end on it. The proposed interchange will help support enhanced mobility for freight by providing less congested conditions on the arterial and collector roads in the area used for the portion of interregional trips leading to or from I-95.

#### **Objective:** Efficiency

The proposed interchange will promote more efficient use of the Strategic Intermodal System by providing relief to SR-786/PGA Boulevard and SR 809/Military Trail thereby extending its functional integrity, and helping to reduce delay along those facilities.

#### **Objective:** Emergency Management

The proposed interchange will provide an additional evacuation route for northern Palm Beach County.

8.6 *In corridors where the potential exists for future multiple interchange additions, a comprehensive corridor or network study must accompany all requests for new or revised access with recommendations that address all of the proposed and desired access changes within the context of a longer-range system or network plan (23 U.S.C. 109(d), 23 CFR 625.2(a), 655.603(d), and 771.111).*

**Response:**

There are no other interchange proposals between SR 786/PGA Boulevard and Donald Ross Road. The only interchange proposal is at Central Boulevard, a Palm Beach County Roadway.

8.7 *When a new or revised access point is due to a new, expanded, or substantial change in current or planned future development or land use, requests must demonstrate appropriate coordination has occurred between the development and any proposed transportation system improvements (23 CFR 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)). The request must describe the commitments agreed upon to assure adequate collection and dispersion of the traffic resulting from the development with the adjoining local street network and Interstate access point (23 CFR 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)).*

**Response:**

The congested conditions that the study area roadways experience is primarily associated with existing land use. The area has experienced rapid development over the past 20 years with associated transportation improvements trying to keep pace. This growth within the study area has burdened the arterial system and the existing interchanges along I-95 to a point where current capacity is beginning to limit mobility.

The MPO has incorporated land use assumptions for the study area, including near and along Central Boulevard into its 2040 adopted LRTP. The County's Comprehensive Plan includes valid and consistent future land use along Central Boulevard east of I-95 in its Future Land Use Element.

The Comprehensive Plan further acknowledges that alleviating traffic demand along PGA Boulevard and Military Trail is a key component to the County's future plans. This alleviation of demand along these two roadways is facilitated by the inclusion of an additional interchange at Central Boulevard.

The implementation of projects in the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan could also contribute to correcting the jobs-housing balance. Several projects in the LRTP could facilitate business development in the north and west portions of the study area south of Donald Ross Road. The proposed Central Boulevard I-95 interchange, in particular, could have a sizeable impact on job creation in this northern portion of the study area, given the propensity of businesses to locate at higher volume traffic locations.

The proposed interchange will enhance economic development within the study area in Palm Beach Gardens by redirecting traffic destined for the northern portions of the study areas away from SR 786/PGA Boulevard and SR 809/Military Trail to the Central Boulevard Interchange. This northern redirection of traffic will reduce congestion along PGA Boulevard and Military Trail and allow for more efficient movement of goods and people to these higher travel demand areas in the southern portion of the study area. The County's long term planning and commitment to this area is evident in the existing commercial and industrial businesses already established in the vicinity of PGA Boulevard. The County's commitment to this area is further supported by the 2040 LRTP and the current Comprehensive Plan.

*8.8 The proposal can be expected to be included as an alternative in the required environmental evaluation, review and processing. The proposal should include supporting information and current status of the environmental processing (23 CFR 771.111).*

**Response:**

The proposal is included in the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study which is currently underway and concurrent with the review and approval of the IJR by the FHWA.