

Chamber of Southwest Florida Transportation Newsletter -August 2024

How will SWFL Transportation Systems be Impacted by Population Growth & Housing Needs?

The Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has begun the process of developing the 25-year vision for Lee County's transportation needs for all travel modes including road, bus, bike, pedestrian, and freight. The 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is scheduled to be completed by December 2025, and will align with federal and state requirements, ensuring consistency and comprehensive planning.

MPO Consultant, Metro Forecasting Models, provided socioeconomic (SE) and other forecast data for the 2050 LRTP to project the area's realistic growth potential in 2050 and provide data for prioritizing capital improvements and conducting long-range planning. Below is a summary of the study's projections. More than half the growth (205,00 new residents) is predicted to be concentrated in Cape Coral and Lehigh Acres.

SWFL 2050 Projections

- ***154,000 New Housing Units***
- ***115,000 Additional Workers***
- ***43 New Schools***
- ***335,000 New Residents***
- ***50,000 New Students***
- ***7,000 Additional Hotel/Motel Rooms***

Florida Transportation Trends

State of Florida trends are similar. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) projections 25-30 years out show the state of Florida is expected to experience high levels of growth evidenced in congestion and density estimates. FDOT has developed the Florida Transportation Trends document and story map that provides an outlook for the state and a visualization of Florida's current and future transportation challenges.

What is the Connection between Housing & Transportation?

As housing developments expand, especially in suburban and rural areas, they can contribute to increased roadway congestion. This is because residents in these areas are more likely to depend on cars due to limited public transit options and the distance to employment districts. The resulting traffic can strain existing infrastructure and necessitate costly upgrades that all taxpayers must bear.

High transportation costs can significantly impact low-income households, often consuming a large portion of their budget. In Florida, where many residents already spend a substantial part of their income on housing, adding high transportation costs can exacerbate financial stress. This dual burden can limit economic mobility and access to opportunities.