



State Legislative Agenda 2026



Lee County
Southwest Florida

Lee Board of County Commissioners

2115 Second Street | Fort Myers, FL 33901



2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA INTRODUCTION

This document represents the 2026 Florida Legislative Session Agenda of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners. While these priorities guide the County's advocacy efforts in Tallahassee, they are not exhaustive and new issues may arise or evolve that will require Board attention.

Issues are not ranked in order of priority. Commissioners, staff, and contract lobbyists will pursue all legislative policies approved by the Board and place appropriate priority on the issues according to opportunities that arise during the legislative process. As usual, Lee County Commissioners emphasize maintaining home rule authority and opposing cost shifts or unfunded mandates.

The state legislative session will begin January 13, 2026, and conclude March 13, 2026.

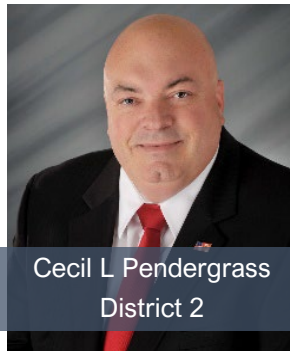
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- SUPPORT AND TRACKING ISSUES
- BACKUP MATERIAL

Lee Board of County Commissioners



Kevin Ruane
District 1



Cecil L. Pendergrass
District 2



David Mulicka
District 3



Brian Hamman
District 4



Mike Greenwell
District 5



2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

PRIORITIES

1) Policy Considerations –

- a. **SUPPORT** modifying state imposed restrictions on transit agency advertising that would generate additional advertising revenue to decrease reliance on taxpayer funding.
- b. **SUPPORT** modifying HB 683 (2025) to allow time frames for Change Order approval that provide local elected authorities opportunity to approve/deny in a transparent process.
- c. **SUPPORT** fully funding the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund to maintain essential transportation services for eligible populations statewide.
- d. **SUPPORT** enhancing FDOT's District 1 Urban Office in Fort Myers to facilitate local decision-making for FDOT priorities within Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Hendry and Glades counties.
- e. **SUPPORT** state funding to improve and widen critical hurricane evacuation routes—especially corridors tied to regional growth—such as Burnt Store Road.

2) SUPPORT Appropriations for Lee County Local Support Project Requests –

- a. **District 21 Medical Examiner Facility – \$2,650,000**
Funding for design and construction of the facilities which serve Lee, Hendry and Glades counties. Rapidly expanding caseloads for both routine and emergency services exceed the capacity of the current facility. (Glades and Hendry are “fiscally constrained” counties).
- b. **Sunshine Boulevard from 75th Street to State Road 80 - \$6,000,000**
Conduct alignment study and Project Development and Environment Study for the Sunshine Boulevard extension from 75th Street to SR 80 in Lehigh Acres.
- c. **Sun Trail Network/Iona Area Sidewalk - \$5,000,000**
Construct a new sidewalk on Pine Ridge Rd from San Carlos Blvd to Summerlin Rd. This would be part of the statewide Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Network.
- d. **Lee County Utilities Fort Myers Beach Water Reclamation Facility - \$5,000,000**
- e. **Lee County Utilities Southeast Force Main Improvements - \$4,000,000**
Construct force mains and upgrade valves to connect the wastewater system to the new Southeast Water Reclamation Facility, supporting growth and improving flow reliability.
- f. **Lee County Utilities North Lee County Wellfield Expansion - \$2,000,000**
Expand sustainable water supply and reduce reliance on freshwater sources.
- g. **Lee County Civic Center - \$950,000**
Fund master planning, design and/or construction for the 92.3-acre site in northeast Lee County, featuring a multi-use event center, agricultural facilities, and community amenities.

2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Lee County Board of Commissioners advocates for the preservation of local home-rule and opposes any legislation, policies or regulations that would impose unfunded responsibilities upon the County.

SUPPORT ISSUES

911 Systems – **SUPPORT** maintaining oversight of 911 systems and networks at the County level, including approval of expenditures. SUPPORT legislation and funding to further regionalize Next Generation 911 systems to improve redundancy and resiliency in the face of disasters.

Development Regulations – **OPPOSE** legislation (e.g., HB 695 (2025)) or regulatory changes that allow private service providers to act as local building officials, thereby undermining public safety and transparency.

Emergency Management – **SUPPORT** additional funding for statewide emergency management systems, including emergency notification systems, coordination platforms, and communications infrastructure.

EMS Balance Billing – **OPPOSE** limitations on the ability of county EMS providers to seek reimbursement for out-of-network transports. SUPPORT requirements for private insurers to pay local governments for the actual cost of emergency service delivery based on audits of expenditures by AHCA.

EMS Regulation – **SUPPORT** maintaining a countywide regulatory system for EMS transport through the current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) process.

FEMA Monitoring – **SUPPORT** monitoring proposed reforms to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and impacts to the State Department of Emergency Management.

Harmful Algal Blooms – **SUPPORT** state initiatives that address the proliferation of harmful algal blooms such as blue-green algae and red tide.

Library Cooperatives – **SUPPORT** continued recurring funding and increase the State's investment in the Multitype Library Cooperatives.

Regional Planning Councils – **SUPPORT** legislation to allow counties to opt out of mandatory membership.

Resiliency/Flood Mitigation – **SUPPORT** state and federal resiliency efforts to identify and address vulnerabilities to public infrastructure and public safety through continued funding of planning and capital improvements.

Waste-to-Energy – **OPPOSE** preemption of new waste to energy construction within a certain distance of specific properties such as residential areas, schools, and similar locations.

Water Management Basin Boundaries – **SUPPORT** updating boundaries of water basin districts according to hydrological conditions to ensure that taxpayers are contributing to the sub-district that best serves them and that water management districts are providing equitable service to all basins. SUPPORT implementing the study commissioned by the legislature to scientifically determine the boundaries of Big Cypress Basin.



Transit Agency Advertising

Background

Public transit systems across Florida support regional mobility and economic activity. To sustain and improve these services, agencies rely on a mix of funding sources, including advertising revenue from placements on vehicles, shelters, and other assets. In 2024, House Bill 1301 imposed new restrictions on advertising that prohibits ads on the exteriors of transit vehicles purchased with Florida Department of Transportation capital funds. These limitations affect a longstanding source of supplemental revenue, potentially leading to reduced service, deferred maintenance, or increased reliance on other funding sources.

Proposal

This proposal recommends restoring transit agencies' ability to generate advertising revenue on approved platforms, including the exteriors of buses funded by the state. Reinstating these advertising opportunities would provide agencies with additional funds to support operations, maintenance, service improvements, and infrastructure investments. Between FY 2019–20 and FY 2023–24, LeeTran generated over \$4.8 million in advertising revenue. The new restrictions reduce annual revenue by approximately \$660,000, representing a significant financial impact. The proposal also encourages expanding advertising options on bus interiors, shelters, benches, and digital platforms, consistent with state funding requirements.

Benefits

Restoring a flexible, cost-effective funding source that transit agencies depend on to support operations and improve LeeTran service. Advertising revenue supplements budgets for maintenance, safety, service expansion, and infrastructure upgrades.



Change Order Management

Background

Local governments establish their own thresholds for when construction Change Orders must be formally reviewed and approved by their elected governing bodies. In Lee County, for example, Change Orders exceeding \$100,000 must undergo internal procurement review before presentation to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration. This process ensures that elected officials entrusted to safeguard taxpayer funds retain direct oversight of significant fiscal decisions. House Bill 683 (2025) requires all public entities to approve or deny construction Change Orders within 35 days, with automatic approval if no action is taken. While intended to expedite project delivery, this provision risks bypassing the accountability of governing boards by allowing substantial expenditures to take effect without elected review when meeting schedules, public notice requirements, or circumstances such as recess or quorum limitations prevent timely board action.

Proposal

This proposal seeks to amend HB 683 to clarify that a Change Order will not be deemed automatically approved if it is placed on a published agenda for consideration by the governing body within the 35-day period. Because thresholds for board approval vary by jurisdiction, the amendment should apply broadly to any Change Orders requiring elected body review under local law or policy. By ensuring that these Change Orders either receive an approval/denial within 35 days or are added to a published agenda within that timeframe, the law would balance timely project delivery with the essential responsibility of elected boards to safeguard public funds. This modification preserves transparency, protects the integrity of fiscal oversight, and ensures that decisions remain in the hands of duly elected representatives rather than being triggered by procedural deadlines.

Benefits

Extending the approval timeline safeguards the integrity of public procurement by ensuring board oversight. This modification reduces fiscal risk, promotes transparency, and upholds accountability in managing public projects.



Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund

Background

The Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund (TDTF) supports Lee County in providing essential transportation for residents with disabilities, low income, or mobility. Administered by the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, the fund enables LeeTran—the County’s Community Transportation Coordinator—to deliver coordinated services like ADA Paratransit, the Cape Coral MiniBus, and the Fixed-Route Bus Pass Program. These services connect residents to healthcare, jobs, education, and other vital needs. The County works with the Metropolitan Planning Organization to ensure services align with the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan and are safe and efficient.

Proposal

Lee County supports full funding of the TDTF as a crucial investment in addressing the mobility needs of vulnerable residents. In 2023, 39,203 individuals were identified with critical transportation needs, and 16,039 daily trips were provided to maintain access to healthcare, employment, and essential services. With over 365,000 transportation-disadvantaged residents countywide, sustained funding is necessary to preserve these services and prevent reductions that would restrict access and independence for thousands.

Benefits

Fully funding the TDTF ensures Lee County residents can get to healthcare, jobs, and school without delays. Reliable transportation leads to better health and economic stability while cutting down costly emergency service use.



Enhance FDOT's District 1 Urban Office

Background

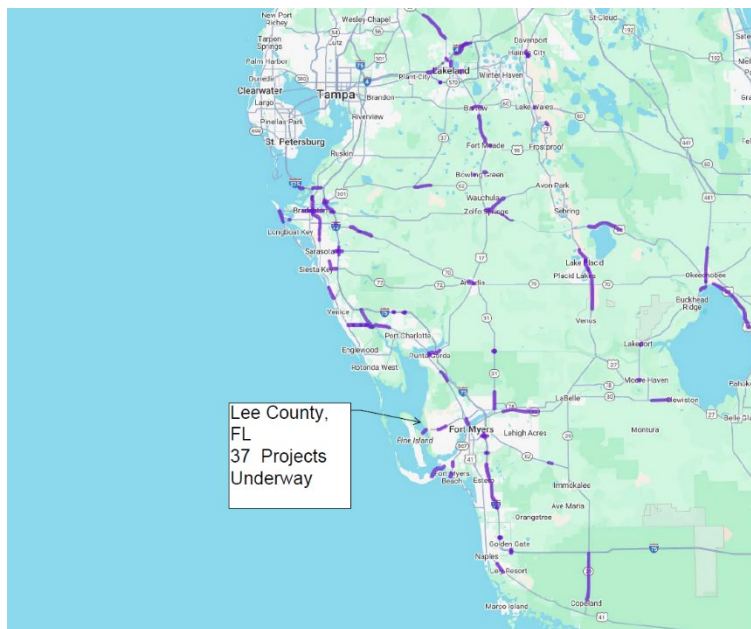
Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 1 encompasses a 12-county region in Southwest Florida. Lee County, the district's most populous, continues to experience significant population growth, infrastructure development, and transportation demand. It serves as a key hub for regional planning, emergency response, and economic activity.

Proposal

This proposal recommends enhancing FDOT's Southwest Area Office in Fort Myers to better align leadership presence with the district's population and its high concentration of FDOT projects. Doing so will strengthen regional planning efforts in emergency management, infrastructure resilience, and interagency coordination.

Benefits

Providing more resources in the District's most populous county enhances coordination with local and regional partners, improves responsiveness to project oversight and emergencies, and supports more efficient decision-making for the district's active transportation needs.





Lee County Facilities District 21 Medical Examiner Facility

Background

The Lee County Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) provides essential forensic services—such as autopsies, death investigations, and the issuance of death certificates—for Lee County, as well as neighboring Hendry and Glades counties. As population growth accelerates, the increasing demand for these services has pushed the current facility beyond capacity. To continue supporting public safety and the justice system effectively, expanding and upgrading the MEO's facilities is now critical.

Proposal

Lee County is requesting \$2.65 million in state funding for design and construction phase services of an expanded Medical Examiner's Office. The project will add 22,000 square feet of morgue and administrative space, increasing capacity and improving efficiency to meet the growing demand for services across Lee, Hendry, and Glades counties. The expansion will streamline workflow and enhance the office's ability to manage a rising caseload. The project received \$875,000 in the FY 2025-26 General Appropriations Act; this additional funding would support the completion of design and the initiation of construction phase services.

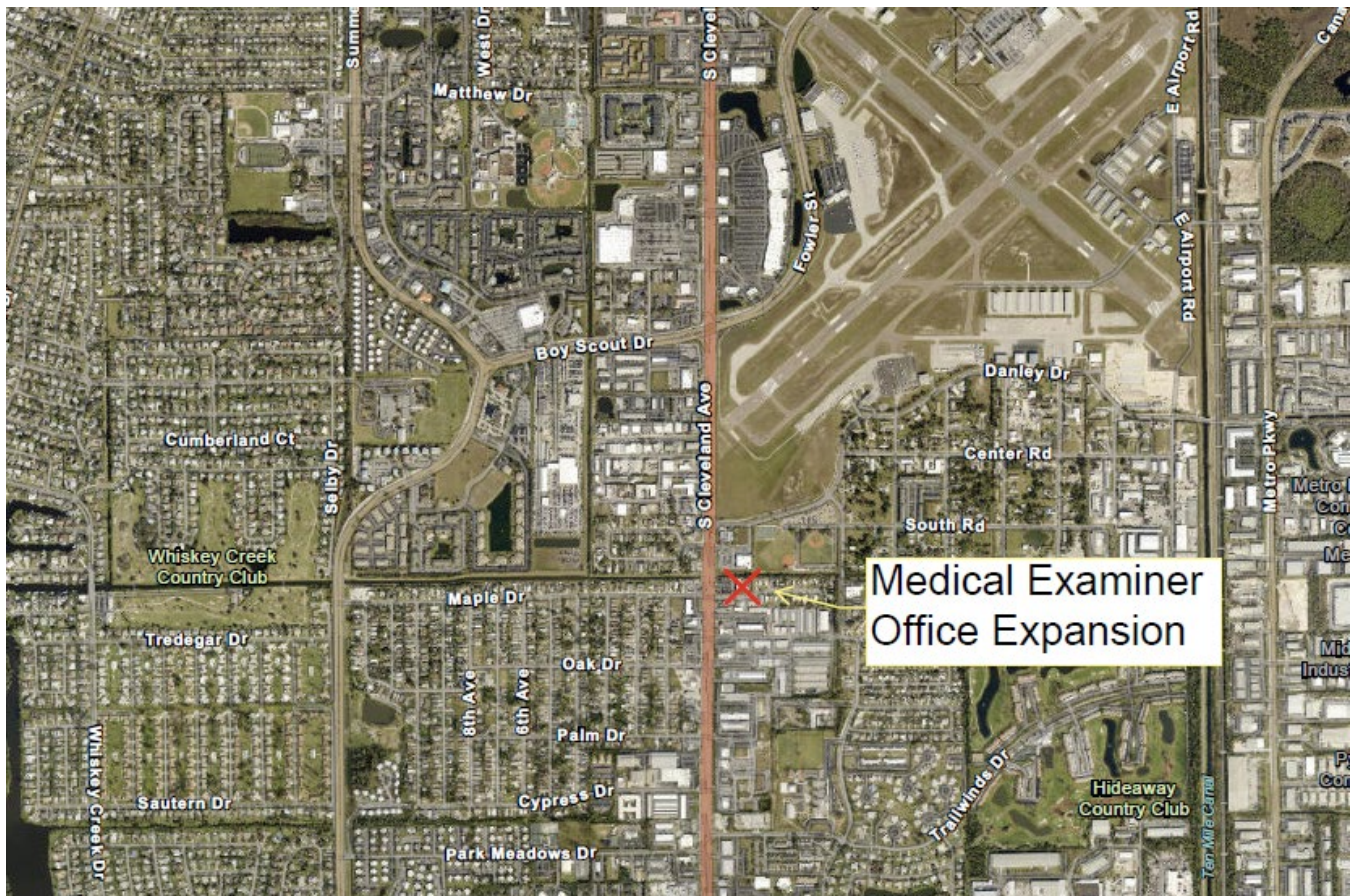
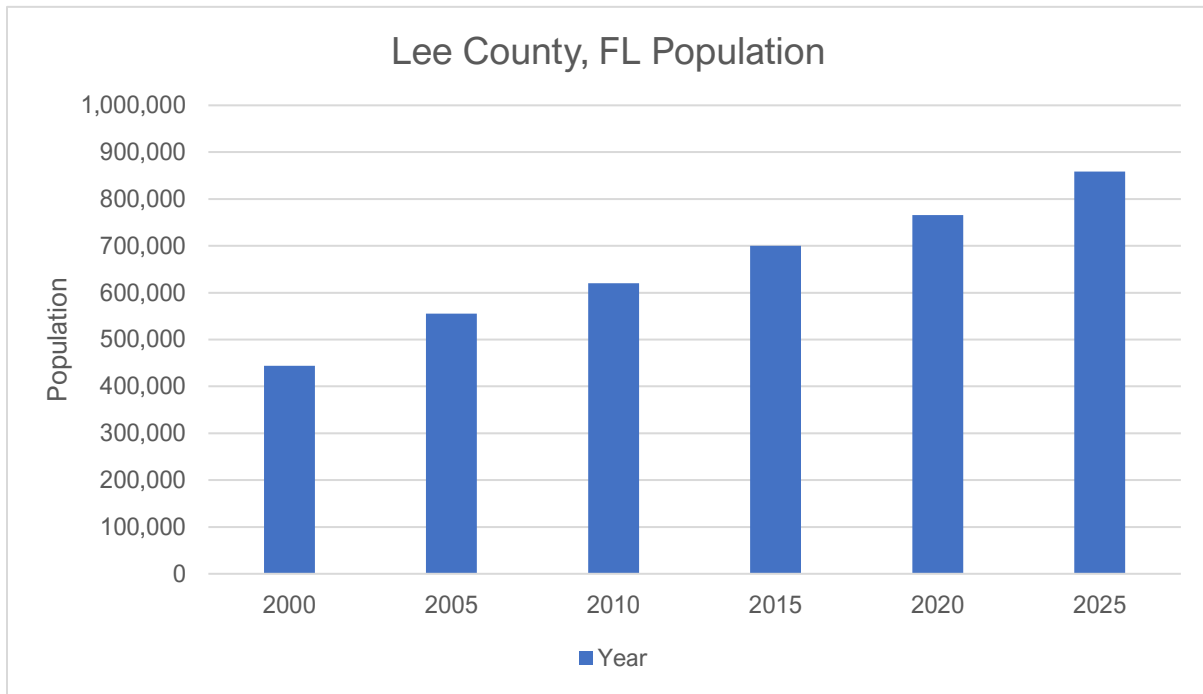
Benefits

This project is vital to the health and safety of Lee, Hendry, and Glades counties. Expanding the Medical Examiner's Office will increase capacity, allowing for faster case processing, improved emergency response, and enhanced public safety. As fiscally constrained counties, Hendry and Glades are unable to fund these critical upgrades on their own. State funding is essential to ensure the continued delivery of vital forensic services to these communities.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$2.65 million
Future requests:	Not yet determined
Total project cost:	Estimated \$40 million

[see images on next page]





Sunshine Boulevard from 75th Street to State Road 80

Background

The Sunshine Boulevard extension project, planned from 75th Street to State Road 80 (SR 80) in Lehigh Acres, addresses the rapid growth and development within Lee County. This area has experienced significant residential and commercial development, leading to increased traffic congestion. This project will support this area's fast-paced growth by improving transportation infrastructure.

Proposal

Lee County seeks funding to conduct an alignment study and a Project Development and Environment study. These studies are essential steps in identifying feasible routes and evaluating potential effects on the community and environment.

Benefits

This project will improve connectivity in Lehigh Acres by connecting major routes and surrounding areas, reducing traffic congestion and supporting the area's rapid growth.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$5 million for FY 2025-2026
Future requests:	Not yet determined.
Total project cost:	To be determined

[location map forthcoming]



Sun Trail Network/Iona Area Sidewalk

Background

Lee County is experiencing a growing population alongside increased pedestrian and bicyclist activity, highlighting the need for improved multimodal transportation infrastructure. Key corridors like Pine Ridge Road see significant pedestrian and bicycle use but currently lack sufficient infrastructure to support safe and accessible travel for these users.

Proposal

Lee County proposes constructing a 6-foot sidewalk and a 5-foot shared-use path along Pine Ridge Road from San Carlos Boulevard to Summerlin Road. This project aims to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety, reduce vehicle conflicts, and improve community connectivity. The corridor is part of FDOT's SUN Trail Program, which develops statewide non-motorized trails. Prioritized by the Lee County Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee based on safety data and community input, this proposal requests funding for construction to advance regional mobility and expand the SUN Trail network.

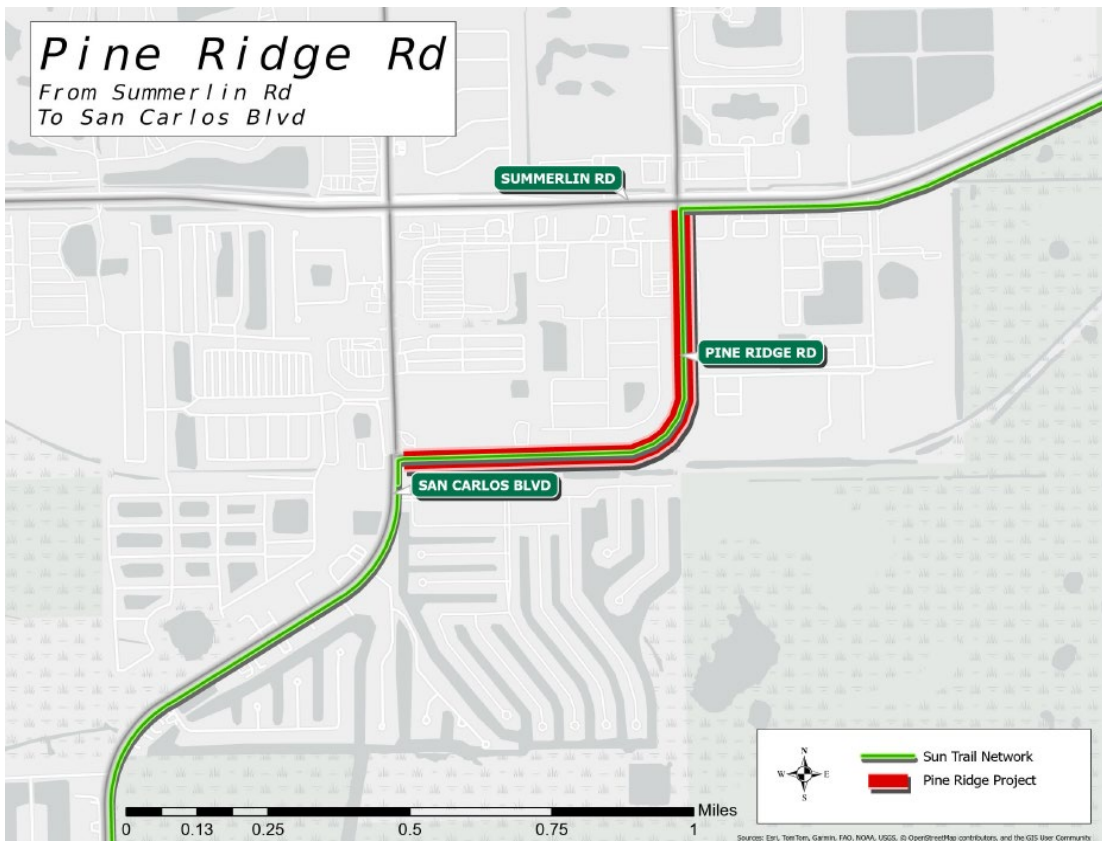
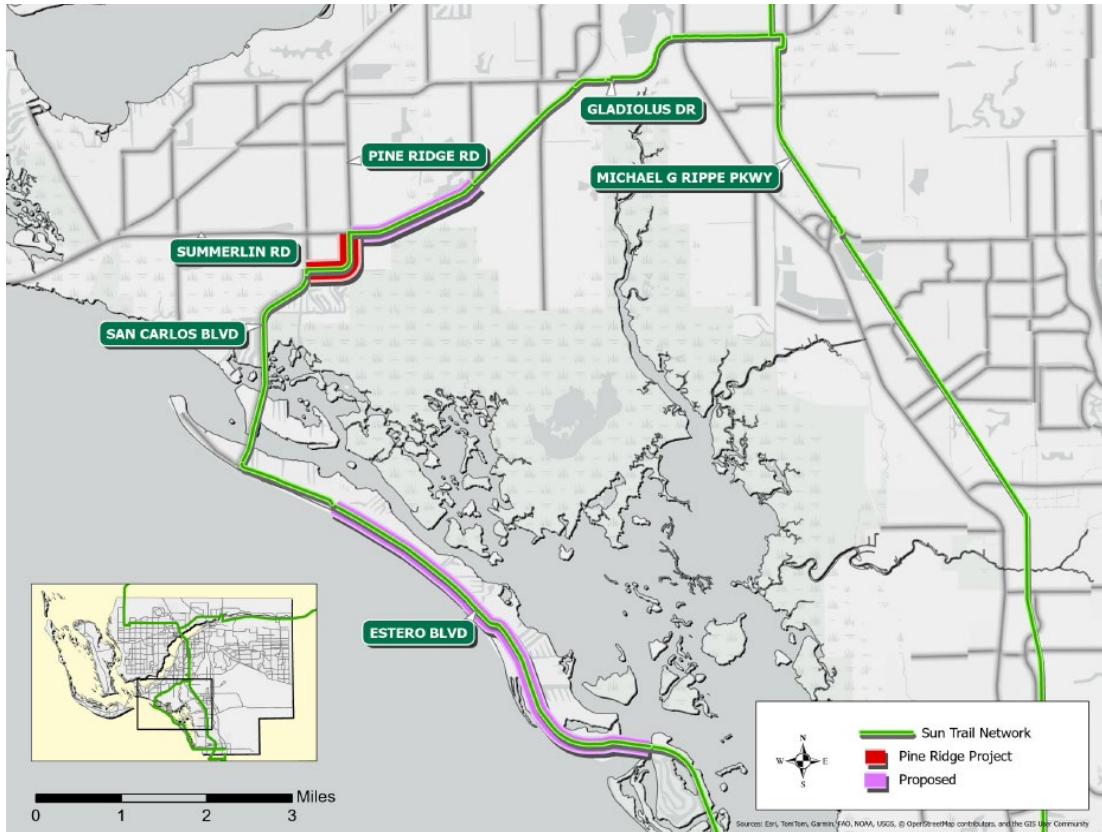
Benefits

This project will improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety by adding dedicated pathways where infrastructure is lacking. It enhances connectivity across Lee County and links to the Florida SUN Trail system, supporting regional mobility goals.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$5 million
Future requests:	Not yet determined.
Total project cost:	Estimated \$7.2 million

[see maps on next page]





Lee County Utilities Fort Myers Beach (FMB) Water Reclamation Facility (WRF)

Background

The Fort Myers Beach Water Reclamation Facility (FMB WRF) is essential for maintaining water quality and environmental health in Lee County. Before Hurricane Ian, the county developed a comprehensive master plan to guide improvements through 2050, focusing on capacity, efficiency, and resiliency. However, the hurricane's five- to seven-foot storm surge in September 2022 caused extensive damage, including saltwater intrusion and flooding that submerged much of the ground-level infrastructure, resulting in electrical failures.

Proposal

This project will rehabilitate and modernize the Fort Myers Beach Water Reclamation Facility to restore treatment capacity, replace aging infrastructure, and repair damage from Hurricane Ian. Key improvements include constructing three advanced Biological Nutrient Removal (BNR) trains – vital in the advanced wastewater treatment process – and implementing hazard mitigation and flood-proofing measures to protect the facility from future climate impacts, ensuring reliable service for coastal communities.

Benefits

By incorporating advanced treatment technologies like BNR trains, the project directly supports the goals of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Caloosahatchee River and Estuaries Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP), as the facility is located within the designated service area. The upgrades will restore and expand wastewater treatment capacity for 27% of Lee County Utilities' service area. Climate-resilient features will prevent service disruptions and sewer overflows during severe weather, protecting public health and improving long-term sustainability.

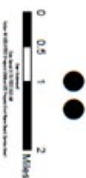
Funding

State funding requested:	\$5 million for FY 2026-2027
Lee County match:	Balance of project costs
Future requests:	None anticipated
Total project cost:	Estimated \$209 million

[see map on next page]



FORT MYERS BEACH WRF SERVICE AREA LEE COUNTY UTILITIES





Lee County Utilities Southeast Force Main Improvements

Background

Lee County's southeastern region is experiencing significant growth, creating a need for expanded wastewater infrastructure. To meet this demand, the County is constructing the Southeast Water Reclamation Facility (SEWRF) to increase treatment capacity and system reliability. Concurrently, the Southeast County Force Main Improvements project is underway to support efficient flow distribution and ensure proper connectivity between existing infrastructure and the new facility.

Proposal

The purpose of this project is to construct a new wastewater infrastructure that will connect Lee County's existing force main network to the Southeast Water Reclamation Facility (SEWRF). These improvements are necessary to support the continued growth of southeast Lee County and to improve system reliability by diverting a portion of flow currently treated at the Three Oaks Water Reclamation Facility. Project components include the installation of new force mains, valve and lift station modifications, and associated utility work. Construction will be coordinated with the Alico Road Widening Project to reduce community disruption and maximize efficiency. The improvements will also provide expanded service capacity for commercial and industrial developments along Corkscrew Road, enabling continued economic growth in the region.

Benefits

This project ensures reliable wastewater service for a fast-growing region by expanding system capacity and improving flow between treatment plants. Reducing demand on the Three Oaks facility increases efficiency and resilience, especially during peak loads. Infrastructure upgrades along Corkscrew Road support continued residential and commercial development, attracting investment and sustaining economic growth. Located within the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Everglades West Coast Basin Management Action Plan, the project also reduces reliance on septic tanks—protecting water quality and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$4 million
Future requests:	To be determined.
Total project cost:	\$7.9 million

[see map on next page]





Lee County Utilities North Lee County Wellfield Expansion

Background

Lee County Utilities (LCU) serves a growing population and is actively working to ensure a sustainable, long-term water supply. In response to increased demand and in line with the 2023 Lee County Utilities Master Plan, LCU is implementing strategic improvements to expand its Alternative Water Supply (AWS) program. This program focuses on diversifying water sources and strengthening the resilience of the region's potable water system.

Proposal

LCU requests funding to construct a raw water transmission pipeline connecting five new brackish groundwater wells in North Fort Myers to the North Lee County Reverse Osmosis (RO) Water Treatment Plant. The project involves installing approximately 5 miles of pipeline to transport brackish water for treatment and potable distribution. This phase (3B) of the North Lee County Wellfield Expansion, identified in the 2023 LCU Master Plan, addresses rising regional water demand. It supports LCU's AWS strategy by using alternative water sources, reducing freshwater aquifer stress, and enhancing system reliability.

Benefits

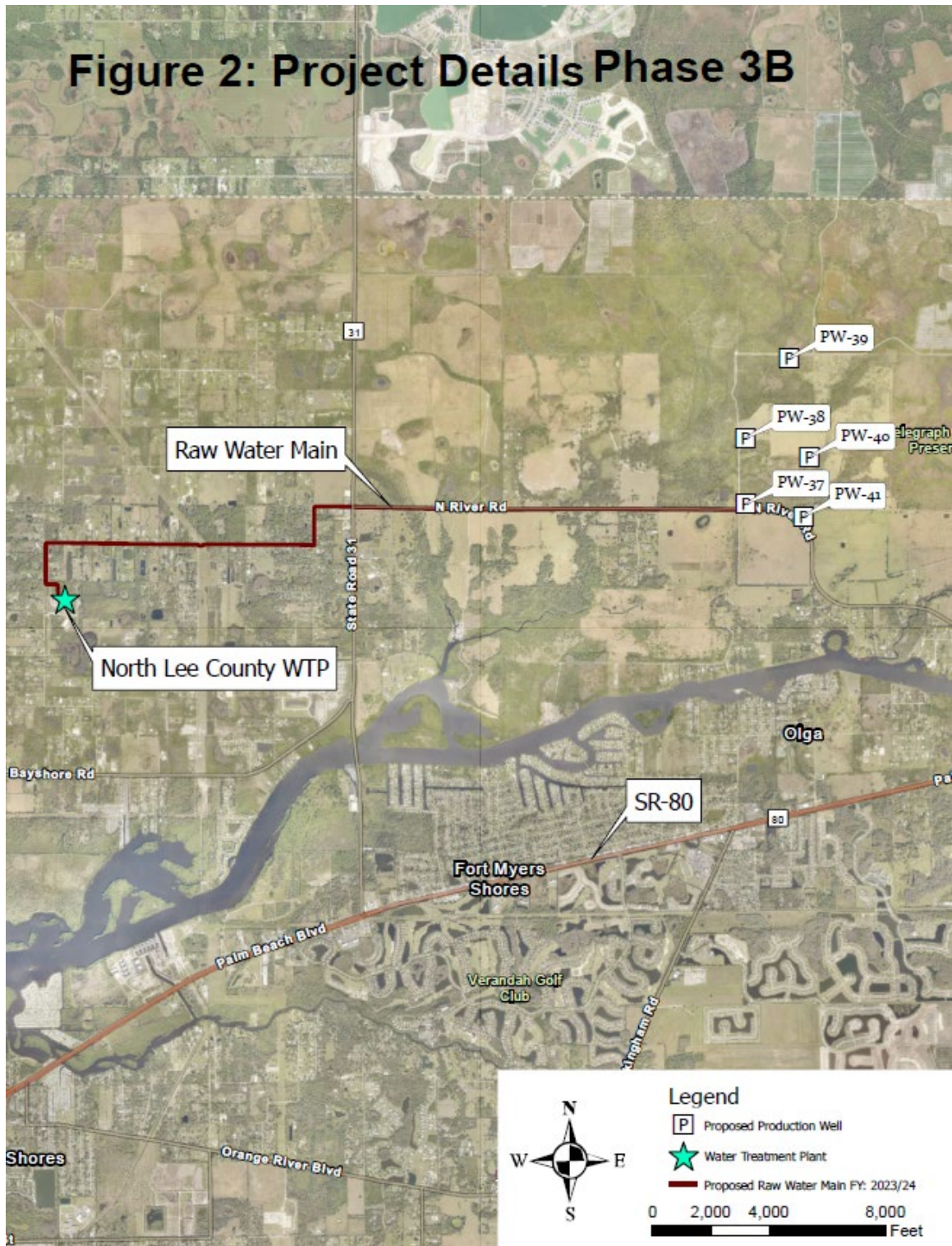
This project enhances Lee County's potable water reliability by developing drought-resilient brackish groundwater as an alternative source. It meets growing regional demand while reducing reliance on vulnerable freshwater aquifers. By shifting to deeper brackish sources, it protects shallow aquifer recharge, promotes responsible water management, and ensures a stable supply of potable water and fire protection in North Lee County.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$2 million
Future requests:	To be determined
Total project cost:	\$21.2 million

[see map on next page]

Figure 2: Project Details Phase 3B





Lee County Civic Center

Background

The Lee County Civic Center Complex in North Fort Myers is a multi-use facility owned by Lee County. Since opening in 1978, the 92.3-acre site has hosted concerts, trade shows, fairs, sporting events, and community gatherings. The complex features a large arena, animal barns, support buildings, and open grounds, and serves as the longtime home of the Southwest Florida & Lee County Fair. Due to aging infrastructure and changing community needs, the facility is currently under review.

Proposal

This project seeks funding to develop a master plan for the design and construction of the Lee County Civic Center Complex and fairgrounds. The goal is to transform the site into a modern, multi-use community hub that supports agricultural education, public engagement, and economic development.

Planned improvements include a new regional event center, upgraded animal barns and show arena, a multi-use educational facility, improved 4-H offices, restrooms, and RV accommodations, along with redesigned stormwater systems and walking paths. Passive recreation areas will be integrated to promote outdoor activity and wellness. In partnership with Lee County School District and FGCU's School of Agribusiness, upgraded facilities will expand opportunities for agricultural education and youth development. Infrastructure enhancements will also support better tracking of events, participation, and revenue, improving operational efficiency.

Benefits

Redeveloping the Civic Center Complex will create a vibrant space that attracts more events, benefiting local businesses and supporting job growth. Enhanced partnerships will strengthen agricultural education and provide valuable learning opportunities for the community. The complex will continue to serve as a cultural gathering place, fostering community engagement.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$950,000
Future requests:	Not yet determined.
Total project cost:	Estimated \$53 million

[see images on next page]

