ITEM 8:

Consider whether an approximately 29.99-acre public transportation easement to the State of Florida Department of Transportation within the Withlacoochee State Forest is consistent with the Board of Trustees' Linear Facilities Policy.

LOCATION:

Hernando, Lake and Sumter Counties

APPLICANT:

Florida Department of Transportation ("Applicant")

CONSIDERATION

No easement fee is required for the transportation easement. As additional compensation for the impacts to state-owned conservation lands, the Applicant will purchase a minimum of 45 acres of replacement land approved by Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Forest Service (FFS) for Withlacoochee State Forest and will pay 0.5 times the market value of the easement for in-kind services.

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is proposing to construct roadway improvements to the State Road (SR) 50 corridor that traverses the Withlacoochee State Forest (WSF) from US 301/SR 35 easterly to CR 33. The project corridor, which consists of a total 20 miles through Hernando, Sumter and Lake Counties, traverses through portions of the northern part of Withlacoochee State Forest (WSF). To the west of the Little Withlacoochee River (River), there is already a 200' corridor through the WSF for SR 50 that also will support the widening. To the east of the River, the corridor reduces to 100' through the WSF. The FDOT will need an additional 100'-150' through this area to complete the widening. The widening is necessary for the projected increase in traffic (two-fold) and for safety (189 crashes between 2011 and 2015, with 12 fatalities). Originally, during the planning phase 65 acres of impacts to the WSF were anticipated; FDOT has eliminated stormwater features on the WSF to minimize the impacts to under 30 acres (cumulative 9250 linear feet).

This project will traverse approximately four miles of state lands within Hernando County and approximately three total miles of state lands within Sumter County. The FDOT seeks to expand the scope of its existing corridor for SR 50 to support public safety by implementing a transportation improvement project, which will reduce collisions and congestion by providing an additional travel lane in each direction. During the SR 50 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study (FM# 435859-1), the FDOT engaged with federal, state and local agencies, as well as the public, in reaching the preferred alternative for the proposed widening of SR 50 from two to four lanes between US 301/SR 35 and CR 33.The project will include reconstruction of the existing road, elevation of the roadbed to account for the high-water table, new stormwater features, a new shared-use path, a new pedestrian crossing, and a new bridge over the Withlacoochee River.

Avoidance:

As stated within the SR 50 PD&E Study, the purpose of the proposed project is to increase capacity and improve safety on the SR 50 corridor. This project is part of a greater effort

addressing existing and future congestion and delay, improving safety and traffic flow, and allowing the SR 50 corridor to operate at an improved level of service for all users. During the SR 50 PD&E Study, FDOT engaged with federal, state and local agencies, elected officials, and the public, in selecting the preferred alternative for the proposed widening of SR 50 from two to four lanes. Alternatives for the corridor's typical section, roadway alignments and stormwater management facilities were evaluated to select a preferred alternative that met the purpose and need of the project and avoided and/or minimized impacts to the WSF to the greatest extent practicable. The SR 50 PD&E Study determined that SR 50 should be widened from two to four lanes to satisfy the project purpose to increase capacity and improve safety.

Minimizing Impacts:

Rather than creating a new corridor through the WSF, the preferred alternative for the SR 50 PD&E Study will widen the roadway by adding two lanes to the existing 2-lane facility, which traverses the WSF. Further, the FDOT has applied additional minimization measures during the project design, reducing the need for additional impacts to the WSF and limiting proposed impacts to WSF lands east from the Little Withlacoochee River, immediately adjacent to the existing roadway on the south/east side of SR 50.

The proposed expanded corridor area within the WSF is dominated by natural communities and is anticipated to include impacts to approximately 18.7 acres of low and high-quality wetland habitat. Impacts to these wetland habitats will be mitigated in accordance with Section 373.4137, Florida Statutes, and the environmental resource permitting process with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at the SWFWMD mitigation area at Colt Creek State Park.

Given its age and the laws in effect at the time of construction, there are no existing water quality treatment features associated with the existing SR 50 facility. The proposed SR 50 project will provide stormwater treatment for the new impervious area required to widen the roadway. As originally planned, stormwater management facilities were being included within the boundaries of WSF. However, through inter-agency coordination and design changes, no stormwater management facilities will be placed within the WSF.

A review of Federal and/or State threatened, endangered, and species of concern with a potential to occur within the project corridor was conducted as part of the SR 50 PD&E Study Natural Resource Evaluation (NRE). FDOT coordinated/consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) throughout the PD&E Study and completion of the NRE. The potential for occurrence within the study area was established for 71 species through the evaluation of existing databases, literature and field surveys identifying evidence of wildlife and appropriate habitat within and adjacent to the corridor to identify potential impacts to protected species and measures to address such impacts. There are no areas within SR 50 PD&E Study area, including the encompassed WSF lands, that are identified as Critical Habitat by the USFWS.

The proposed roadway improvements are not anticipated to have an adverse effect on protected wildlife species and FDOT committed to implement the USFWS Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake and to relocate gopher tortoises from the impact area should burrows be identified prior to construction. Any gopher tortoises found on WSF that may be impacted will be relocated to FFS lands. Furthermore, the FDOT committed to incorporate wildlife permeability features in the project design to provide crossing opportunities for wildlife

from one side of SR 50 to the other within the WSF. These will be elliptical pipes ranging from 29 inches X 45 inches (height X width) to 48 inches X 76 inches that are separate from and raised higher, at or above the seasonal high water table, than the stormwater culverts so that they remain dry though most of the year.

The FDOT also committed to coordinating with local botanical experts to relocate/collect seeds of rare plant species prior to construction and to coordinating with USFWS regarding impacts to endangered Cooley's water-willow. Surveys to date indicate that the project will not have impacts to Cooley's water-willow. After multiple meetings and discussions with the FFS, the FFS concurred with these commitments.

Regarding the historical and archeological resources, the FDOT prepared three cultural resource documents in support of improvements to SR 50 in Hernando, Sumter and Lake Counties, Florida. Those documents are entitled Cultural Resource Assessment Survey of the SR 50 PD&E Study from US 301 to County Road 33. Detail of the results can be found in the back up. On June 13, 2019, FDOT and the Florida Division of Historical Resources entered into a Memorandum of Agreement addressing the archaeological data recovery plan for two archeological sites that will be impacted by the proposed project.

Regarding the recreational Van Fleet Trail, FDOT coordinated with the Rails to Trails Division of Recreation and Parks and it was determined that the trail corridor will remain the same, the FDOT is only connecting the trail that is proposed along SR 50 to the existing trail.

Compensation:

There is no fee due to the Board of Trustees for public easements.

In addition to the avoidance and minimization measures taken by FDOT through the SR 50 PD&E Study and design of this project coupled with the best management practices that will be applied during the construction phase, the project itself will provide a net positive benefit to the WSF through improved water quality, improved public safety through the creation of a shared-use path and pedestrian crossing and potential enhancement of wildlife connectivity by providing wildlife permeability features. To further meet the net positive benefit element of the Board's policy, FDOT has committed to providing the following as accommodations and mitigation for the remaining impacts associated with the expanded corridor area in Segment -3 and new easement in Segment -4 of the SR 50 project:

- Construction of a dedicated upland wildlife permeability feature,
- Construction of a new pedestrian trail crossing where the Florida Trail intersects with SR50,
- Construction of a wildlife permeability feature on each side of the Little Withlacoochee River Bridge,
- Partnering with botanical experts to relocate/collect seeds of certain identified plants within the expanded corridor area prior to construction, and
- Designing the proposed shared-use path to avoid as many large trees as is feasible.

The FDOT will be providing the state with a minimum of 45 acres of replacement lands, which is 1.5 times the size of the expanded corridor area (approx. 29.99 acres) necessary to support this roadway improvement project. FDOT is already assessing the properties proposed by FFS and identifying funds for acquisition with the intention of acquiring replacement lands. In addition to the fee simple conveyance of the replacement lands to the Trustees of the Internal

Improvement Trust Fund (TIITF), FDOT will also pay the Friends of the Forest 0.5 times the market value of the easement interest for in-kind services.

Conclusion:

Throughout the SR 50 PD&E Study and more recently during design, the FDOT has coordinated with the FFS at both the local and state level to minimize impacts to the WSF, to provide mitigation for unavoidable impacts, and to provide benefits and accommodate requests by the FFS, such as consideration of an upland and pedestrian crossing. The FDOT also coordinated with the Florida Division of Historical Resources to address the project effects on two archaeological properties and with the Rails to Trails Division of Recreation and Parks to address mitigation for any impacts to the Van Fleet Trail. These actions have been taken consistent with Chapter 253, Florida Statutes, and the policy established by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund for the Use of Natural Resource Lands by Linear Facilities and the Board's Policy for Incompatible Use of Natural Resource Lands and other applicable laws.

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

( ) APPROVE
( ) APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____
( ) DEFER
( ) WITHDRAW
( ) NOT APPROVE
( ) OTHER:_____

FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE
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3125 CONNER BOULEVARD
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-1650

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES

COMMISSIONER NICOLE "NIKKI" FRIED

January 21, 2020

Callie DeHaven, Director
Division of State Lands
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Subject: State Road 50/Withlacoochee State Forest

Dear Ms. DeHaven:

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) has reviewed the proposal for construction and additional easement for expansion of the State Road 50 corridor from the Hernando/Sumter County Line to west of County Road 757, specifically in relation to impacts to Withlacoochee State Forest. The FFS prefers this type easement not be located on FFS managed property, as this may disturb those natural communities present in the easement area. However, in this instance, the FFS understands that suitable substitutes may not exist.

Understanding that no suitable alternative easement area exists, the FFS will look to the Department of Environmental Protection, Division of State Lands, to coordinate the terms and conditions of the easement along with a suitable net positive benefit for the impacted property. FFS staff will assist by providing input into the resources involved and any mitigation that is deemed necessary for making this a successful transaction.

Please keep us apprised of the progress as this request moves through the process. Thank you for your consideration. Should we be of further assistance, please contact Brian Camposano at 850-681-5890.

Sincerely,

Jim Karels, Director
Florida Forest Service

JRK/bjc

cc: Keith Rowell, Land Programs Administrator, Florida Forest Service
Alan Davis, Land Planning Coordinator, Florida Forest Service
Brian Camposano, Assistant Chief of Forest Management, Florida Forest Service
Keith Mousel, Center Manager, Withlacoochee Forestry Center
Vince Morris, Forestry Resource Administrator, Withlacoochee Forestry Center
Casey Lyon, Environmental Permits Supervisor, Florida Department of Transportation, District 5

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of STATE

RON DESANTIS
Governor

LAUREL M. LEE
Secretary of State

Mr. Scott Woolam
Division of State Lands – DEP
3900 Commonwealth Blvd., MS 100
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

January 17, 2020

RE: DHR Project File No.: 2018-1573K
Project: 29.99 Acre Public Transportation Easement for State Road 50 Expansion
Within the Withlacoochee State Forest, Hernando, Lake and Sumter County

Dear Mr. Woolam:

Our office reviewed the referenced easement request in accordance with Chapters 267.061, *Florida Statutes*, and implementing state regulations, for possible effects on historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places*, or otherwise of historical, architectural or archaeological value.

We note that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 5 is requesting a perpetual easement to expand the existing SR 50 easement through the Withlacoochee State Forest (WSF). *A Cultural Resource Assessment Survey of the State Road Project Development and Environmental Study from US301 to County Road 33, Hernando, Sumter, and Lake Counties, Florida* was conducted by SEARCH, Inc. in September 2018. This survey covered the proposed easement areas in the WSF.

Four archaeological sites were located in the proposed easement; 8SM1013, 8SM1014, 8SM1101 and 8SM1015. Of these sites, SHPO concurred that two, 8SM1014 and 8SM1101 were not eligible for the *National Register of Historic Places (*NRHP*)*. Phase II archeological testing was conducted for 8SM1013 and 8SM1015. Site 8SM1013 within the easement was determined to not be eligible for the NRHP. However, 8SM1015, the Lonely Rock Site was found eligible for the NRHP and it was determined that the proposed project could have an adverse effect on this site within the existing and proposed WSF easement.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the FDOT and Florida Division of Historical Resources (FDHR) was written in 2019 to address adverse effects to Site 8SM1015 the Lonely Rock Site (in the proposed WSF easement) and also NRHP eligible archaeological Site 8SM1093, Lonely Rock 2 Site (located outside of state lands property). In summary, the MOA stipulates that project activities will avoid sites 8SM1015 and 8SM1093 until a Phase III Data recovery plan can be developed and put in place (see attached copy of MOA).

It is the opinion of this office that the proposed FDOT acquisition of the easement within the WSF will have no adverse effect on historic properties if the stipulations outlined in the MOA are followed.

Division of Historical Resources
R.A. Gray Building • 500 South Bronough Street• Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850.245.6300 • 850.245.6436 (Fax) • FLHeritage.com

DHR Project File No.: 2018-1573K
January 17, 2020
Page 2

For any questions concerning our comments, please contact Robin Jackson, Historic Preservationist, by electronic mail at robin.jackson@dos.myflorida.com, or at 850.245.6496, or 800.847.7278.

Sincerely,

Jason Aldridge
For

Timothy A. Parsons, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Historical Resources &
State Historic Preservation Officer

2018-1573H

CHAPTER 267, F.S. AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE FLORIDA DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES REGARDING THE STATE ROAD 50 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT STUDY IN HERNANDO, LAKE, AND SUMTER COUNTIES, FLORIDA

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) proposes to widen State Road (S.R.) 50 from US 301 to County Road (C.R.) 33 in Hernando, Lake, and Sumter Counties, Florida (Financial Project No. 435859-1-22-01) (**Project**); and

WHEREAS, FDOT has defined the **Project's** area of potential effects (APE) as a composite of the proposed alternatives incorporating the maximum existing and proposed right-of-way with a buffer that extended to the back or side property lines of parcels adjacent to the existing or proposed right-of-way, or a distance of no more than 100 meters (330 feet) from the maximum right-of-way line) (see Attachment 1); and

WHEREAS, FDOT has consulted with the Director of the Florida Division of Historical Resources (FDHR) pursuant to the requirements of Chapter 267.061(2), Florida Statutes, and has determined that the **Project** will have an adverse effect on the Lonely Rock site (8SM01015) and the Lonely Rock 2 site (8SM01093), two archaeological properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); and

WHEREAS, FDOT has consulted with the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma regarding the effects of the **Project** on historic properties; and

WHEREAS, FDOT has provided opportunities for public review and comment regarding the effects of the **Project** on historic properties, as appropriate; and

NOW, THEREFORE, FDOT and FDHR agree that the **Project** shall be implemented in accordance with the following stipulations in order to take into account the effects of the **Project** on historic properties.

STIPULATIONS

The FDOT shall ensure that the following measures are carried out:

I. INTERIM PROTECTION PLAN

Following acquisition of the **Project**'s right-of-way and prior to Phase III Excavation, FDOT shall implement an interim site protection plan to avoid and, where avoidance is not possible, minimize ground disturbing activities within and adjacent to the boundaries of 8SM01015 and 8SM01093 to the maximum extent practical. FDOT shall ensure that 8SM01015 and 8SM01093 are secured and protected against damage until the measures agreed upon in Stipulations II-III

are implemented. To achieve such security and protection within and adjacent to the boundaries of 8SM01015 and 8SM01093, FDOT shall:

A. Prohibit staging, storage, and parking, without disclosing the presence of the archaeological sites.

B. Require work be conducted in dry conditions and by vehicles with rubber tires only.

C. Require the FDOT District 5 Cultural Resources Coordinator to be contacted a minimum of two weeks prior to any work being conducted.

II. ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY PLAN

A. In consultation with FDHR and appropriate consulting parties, FDOT shall develop a Phase III Data Recovery Plan for the portion of sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093 being impacted by the ground disturbing activities associated with the **Project.**

B. This Data Recovery Plan shall be developed in accordance with Rule Chapter 1A-46, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), the FDHR Cultural Resource Management Standards & Operations Manual, Module Three: Guidelines for Use by Historic Preservation Professionals, and FDOT's Cultural Resources Management Handbook.

C. This Data Recovery Plan shall include a provision for the contents and completion of a Site Management Plan to be implemented following the completion of the Phase III Excavation of Sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093.

D. FDOT shall provide the proposed Data Recovery Plan to FDHR and appropriate consulting parties for their review and comment in accordance with Stipulation XI.

III. ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY

A. Following review and comment in accordance with Stipulation XI, FDOT shall hire an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation set forth at 36 CFR § 61, Appendix A, to perform Archaeological Data Recovery at sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093 in accordance with the approved Data Recovery Plan.

B. Within sixty (60) days following the completion of the Phase III Excavation at 8SM01015 and 8SM01093, FDOT shall prepare a Site Management Plan which shall include:

1. The initial assessment of the Data Recovery Effort at the sites; the confirmed boundaries of the sites in relation to the **Project**; and a preliminary evaluation of the data collected at the sites.

2. The additional research efforts and considerations needed to complete the analysis to answer the research questions set forth in the Data Recovery Plan.

3. Appropriate measures to be implemented for the avoidance and, where avoidance is not possible, the minimization of harm to sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093, during the construction of the **Project**.

4. The proposed time frame for completing any additional research including artifact analysis and the Phase III Excavation Report.

5. Identify any areas in the **Project** vicinity where the staging and storage of equipment and vehicles shall be avoided, as determined appropriate by FDHR and the federally-recognized tribes.

C. The Site Management Plan shall be submitted to FDHR and appropriate consulting parties for review and comment in accordance with Stipulation XI.

D. Ninety (90) days following the completion of additional research identified in the Site Management Plan, FDOT shall prepare a draft Phase III Excavation Report for sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093. FDOT shall provide the Phase III Excavation Report to FDHR and appropriate consulting parties for review and comment in accordance with Stipulation XI.

IV. DISPOSITION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

In consultation with FDHR, the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research (BAR), and appropriate consulting parties, FDOT will ensure that all materials and records resulting from data recovery excavations at sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093 are curated by the FDOT in consultation with FDHR and the Florida BAR.

V. INITIATION OF CONSTRUCTION

Following the review and comment of the Site Management Plan in accordance with Stipulation XI, FDOT may initiate construction activities within and adjacent to the boundaries of sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093 for the **Project** consistent with the conditions contained in the Site Management Plan.

VI. ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

FDOT shall ensure that a qualified archaeological monitor be on site during ground-disturbing construction activities within the boundaries of sites 8SM01015 and 8SM01093. Such activities include, but are not limited to, clearing and grubbing within the site boundaries, soil stabilization, and installation of drainage structures. FDOT will submit a monitoring report to FDHR and other appropriate consulting parties within 90 days of completion of the monitoring effort.

VII. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Following submittal of the Phase III Excavation Report, FDOT shall develop a public outreach plan, the nature and content of which will be developed in consultation with FDHR. The goal of

the public outreach effort will be to provide information to the public, as appropriate, regarding the prehistoric and/or historic development and use of the Linden/Mabel area.

The public outreach plan shall be submitted to FDHR within thirty (30) days of submittal of the Phase III Excavation Report for review and comment in accordance with Stipulation XI. The public outreach plan shall be implemented within two (2) years of initiation of project construction.

VIII. POST-REVIEW DISCOVERIES

A. If properties are discovered that may be historically significant, or if unanticipated effects on historic properties are found, FDOT shall implement the Post Review Discovery Plan established in Stipulation X of the March 15, 2016 Programmatic Agreement among the ACHP, SHPO, and FDOT, as amended on June 4, 2017.

B. In the event that human skeletal remains or associated burial artifacts are uncovered within the project area during construction, all work in that area must stop. The individual in charge of the activity that leads to the discovery must notify the Project Engineer and the FDOT District 5 Cultural Resources Coordinator. The discovery must be reported to local law enforcement and the appropriate medical examiner. The medical examiner will determine whether the State Archaeologist should be contacted per the requirements of Section 872.05, Florida Statutes, and Rule Chapter 1A-44.004, FAC.

IX. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

All archaeological and historic preservation work carried out pursuant to this agreement shall be conducted by, or under the direct supervision of, a person or persons meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation set forth at 36 CFR § 61, Appendix A.

X. DURATION

This AGREEMENT will expire if its terms are not carried out within ten (10) years from the date of execution. Prior to expiration, the parties may agree to extend the timeframe for fulfillment of the terms by letter agreement.

XI. REVIEW STIPULATION

FDOT shall provide FDHR and appropriate consulting parties, including the federally-recognized tribes affiliated with Florida, a thirty (30)-day period for review and comment following the receipt of delivery of the documents described above. If no comments are received by FDOT at the end of these thirty (30) days, FDOT will presume there are no comments and move to the next phase, as appropriate. If FDOT timely receives comments within the thirty (30)-day period, FDOT shall consult with the commenting party to resolve the comment.

XII. AMENDMENTS

This agreement may be amended when such an amendment is agreed to in writing by all signatories. All signatories must signify their acceptance of the proposed changes to the agreement in writing within thirty (30) days of their receipt.

XIII. TERMINATION

If any signatory to this Agreement determines that its terms will not or cannot be carried out, that party shall immediately consult with the other signatories in an effort to amend the Agreement per Stipulation XII, above. If within thirty (30) days (or another time agreed to by all signatories) an amendment cannot be reached, any signatory may terminate the Agreement upon written notification to the other signatories.

SIGNATORIES:

FLORIDA DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Date: 6/3/19

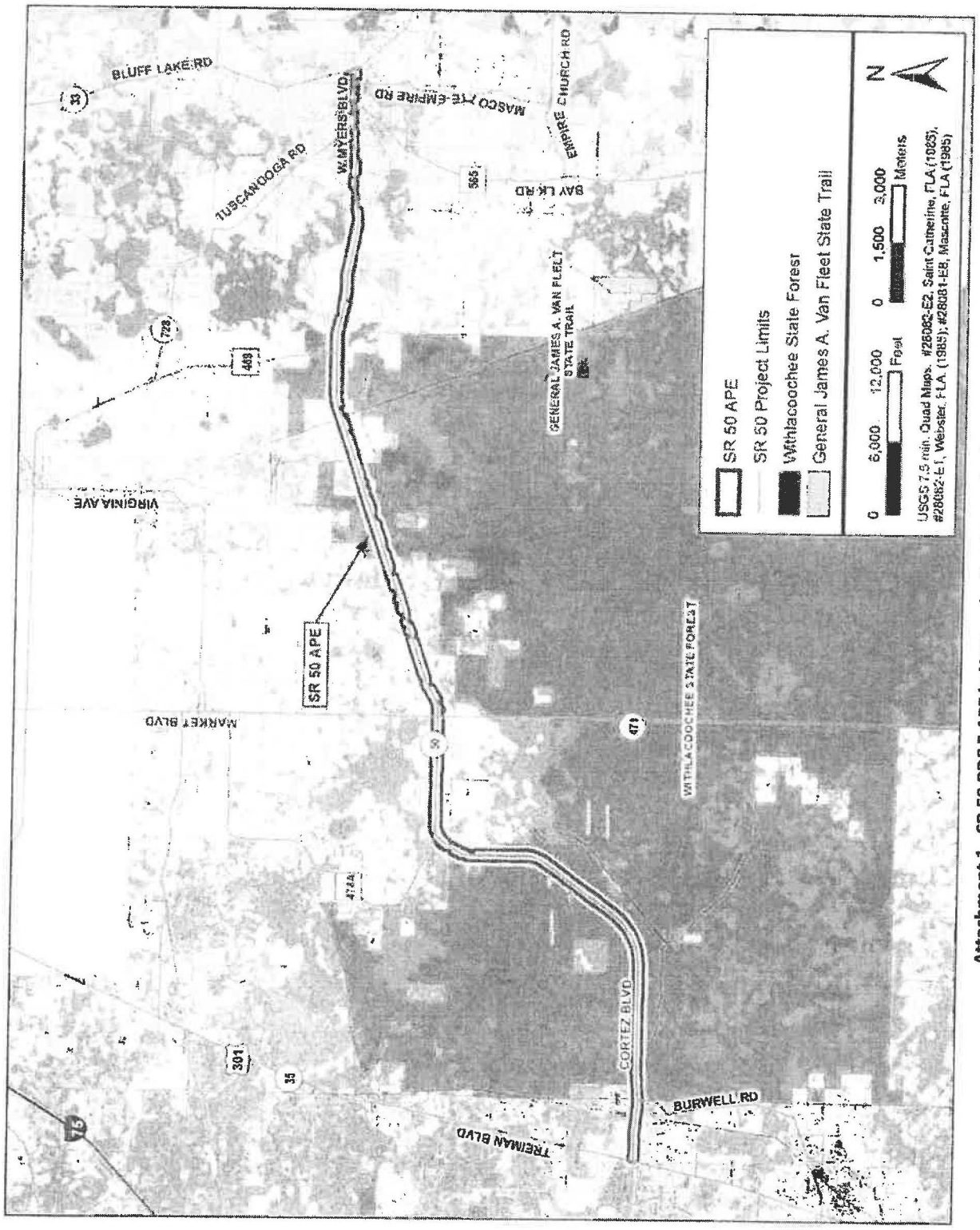
Timothy A. Parsons
Director, Division of Historical Resources

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, DISTRICT FIVE

Date: 5/14/19

Michael Shannon, P.E.
District Secretary or Designee

5-14-19
LEGAL REVIEW



Attachment 1. SR 50 PD&E APE in Hernando, Sumter, and Lake Counties, Florida.

Page 6 of 6

Application for the use of State-Owned Uplands

Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida

Intended Use of the Property Narrative

a) The requested term, which shall not be greater than is necessary to provide for the reasonable use of the state land and shall not be greater than the parent lease term.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 5 is requesting a perpetual easement to expand the scope of its existing easement for SR 50 to address traveler safety concern.

b) The need for the proposed use of state lands and written evidence that all other alternatives to the use of state lands have been denied.

During the SR 50 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study (FM# 435859-1), the FDOT engaged with federal, state and local agencies, elected officials, and the public in selecting the preferred alternative for the proposed widening of SR 50 from two to four lanes between US 301/SR 35 and CR 33, a portion of which traverses the Withlacoochee State Forest (WSF). As stated within the SR 50 PD&E Study, the purpose of the proposed project is to increase capacity and improve safety on the SR 50 corridor. This project is part of a greater effort addressing existing and future congestion and delay, improving safety and traffic flow, and allowing the SR 50 corridor to operate at an improved level of service (LOS) for all users. The SR 50 State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) and Preliminary Engineering Report (PER), which can be accessed through the FDOT website (http://www.cflroads.com/project/435859-1/SR_50_PD_E_Study), documents the alternatives evaluated and public involvement engagement. Alternatives for the corridor's typical section, roadway alignments and stormwater management facilities were evaluated to select a preferred alternative that met the purpose and need of the project and avoids and/or minimizes impacts to the WSF to the greatest extent practicable. These alternatives analyses are summarized below.

Consideration of typical sections

The SR 50 PD&E Study determined that SR 50 should be widened from two to four lanes to satisfy the project purpose to increase capacity and improve safety. The analysis evaluated typical sections, i.e., depictions of the highway's principal elements that are standard between certain limits, that met the project purpose to increase capacity and improve safety, met FDOT design criteria and requirements, and minimized impacts to the WSF. Per the FDOT Design Manual (FDM), "Selection of the appropriate criteria and standards is influenced by traffic volume and composition, desired levels of service, functional classification, terrain features, context classification, and environmental considerations. The identification of applicable design controls is needed to achieve: (1) optimum safety, (2) desired capacity and LOS, (3) design consistency

and (4) cost effective designs." Two design controls that have the most influence on the operation of the facility are functional classification and design speed. The factors considered in the selection of either of these controls directly affect the selection of the other. Per the FDM, "Select a context-appropriate design speed to attain a desired degree of safety, mobility and efficiency." SR 50 is designated a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facility and, therefore, must maintain a minimum design speed of 65 mph.

Urban roadways generally have a smaller typical section width than rural roadways, but urban roadways also are limited to a lower design speed (45 mph due to curb and gutter) than rural roadways. As a result, to achieve the required minimum design speed of 65 mph, a rural typical section is appropriate for SR 50. In addition, when an urban or rural type classification is chosen, it should also be compatible with driver expectations for the area and maintain design consistency. This section of the SR 50 corridor is rural in nature, and the adjoining sections are also rural in nature. Per the FDM, "Design consistency is achieved when the geometric features of the roadway are consistent with the operational characteristics expected by the driver." Inconsistencies normally relate to: changes in design speed, changes in cross section, and incompatibility in geometry and operational requirements. If an urban typical section is used in the area of the WSF property to reduce impacts, it would introduce an inconsistency to the driver in all three of these elements, adversely affecting driver safety. This makes a rural typical section the safe, consistent option to provide for safety and the desired level of service for this part of the corridor.

Based on the analysis within the SR 50 PD&E Study and summarized above, a rural typical section along the WSF is the best option for public safety within the corridor. The determination to widen SR 50 from two to four lanes and to implement a rural typical section is the primary reason the FDOT is requesting to expand the existing easement within the WSF beyond the existing 100-foot easement within Segment -3 and 100-foot SR 50 right-of-way within Segment -4. The proposed widening and typical section will be accommodated within the existing 200-foot easement within Segment -2 and, therefore, not require additional state lands easement in that area.

Consideration of alignments

Since creating a new corridor adjacent to SR 50 to meet the purpose and need of the SR 50 PD&E Study would result in greater impacts to the community and to the WSF, the study evaluated alternatives to maximize the existing SR 50 facility. Best fit options, including widening to the left, from the center and to the right, for specific segments of the corridor were evaluated to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The preferred alternative maximizes the use of the existing road and minimizes environmental impacts. Based on the location of the existing travel lanes within the existing 200-foot easement of Segment -2, it was determined that widening to the right, or south/east, of the existing SR 50 travel lanes would result in the least amount of impacts to the WSF. As this alternative is carried through to Segments -3 and -4, an expanded easement will be required on only the south/east side of the existing roadway. The proposed project will utilize/resurface the existing SR 50 lanes as the new westbound lanes and construct two new lanes for the eastbound traffic.

Consideration of stormwater management

As part of the SR 50 PD&E Study's Pond Siting Report, floodplain compensation areas and up to three alternative pond site locations were evaluated within each of the 10 drainage basins that occur along the corridor and within the WSF (Segments -2 and -3). However, as a result of FDOT

coordination with the SWFWMD and FFS, it was determined that floodplain compensation areas and stormwater treatment ponds could be eliminated from within the WSF.

As recently coordinated in meetings with the SWFWMD on April 11, 2019 and with the FFS on September 6, 2019, floodplain impacts were calculated and mapped demonstrating that the project would result in up to a 0.33-foot flood level rise within the WSF with a majority of the impacted basins seeing a 0.01-foot flood level rise. In meetings with FDOT, the FFS reviewed basin maps delineating the flood stage increases and approved the localized impacts within the WSF. The notes from the September 6, 2019 FFS coordination meeting, demonstrating their approval, are contained in Attachment D.

As coordinated in a meeting with the SWFWMD on April 11, 2019, Segments -2 and -3 will use the compensatory treatment method to eliminate stormwater treatment ponds within the WSF. The intent is to use a regional treatment pond adjacent to SR 50 but beyond the extent of the western and eastern boundaries of the WSF that treats both the existing untreated impervious area and the proposed impervious area. FDOT's Segment -4 was also designed to site stormwater treatment ponds and floodplain compensation areas outside the limits of the WSF. The project as designed meets the SWFWMD's stormwater treatment criteria. Agreement between FDOT, FFS and SWFWMD provided allowances for increased stages in floodplains within the WSF. As a result, no stormwater ponds or floodplain compensation areas are proposed within the WSF.

c) Projected revenue to be generated from the use of state lands.

No revenue is projected to be generated from the use of the state lands.

d) Whether the intended use is public or private and the extent of public access for such use.

The intended use of the requested easement will be public, consistent with the existing SR 50 easement through the Withlacoochee State Forest in that it will provide public transportation. The proposed project will maintain the existing access points as discussed and approved by the WSF staff.

The proposed facility within the easement area is roadway. The proposed project includes reconstruction of the existing road, elevation of the roadbed to account for the highwater table, new stormwater features, a new shared-use path, a new pedestrian crossing, and a new bridge over the Withlacoochee River. FDOT District 5 is requesting an additional easement on approximately 29.99 acres of state lands within the WSF running adjacent to the existing SR 50.

e) A statement describing the public benefits that will occur as a result of the proposed use of state lands.

The purpose of the proposed roadway improvements is to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety within the WSF. During the PD&E Study (FM# 435859-1) and more recently during design, the

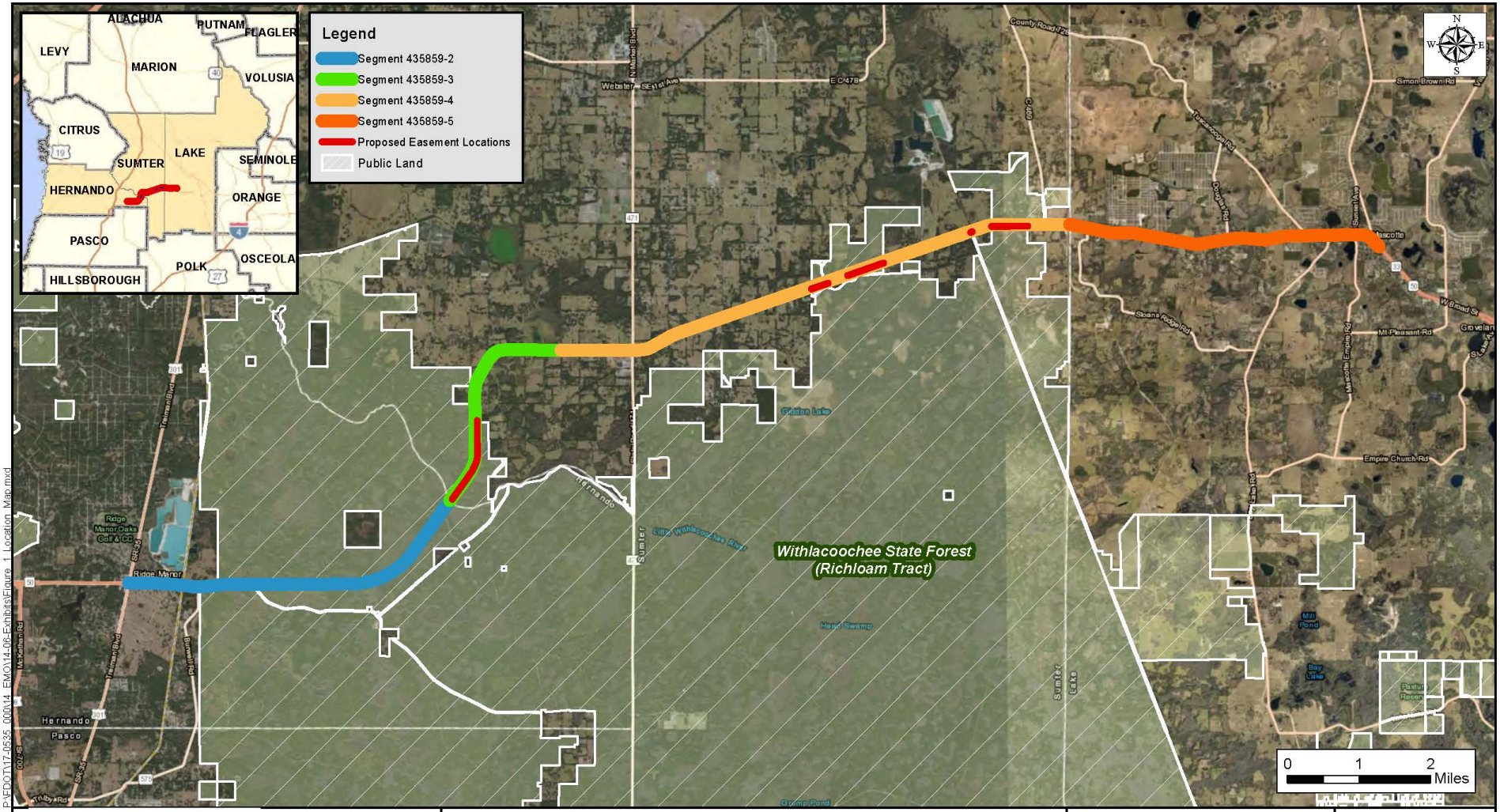
FDOT engaged with federal, state and local agencies, as well as the public, in reaching the preferred alternative for the proposed widening of SR 50 from two to four lanes between US 301/SR 35 and CR 33, a portion of which traverses the WSF. The WSF has public facilities in the following categories: recreation areas (including campgrounds featuring primitive to full service facilities), day use areas (featuring trailheads for hikers, bikers and equestrians), and off highway vehicle (OHV) areas. All existing public uses will either remain the same or be improved as a result of this project. During implementation of the roadway widening project, FDOT will continue to maintain public access and existing driveway connections within the WSF.

In addition to the avoidance and minimization measures taken by FDOT through the SR 50 PD&E Study and design, the FDOT has agreed to satisfy various Florida Forest Service (FFS) requests as accommodations and mitigation. The project will provide a net benefit to the WSF through improved water quality, improved public safety through creation of a shared-use path and pedestrian crossing and potential enhancement of wildlife connectivity by providing additional culverts (see Attachment 1). Specifically, these measures include:

- Elimination of all proposed stormwater ponds within the WSF;
- Construction of a new pedestrian trail crossing where the Florida Trail intersects with SR 50;
- Construction of wildlife permeability features;
- Construction of a wildlife permeability feature on each side of the Little Withlacoochee River Bridge;
- Partnering with botanical experts to relocate/collect seeds of certain identified plants within the expanded easement area prior to construction; and
- Designing a proposed shared-use path to avoid as many large trees as is feasible.

The FDOT will provide the state with a minimum of 45 acres of replacement lands, which is 1.5 times the size of the expanded easement area (29.99 acres) necessary to support this roadway improvement project. FDOT is already assessing the properties proposed by FFS and identifying funds for acquisition with the intention of acquiring replacement lands. In addition, the FDOT will pay the FFS 0.5 times the market value of the easement for in-kind services to the Friends of the Forest 501(c)(3). This replacement land and monetary value in addition to the mitigation efforts noted above will not only offset the impacts of the requested expanded easement but benefit the WSF.

The project will meet the "net positive benefit" element of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund for the Use of Natural Resource Lands by Linear Facilities.



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FDOT

DRMP, Inc.
941 Lake Baldwin Ln.
Orlando, FL 32814
www.drmp.com
Phone: 407-896-0594
Fax: 407-896-4836

DATE: May 2019 | DRAWN BY: CAM | PROJECT NUMBER: 17-0535.000

State Road 50 from Hernando / Sumter County Line to West of County Road 757

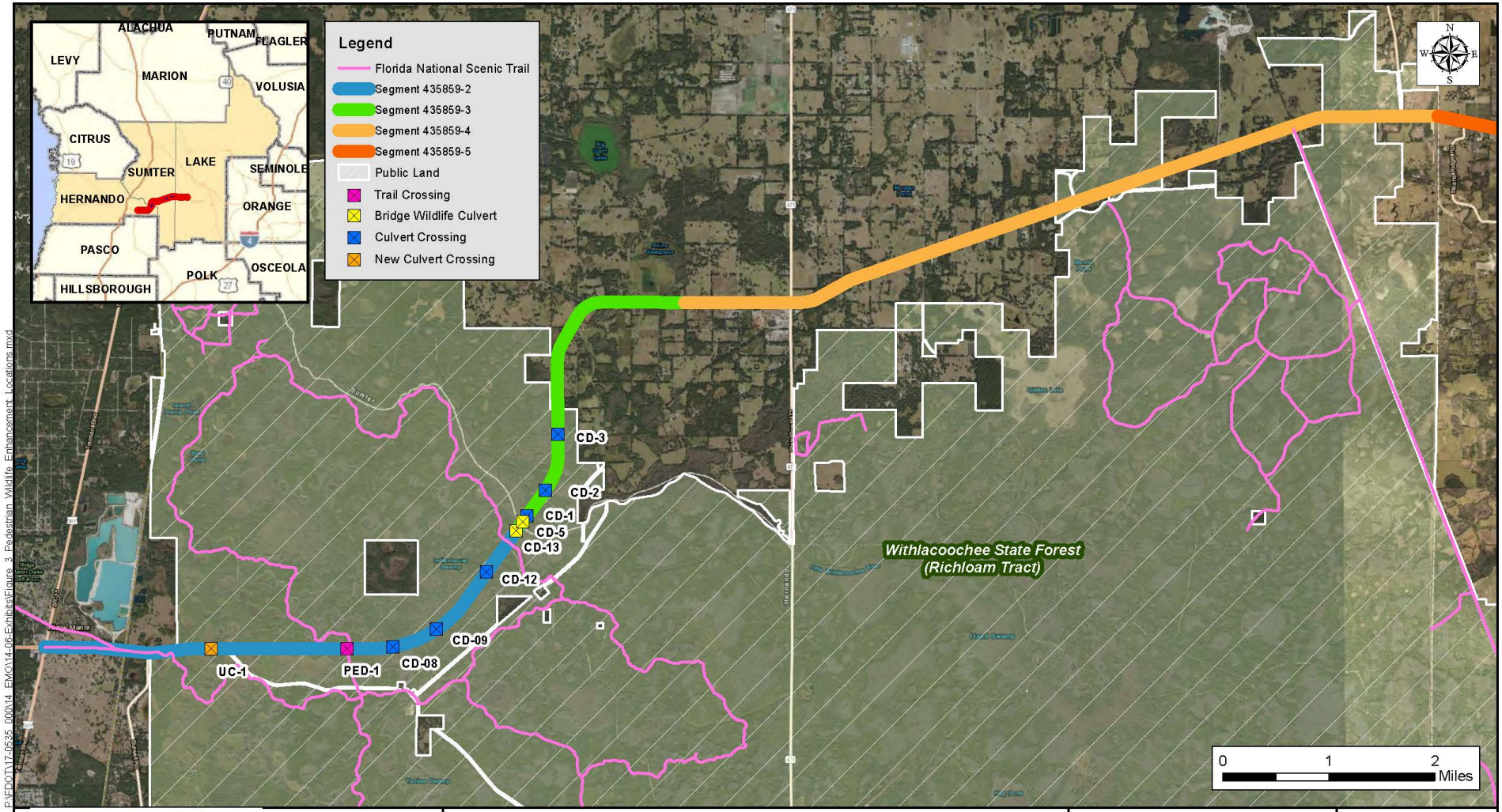
FPID No. 435859-2-32-01, 435859-3-32-01, 435859-4-32-01, 435859-5-32-01;

Hernando, Sumter and Lake Counties

Location Map

DATA SOURCE:
Aerial - ESRI 2018
Public Land - FNAI 2018

Figure 1



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941 Lake Baldwin Ln.
Orlando, FL 32814
www.drmp.com
Phone: 407-896-0594
Fax: 407-896-4836

DATE: September 2019 | DRAWN BY: CAM | PROJECT NUMBER: 17-0535.000

State Road 50 from Hernando / Sumter County Line to West of County Road 757

FPID No. 435859-2-32-01, 435859-3-32-01, 435859-4-32-01, 435859-5-32-01

Hernando, Sumter and Lake Counties

Pedestrian Crossing and Wildlife Permeability Features Map

DATA SOURCE:
Aerial - ESRI 2018
Public Land - FNAI 2018 FL National Scenic Trail - FDEP 2012

Figure 4

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941 Lake Baldwin Ln.
Orlando, FL 32814
www.drmp.com
Phone: 407-896-0594
Fax: 407-896-4836

DATE: July 2019
DRAWN BY: Peters
PROJECT NUMBER: 17-0535.000

State Road 50 Widening from west of CR 757 to the Sumter/Lake County line

FPID No. 435859-4-52-01

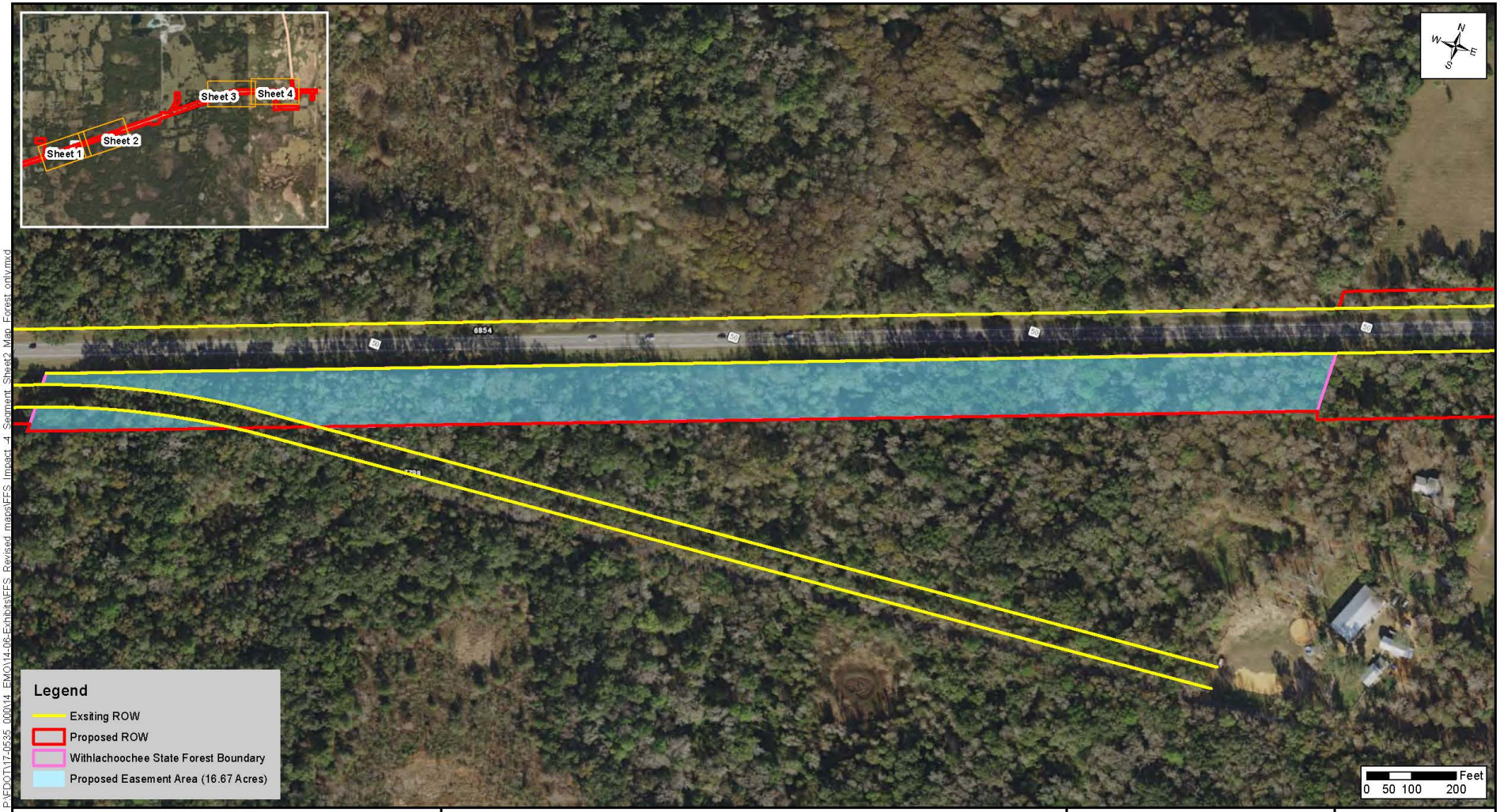
Sumter County

Segment -4
Proposed Easement Map

DATA SOURCE: Aerials- ESRI 2018

Exhibit
1

Sheet 1



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DRMP, Inc.
941 Lake Baldwin Ln.
Orlando, FL 32814
www.drmp.com
Phone: 407-896-0594
Fax: 407-896-4836

DATE: July 2019
DRAWN BY: Peters
PROJECT NUMBER: 17-0535.000

State Road 50 Widening from west of CR 757 to the Sumter/Lake County line

FPID No. 435859-4-52-01

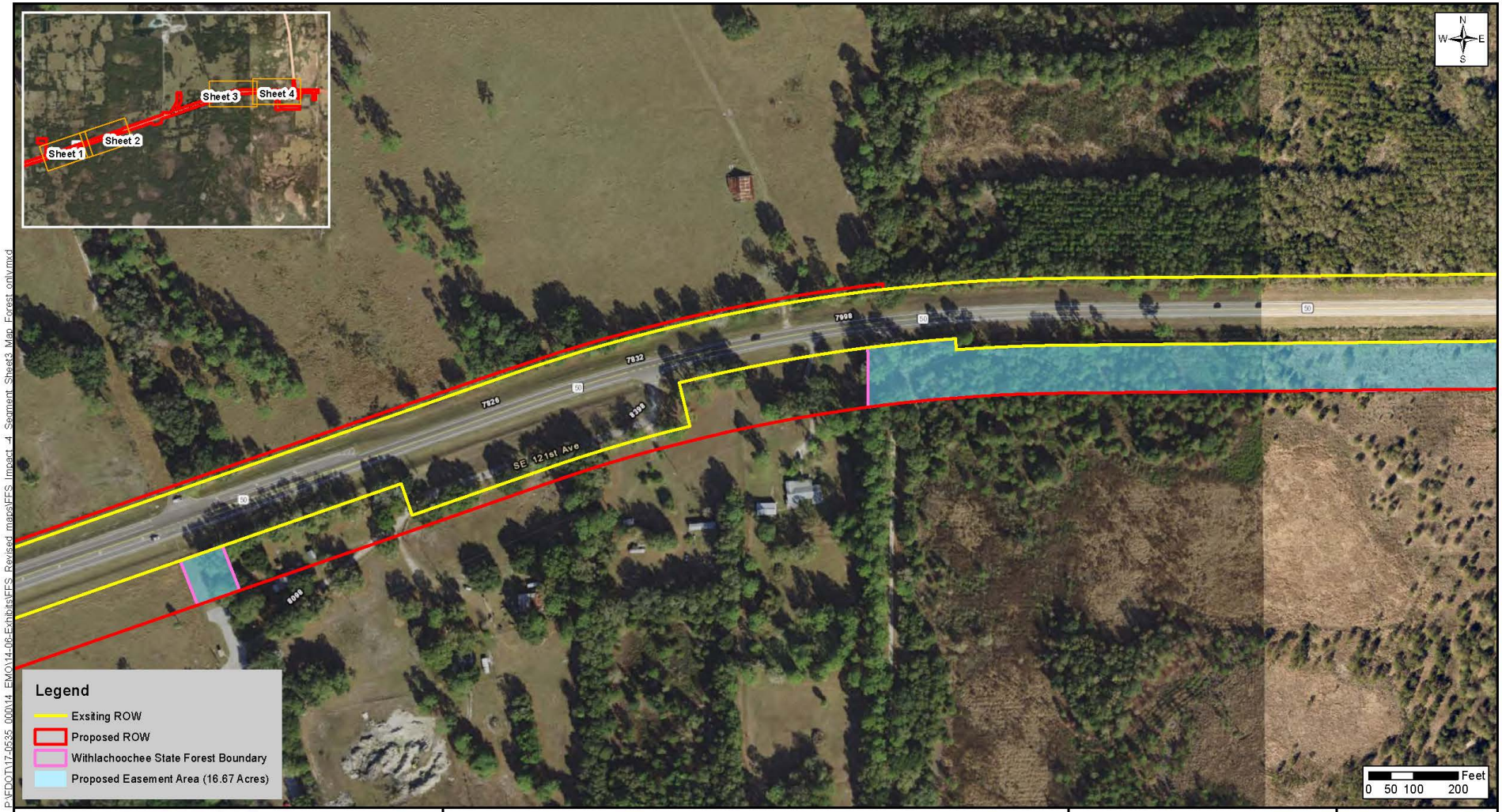
Sumter County

Segment -4
Proposed Easement Map

DATA SOURCE: Aerials- ESRI 2018

Exhibit
1

Sheet 2



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State Road 50 Widening from west of CR 757 to the Sumter/Lake County line

FPID No. 435859-4-52-01

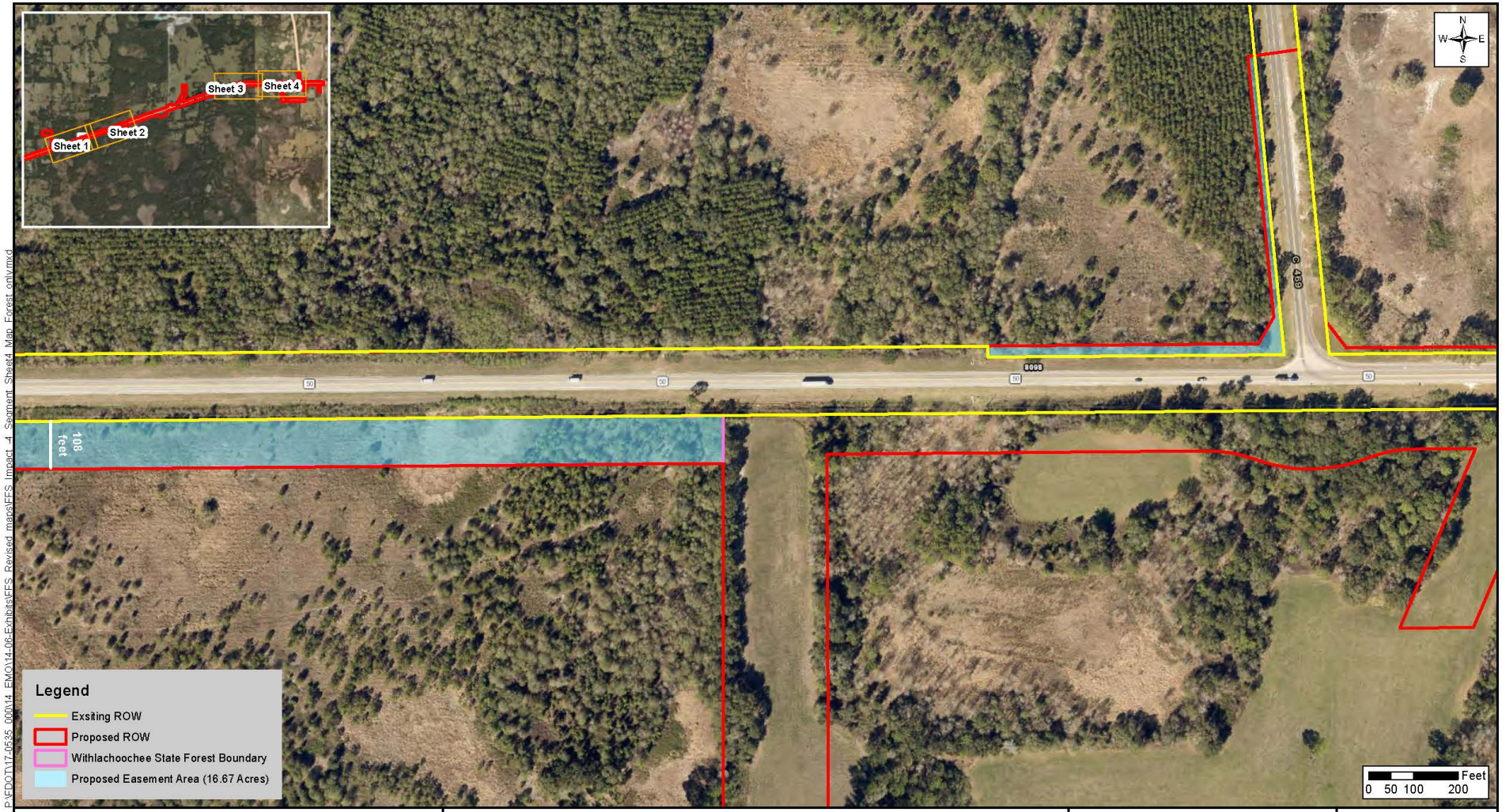
Sumter County

Segment -4
Proposed Easement Map

DATA SOURCE: Aerials- ESRI 2018

Exhibit
1

Sheet 3



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State Road 50 Widening from west of CR 757 to the Sumter/Lake County line

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Sumter County

Segment -4
Proposed Easement Map

DATA SOURCE: Aerials- ESRI 2018

Exhibit
1

Sheet 4