

## 1.1. PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

Polk County is uniquely positioned between the Tampa Bay region on the west and the Central Florida region around Orlando on the east. These regions are anticipated to grow over the next few decades into one economic region. As a result, transportation needs in these regions will continue to be focused around congestion relief. The CPP is anticipated to accommodate the increased travel demand expected from the projected residential and employment growth within the county and throughout the entire region. The facility will provide a new multi-lane limited access freeway that will improve connectivity to the regional transportation network, enhance freight mobility and economic competitiveness, and improve emergency evacuation capabilities.

The addition of an alternative facility to the existing network will reduce traffic congestion on several corridors in central Polk County, particularly U.S. 98, S.R. 540, U.S. 17 and S.R. 60, and redistribute truck traffic in the region. The CPP will provide additional connections to the local roadway network and Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facilities such as Polk Parkway, U.S. 98 and S.R. 60. The Polk Parkway is a belt route that provides easier access to I-4 from Polk County cities such as Winter Haven, Bartow, and Auburndale, and the south side of Lakeland. S.R. 60 provides coast to coast traffic movement across Central Florida, while U.S. 98 provides north-south movement through the state and beyond. The addition of the CPP to these regional roadways would not only relieve congestion by distributing traffic, but allow for better connectivity, thereby enhancing mobility in Polk County and west central Florida. Improved connectivity will increase mobility during an emergency event and enhance emergency response times. The 2011 PD&E study also identified the need for a new facility within the project area, in addition to the planned highway and transit improvements within the cost feasible network of the Polk County 2035 Mobility Vision Plan, published in 2010.

## 1.2. PROJECT AREA OF INFLUENCE

The CPP is a future expansion project of the FTE, similar to Polk Parkway. It is a limited access freeway that is planned to begin along the Polk Parkway at approximately Mile Post (MP) 14 within the existing S.R. 540 interchange, extending southeast to intersect U.S. 17, terminating at S.R. 60. The existing Polk Parkway and S.R. 540 partial interchange with ramps to and from the east will be modified to add system to system ramps at Polk Parkway, and create a diamond interchange at S.R. 540. This IMR only documents traffic and safety analysis within the anticipated Area of Influence (AOI) for the Polk Parkway and S.R. 540 interchange modification. The AOI is shown on **Figure 1.2** and includes:

- Interchanges along the Polk Parkway
  - U.S. 98
  - S.R. 540 ramps to and from west
  - S.R. 540 ramps to and from east
  - U.S. 92
- Intersections along S.R. 540
  - Landfill Road
  - Polk Parkway ramps to and from east
  - Thornhill Road

The analysis for the entire CPP and proposed interchanges was documented in the *Project Traffic Analysis Report (PTAR)*, dated March 2020, prepared in support of the entire PD&E study.