

1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

In October 2016, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) received approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the Systems Interchange Modification Report (SIMR) supporting the implementation of improvements along the segment of SR 826/Palmetto Expressway extending from I-75 to the Golden Glades Interchange (GGI) in Miami-Dade County, Florida (FM No. 418423-22-01). The SIMR was prepared as a component of the above referenced SR 826/Palmetto Expressway Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. The SR 826 SIMR included improvements resulting from the adjacent GGI PD&E Study (FM No. 428358-1-22-01). Proposed improvements identified in the PD&E Study involve the construction of new express lanes along the Palmetto Expressway mainline connecting to I-95 express lanes, capacity improvements at the SR 826 interchanges, a southbound express lane connector from Florida's Turnpike (Spur), and ramp improvements at the GGI.

Subsequent to the approval of the Palmetto Expressway SIMR in 2016, the FDOT identified additional network improvements within the GGI to further enhance traffic operations. These involve the introduction of a modified ramp to connect the existing NB I-95 express lanes directly to the Turnpike Spur, whereas in the existing configuration, the NB express lanes traffic merges with general use (GU) traffic before accessing the Turnpike Spur. Modifications are also proposed for the ramp systems providing connections between the NB I-95 Express Lanes (EL) and other destinations served at the GGI (these include: I-95 GU lanes; NW 167th Street; US 441 and SR 826 GU lanes). Further, safety and operational improvements to support the implementation of the ramp modifications will involve removing the existing NB I-95 Express Lanes egress at NW 151st Street. These ramps modifications are planned to be implemented in 2025 as part of the GGI Ultimate Improvements (the GGI Enhancements Projects).

In addition to these ramp modifications, the FDOT plans to relocate the proposed EL ingress/egress points on the Palmetto Expressway that were previously located to service traffic using the GGI Interchange. In the new proposed configuration, the ingress/egress point will be relocated to service traffic using the GGI in addition to serving NW 17th Avenue and NW 12th Avenue. This

proposed relocation of the ingress/egress points will better serve the transportation needs for the industrial and commercial areas located west of the GGI.

The FDOT has determined that the analysis and documentation of the aforementioned design modifications will require a re-evaluation of the previously approved 2016 SR 826/Palmetto Expressway/GGI SIMR, per FDOT's Interchange Access Request Guidelines. This addendum to the SIMR presents the re-evaluation of the traffic operations analyses for the proposed design changes (referenced herein as 2018 SIMR Re-evaluation Design Concept) in order to gain concurrence from the FHWA.

The SR 826 PD&E Preferred Alternative was approved in both the SR 826 SIMR and the SR 826 PD&E Study documents. Hence, the proposed design changes will be documented in both the SIMR and the Design Change Re-evaluations. The Project Location map in Figure 1-1 highlights the focus area for the SR 826 SIMR Re-evaluation.

1.2 Purpose of SR 826 SIMR Re-evaluation

This SR 826 SIMR Re-evaluation documents operations analyses for the proposed design modifications, referenced herein as the 2018 SIMR Re-evaluation Design Concept. This incorporates the NB I-95 Express to NB Turnpike Connector (also known as Design Concept 4.1B), and the relocation of the ingress and egress points along SR 826 Express. The SIMR Re-evaluation compares traffic operations for the 2018 SIMR Re-evaluation Design Concept and the previously approved 2016 SIMR Design Concept. The findings presented in the SIMR Re-evaluation demonstrate the operational benefits of the 2018 SIMR Re-evaluation Design Concept compared against the 2016 SIMR Design Concept. The findings provide the necessary justification for implementation of the 2018 SIMR Re-evaluation Design Concept.

Figure 1-1: Project Location Map

