

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The US 17/Roosevelt Boulevard (SR 15) from south of Wells Road to Collins Road serves as an important access point in Duval and Clay Counties' transportation network. It provides connectivity to major employers such as Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville and Fleming Island. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Two completed a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to evaluate several enhancements to improve traffic operations and safety at this key interchange with I-295. Improvements developed under this PD&E Study include ramp and intersection improvements at SR 15 and the I-295 off-ramps, Eldridge Avenue, Old Orange Park Road, and Wells Road. A project location map is provided in **Figure 1-1**. An Interchange Operations Analysis Report (IOAR) was approved under the Programmatic Agreement by FDOT District Two and FDOT Central Office in August 2018.

FDOT District Two evaluated a Build Alternative that will improve traffic operations and safety at this key interchange with the available construction funding and requests approval of an IOAR to incorporate these modifications. An approved July 2020 Methodology Letter of Understanding (MLOU) (**Appendix A**) summarizes and documents all methodology agreements reached between the FDOT District Two Interchange Review Team, FDOT Central Office and FHWA for these proposed build improvements. This IOAR has been developed per FDOT Policy No 000 525-015 (Approval of New or Modified Access to Limited Access Highways on Strategic Intermodal System (SIS)), FDOT Procedure No. 525-030-160 (Approval of New or Modified Interchange Access to Limited Access Facilities on SIS), Interchange Access Request User's Guide, and the FDOT Project Traffic Forecasting Handbook (Procedure No 525-030-120).

### 1.2 Project Description

This project will construct build operational and safety improvements along SR 15 from south of Wells Road to Collins Road that includes I-295 ramp terminal intersections to relieve congestion and improve safety along the study area.

This project is identified in the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization's (TPO) 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the FY 2017-2021 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and in the FDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

### 1.3 Purpose and Need

#### 1.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to complete build improvements that improve operations and safety conditions at I-295 and SR 15 interchange and along SR 15 from south of Wells Road to Collins Road within available funding for completing these improvements. During peak travel times, traffic queues onto I-295 from SR 15 and is creating backups and causing crashes. Therefore, the proposed interchange improvements at the ramp terminals and the intersections' improvements at Eldridge Avenue, Old Orange Park Road and Wells Road will improve traffic operations as well as safety along SR 15 within the study limits.

## I-295 at SR 15 (US 17) to South of Wells Road – Build Improvements

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### **1.3.2 Need**

This project is needed to improve operational and safety deficiencies near I-295 and SR 15 interchange areas. The operational and safety improvements, consisting of interchange improvements at I-295 and SR 15 and modifications to the intersections of SR 15 with Eldridge Avenue, Old Orange Park Road and Wells Road, are expected to relieve congestion and reduce crashes on I-295 around SR 15 interchange. This project proposes to address the following issues at the I-295 and SR 15 interchange:

- Southbound congestion on SR 15 interferes with traffic exiting the Naval Air Station Jacksonville.
- During the PM peak, traffic exiting from I-295 northbound to SR 15 queues several miles onto the right lanes of I-295 northbound.
- Backup onto I-295 from the I-295 southbound off-ramp is also observed during peak hours.

Several other needs related to roadway capacity/deficiencies, system linkage, legislation/plan consistency, social demands or economic development, modal interrelationships and hurricane evacuation were identified and addressed in the PD&E study completed for this project (August 2018) and supports the need for these proposed improvements.

### **1.4 Project Location**

The project is located in the southwestern area of the City of Jacksonville, in Duval and Clay Counties, Florida, as presented in **Figure 1-1**. The project study area consists of a mile-long segment along SR 15 between the signalized intersections of Wells Road to the south and Collins Road to the north. It consists of SR 15, the on-/off-ramps to/from I-295, and cross streets (Wells Road, Old Orange Park Road, Eldridge Avenue, Collins Road) that connect to these roadways within the project limits. The on and off-ramps from I-295 feed/attract traffic in the project study area.