



**Lake ~ Sumter  
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

**PURPOSE & NEED STATEMENT  
SR 19 & ALTERNATIVES  
EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION DECISION  
MAKING  
PLANNING SCREEN**

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## **Overview**

The current initiative involves a planning screen of three corridors in central Lake County to determine fatal flaws and dominant issues that would come to light should any of the subject corridors be the focus of a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. All three corridors are included in the adopted, cost-feasible *2025 Long Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP) of the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). All three corridors consist of two-lane, once-rural roadways that have suburbanized and, in some areas, urbanized, thus creating a need for capacity planning. The three subject corridors are as follows:

### State Road 19

North-to-south from County Road 561 in Tavares through the town of Howey-in-the-Hills to US 27 in Groveland; the segment includes the 3,300-foot-long Little Lake Harris Bridge and the planning screen examines the potential for a new bridge alignment west to connect to County Road 48.

### County Road 561

North-to-south from SR 19 in Tavares through the town of Astatula, under the Florida Turnpike (SR 91) to US 27; in addition to evaluating the existing alignment, the planning screen will also examine a new alignment for future arterial traffic flows that would connect to a new interchange with the Turnpike at Milepost 279; this new alignment would incorporate a portion of existing CR 561-A and the spine road from the interchange of the Hills of Minneola Development of Regional Impact (DRI).

### County Road 48

East-to-west from SR 19 in Howey-in-the-Hills through the unincorporated community of Yalaha to US 27 in Leesburg; at the eastern portion of this segment, a new bridge alignment to replace the existing Little Lake Harris Bridge is to be examined.

## **Project Status**

The ETDM Planning Screen will provide first-level analyses for each of the corridors, while also providing an initial analysis of alternatives for the Little Lake Harris Bridge. The screening is coordinated by the Lake~Sumter MPO, with the assistance from the Florida Department of Transportation, District 5, and Lake County Public Works. All three corridors are referenced in the MPO's *2025 Long Range Transportation Plan*.

State Road 19

SR 19 was designated in the 2025 LRTP as a two-lane arterial in need of widening. SR 19 was adopted, from CR 561 south to CR 48, as a four-lane cost-feasible project. The need was actually determined to be for six lanes, with the primary flow connecting to CR 48 west (also identified as needing six lanes to the Florida Turnpike). SR 19, south of CR 48 through Howey-in-the-Hills, was not designated as a cost-feasible project and is, therefore, adopted in the 2025 LRTP as a two-lane arterial. South of Howey-in-the-Hills, SR 19 is designated as a four-lane cost-feasible project from CR 455 south to US 27. The only project generated along this corridor was a 2006 ETDM planning screen of SR 19 from CR 448 to CR 48, which included the Little Lake Harris Bridge. It was later recognized that the previous planning screen did not incorporate a broad enough area.

Little Lake Harris Bridge

SR 19/Little Lake Harris Bridge Condition: This bridge, which is 58 years old, is currently rated as both structurally and functionally sufficient. While regular monitoring and inspections have shown it to still be a sound facility, it is approaching the end of a typical service life for this type of structure. To assure that the facility remains in a safe/operable condition, the District will be soon be scheduling a shoring/rehabilitation project (in FY 11 or 12). This improvement will ensure that the bridge remains a safe structure, until funding can be secured for a new facility. This precaution is felt to be necessary due to the high cost of replacement, and the fact that adequate District funding for reconstruction, is unavailable in the near term. The current ratings for this bridge are:

Sufficiency Rating:	51 (fair)
Structural Rating:	5 (fair)
Heath Index – (PONTIS):	79

County Road 561

CR 561 was designated in the 2025 LRTP as a two-lane collector in need of widening. CR 561 was adopted as a four-lane cost-feasible project from Tavares to Minneola, with PD&E study cost feasible by 2015. Astatula is currently managing a PD&E study through that community with the cooperation of Lake County. The segment north of Astatula, to Tavares, and the segment south of Astatula, to Minneola, are on the MPO's priority list for PD&E studies.

County Road 48

CR 48 was designated in the 2025 LRTP as a two-lane collector in need of widening. CR 48 was adopted as a four-lane cost-feasible project from Howey-in-the-Hills to Leesburg. Modeling of the corridor showed a dramatic increase in traffic, demonstrating an actual need for six lanes. The only study along this corridor is at the western end where CR 48 intersects with US 27. Lake County is planning to widen from just east of the bridge over Palatlahaha Creek west across US 27.

## **Capacity**

Each of these three primary corridors traversing through Central Lake County currently operate within the adopted Level of Service (LOS) standards identified within the applicable local government comprehensive plans. SR 19 is projected to reach capacity quicker than CR 561 or CR 48, but all three are expected to reach capacity as the area and the region continue to develop. Developments to the west, either approved or progressing through the review process, include Secret Promise, Renaissance Trails, Wildwood Springs, Landstone Communities, Southern Oaks and The Villages. Developments to the south include Sugarloaf Mountain, Hills of Minneola, Christopher C. Ford Commerce Park, and IMG (Cherry Tree Farms) Development. In addition, the urbanized areas of Leesburg, Tavares, Eustis and Mount Dora continue to grow.

### State Road 19

SR 19, in Tavares, is a two-lane minor arterial with an LOS “D” standard. This segment is currently (2007) operating at approximately 63% capacity with reserved trips from approved development increasing to 86% (LOS D). This is a “yellow” road (80% to 100% capacity) in the *Lake County Transportation Concurrency Management System (TCMS)*, operating at the LOS standard. With the anticipated development occurring within the region, additional capacity will soon be required to maintain the adopted LOS standard.

SR 19, in Howey-in-the-Hills, is a two-lane minor arterial with an LOS “C” standard. This segment currently operates at 64% capacity with reserved trips increasing to 86% (LOS C). This is a “yellow” road in the *Lake County TCMS*, operating at the LOS standard.

SR 19, south of Howey-in-the-Hills and into Groveland, is a two-lane arterial with an LOS “C” standard. This segment currently operates at 48% capacity with reserved trips increasing to 82% (LOS C). This is a “yellow” road in the *Lake County TCMS*, operating at the LOS standard.

### County Road 561

CR 561, in Tavares, is a two-lane collector with an LOS “D” standard. This segment currently operates at 76% capacity with reserved trips increasing to 79% (LOS D). This is a borderline “green” road (less than 80% capacity) in the *Lake County TCMS*, operating at the LOS standard.

CR 561, in Astatula, is a two-lane collector with an LOS “D” standard. This segment currently operates at 57% capacity with reserved trips increasing to 64% (LOS D). This is a “green” road in the *Lake County TCMS*, operating at the LOS standard.

CR 561, south of Astatula into Minneola, is a two-lane collector with an LOS “C” standard. This segment currently operates at 48% capacity with reserved trips increasing to 55% (LOS C). This is a “green” road in the *Lake County TCMS*, operating at the LOS standard.

### County Road 48

CR 48, in Leesburg, is a two-lane collector with an LOS “D” standard. This segment currently operates at 47% capacity with reserved trips increasing to 59% (LOS C). This is a “green” road in the *Lake County TCMS*, operating better than the LOS standard.

CR 48, in the unincorporated community of Yalaha and into Howey-in the Hills, is a two-lane collector with an LOS “D” standard. This segment currently operates at 39% capacity with reserved trips increasing to 50% (LOS C). This is a “green” road in the *Lake County TCMS*, operating better than the LOS standard.

### ***System Linkage***

The ETDM Planning screen is taking a network approach to the Central Lake roadway system. The purpose of such an approach is to examine the interrelationship of the three corridors, as improvements to one corridor may remove the need for improvements to another. Additionally, the Little Lake Harris Bridge is a major determining factor, influencing improvements to SR 19 and CR 48. Because of plans to connect CR 561 to Florida’s Turnpike (SR 91), improvements to that corridor may remove the need to improve SR 19 through Howey-in-the-Hills.

### State Road 19

SR 19 extends from US 17 in Palatka in Putnam County south to SR 50 in Groveland in Lake County. SR 19 connects northern Lake County south to the state’s Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), linking US 441 in Tavares with US 27 and Florida’s Turnpike (SR 91), both SIS facilities. SR 19 also connects with SR 40 through the Ocala National Forest, an Emerging SIS facility. The corridor provides a spine through Lake County for north-south travel.

### County Road 48

CR 48 connects SR 19 and Central Lake County west to Florida’s Turnpike (SR 91), via a short connection onto CR 470. CR 48 ultimately continues west to Sumter County and I-75. Another portion of CR 48, once connected via a bridge over Little Lake Harris, is east through Astatula into Orange County. CR 48 is a former state road turned over to Lake County in the late 1970s. The portion of CR 48 that is the subject of the planning screen is a burgeoning east-west connection due to geographical effects of Lake Harris and Little Lake Harris, making the corridor an east-west alternative to US 441.

### County Road 561

CR 561 extends from SR 19 in Tavares south to US 27 in Minneola, where it continues south with US 27 for three miles before deviating west to cross SR 50 and then terminate at SR 33 south of Groveland in Lake County. CR 561 is a former state road turned over to Lake County in the late 1970s. The north-south corridor subject of the planning screen is the primary connection between North Lake and South Lake. Even with SR 19's connection to Florida's Turnpike, CR 561's direct connection between Tavares and Minneola is the primary corridor

### ***Transportation Demand***

As mentioned above, the *Lake~Sumter MPO 2025 LRTP* identifies the need for each of these corridors as a future four or six lane facility. The cost feasible plan shows each as four lanes, with the exception of SR 19 through downtown Howey-in-the-Hills. Volumes are projected to increase significantly through the Central Lake County region, creating a significant need for additional east-west and north-south capacity. The existing network of two-lane roadways is destined to fail. The 2025 LRTP was developed using FDOT, District 5, Central Florida Regional Planning Model, Version 4.

### ***Legislation***

There currently is no legislation mandating action on these corridors, but a Community Budget Issue Request (CBIR) has been filed for a PD&E study on SR 19, from CR 561 to CR 48, including the Little Lake Harris Bridge.

### ***Social Demands or Economic Development***

An improved transportation network through Central Lake County will allow easier access to and from regional attractors, such as Orlando, Tampa, and Ocala, as well as more local attractors, such as The Villages, Four Corners, and Disney World. As mentioned above, there are a number of large-scale developments to the west and south that are soon coming online. The improved transportation network would provide better access to these residential and commercial centers, as well.

### ***Modal Interrelationships***

Central Lake County is not currently served by fixed route transit. SR 19 in Tavares and Howey-in-the-Hills, CR 561 in Tavares, Astatula, and Minneola, and CR 48 from Howey-in-the-Hills to Leesburg have good potential for expansion of the LakeXpress system (as described in the 2020 TDP) but are likely long term (2015-2020) type improvements.

As described in the 2008 Lake County Trails Masterplan, Bicycle/Pedestrian multi-purpose trails are planned for the Central Lake Area including two segments of the Central Lake Trail providing regional connections to established on-road bicycling routes and trail networks in the Leesburg and South Lake areas. Currently CR 48, SR 19 and CR 561 serve as major bicycling routes for the large recreational cycling population linking destinations throughout the region, all three roads have a paved shoulder to better accommodate cyclists. Future improvements for the cycling population could include upgrade from paved shoulders to bike lanes on all roads Pedestrian facilities within the road right-of-way (i.e., sidewalks) are minimal to none. Needed roadway improvements should include enhanced facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The “conceptual” improvements/typical sections for all three roadways (SR 19/CR 561 and CR 48), all will include provisions for both 5’ sidewalks and 4 foot paved shoulders. If County or Local plans, recommend additional non-vehicular improvements (i.e. multi-use Trails) in the future, it is expected that this will be noted in the local/public input portion of this ETDM screening process and/or during subsequent PD&E studies

### ***Safety***

At the base of this planning screen is the need to study the SR 19 corridor for potential widening, particularly through Tavares and including the Little Lake Harris Bridge. While deemed safe by the FDOT, the bridge is aging and showing signs of deterioration. In an attempt to be proactive and avoid a potential safety hazard, efforts are being made to commence a study for the eventual replacement of the bridge.

### ***Roadway Deficiencies***

Each of these regionally significant corridors was initially designed to be a rural facility, not intended to serve suburban and urban areas and their associated travel demand. As mentioned above, the Little Lake Harris Bridge is in need of eventual upgrade and/or replacement. The corridors include several sharp curves and other design flaws for roadways that will be expected to serve much greater travel demand. While some issues have been addressed through resurfacing, each is in need of upgrades to better meet demand