

2024-2025

# PUBLIC INFORMATION

## ANNUAL REPORT



CENTRAL  
FLORIDA  
EXPRESSWAY  
AUTHORITY



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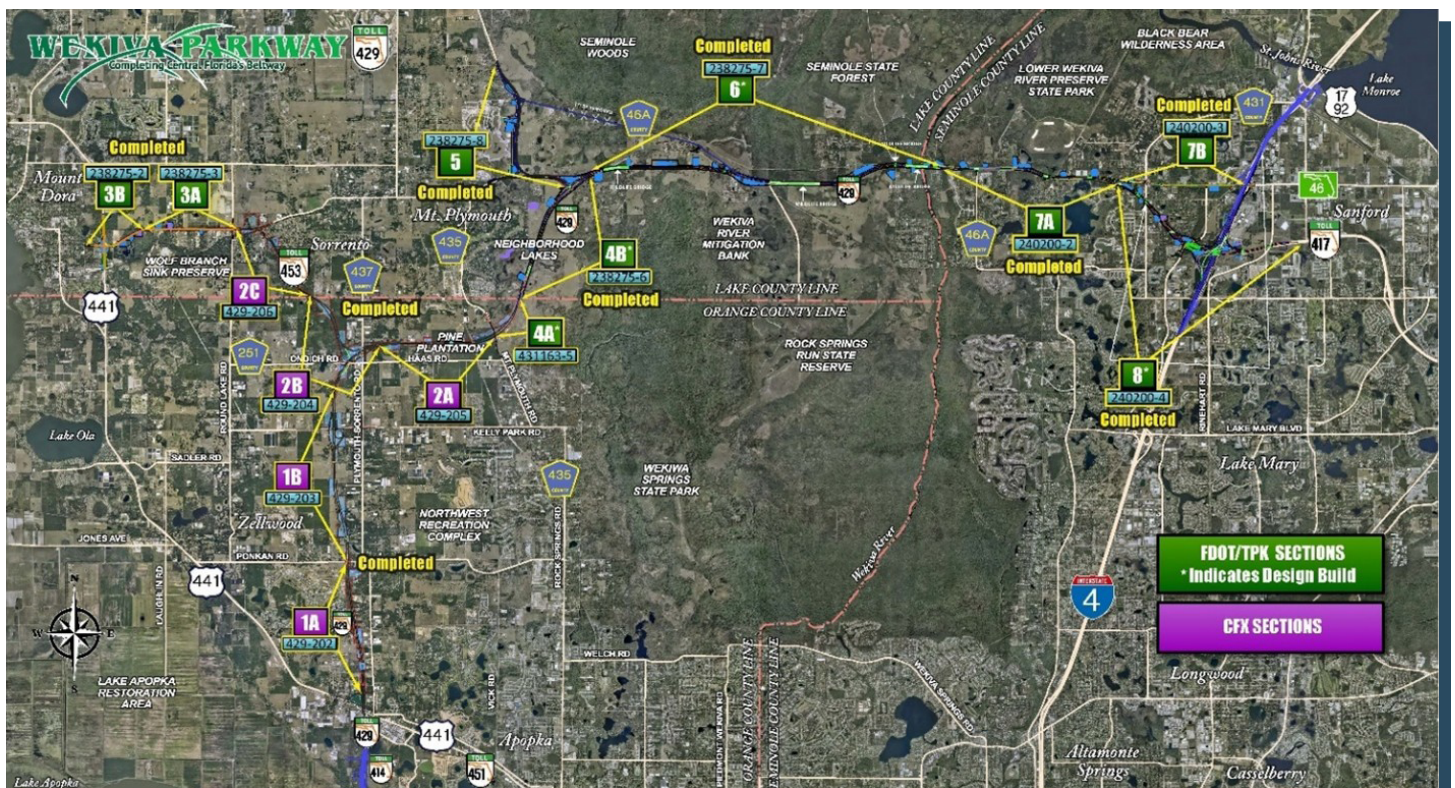
## Introduction

2024 was a watershed year for the Wekiva Parkway as the final section opened to traffic on January 27. This milestone capped a nearly 30-year journey to connect State Roads (S.R.) 429 and 417 with Interstate 4 (I-4), thereby completing the 100-plus-mile beltway around Central Florida. The feat was even more momentous as it was accomplished while helping to protect the natural resources surrounding the Wekiva River, a National Wild and Scenic River and Outstanding Florida Water.

The product of extensive federal, state and regional collaboration, the Wekiva Parkway was a cooperative effort driven by the Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Five, with wholehearted engagement from many other agencies, government partners and stakeholder groups. This included Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, which provided design input and manages toll operations on the FDOT sections. Each had a hand in making the parkway a reality.

Today, tens of thousands of travelers enjoy the 25-mile parkway's convenience while heading to destinations near and far, around and outside of the Wekiva River Basin. The sprawling basin is home to dozens of rare and threatened species, their habitat, springs and other natural resources.

Development of the \$1.6 billion Wekiva Parkway involved comprehensive improvements that have helped connect communities, support commerce and protect the gem that is the Wekiva River Basin for generations to come.





Part of a comprehensive mobility enhancement program, the parkway included about \$500 million in non-toll road improvements:

- **Widened seven miles of S.R. 46 in Lake and Seminole counties**
- **Rebuilt the U.S. 441/S.R. 46 interchange in Mount Dora**
- **Moved about a mile of County Road (C.R.) 46A out of the Seminole State Forest so wildlife can move safely between habitats**
- **Built parallel, non-tolled service roads for local trips in east Lake and Seminole counties**

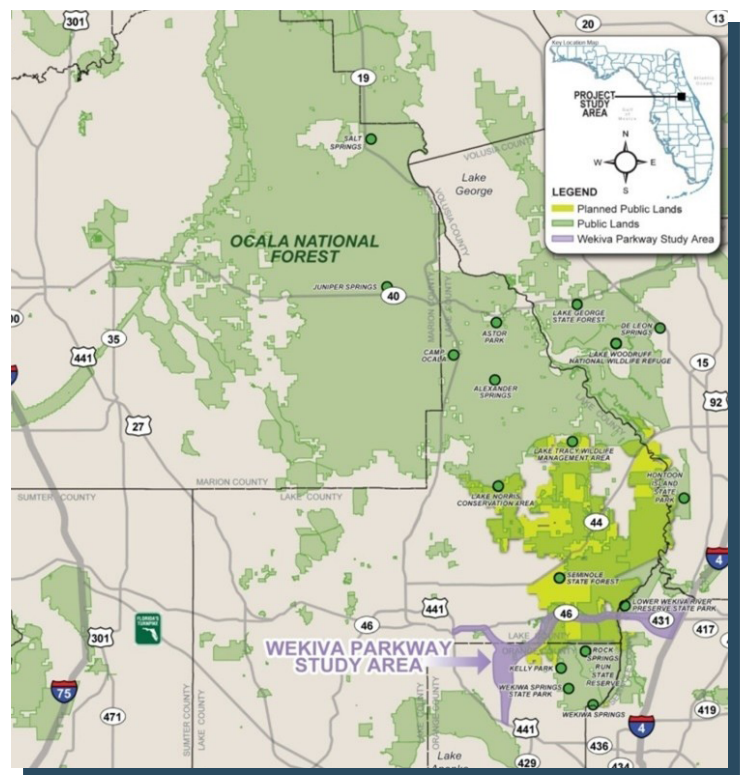
Construction on the parkway began in 2013, with FDOT opening the first sections in 2016. New sections came online nearly every year. Today, the completed parkway provides travel alternatives, helping to relieve traffic congestion on U.S. 441, S.R. 46, I-4 and other roads. Travel has become easier and faster between Lake, Orange and Seminole counties.

## Unprecedented Natural Protections

The Wekiva Parkway's landmark design helps to protect the Wekiva River – a National Wild and Scenic River and Outstanding Florida Water. It also helps to protect the Wekiva River Basin – a key component in a much larger natural corridor known as the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway. The corridor provides habitat for many rare or threatened species, including the Florida Black Bear, Bald Eagles, Burrowing Owls, Sandhill Cranes, Gopher Tortoises and Florida Scrub Jays. The basin includes more than 25 springs connected to the Florida Aquifer. Vast areas of floodplains and wetlands, including the Wekiva and Seminole Swamps, are located west of the river.

The State of Florida since the 1960s has endeavored to acquire tracts needed to complete the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway, including Wekiwa Springs State Park, Rock Springs Run State Reserve and the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park. The landmark conservation of 3,400 acres of land as part of developing the Wekiva Parkway has further enhanced this natural corridor.

Parkway development also has included building about 1.5 miles of wildlife bridges and other safeguards for animals. The parkway is largely elevated to reduce collisions between vehicles and wildlife. The number of interchanges was limited to curb development in this sensitive natural area.







The Wekiva Parkway was the first expressway in Central Florida to feature All Electronic Tolling (AET) for the greatest customer convenience and to keep traffic moving. There are no toll plazas – motorists pay their tolls at safe highway and ramp speeds using E-PASS, SunPass, or other Florida-accepted transponders.

By early 2023, the agencies had opened 23 miles of the Wekiva Parkway to traffic across the three counties. All CFX sections of the parkway have been open since 2018 and have experienced higher than anticipated trips by motorists enjoying the convenience. The agency set the standard for parkway aesthetics, including a color palette of warm earth tones of brown, green and tan, stone relief with eco-staining on bridge piers and walls, gently arched bridge beams, decorative pedestrian railing and enhanced landscaping.

This report is intended to provide CFX, FDOT and other interested parties with a summary of 2024-2025 Wekiva Parkway project milestones and community awareness activities.

The Community Outreach Specialist (COS) team coordinates community awareness initiatives for both agencies for the 25-mile corridor. Since 2004, the COS team has worked with FDOT and CFX communications teams to maintain consistent messaging across the project corridor and with all local government and stakeholder groups. Community outreach staff worked in tandem with FDOT District Five Communications



Director Cindi Lane and Communications Manager Matthew Richardson, as well as with CFX Community Engagement Manager Brian Hutchings. The consultant Wekiva Parkway community outreach team in 2024 included Mary Brooks, Susan Miller, Lisa Mark, LaTiesha Rivera, Chris Ward, Samantha Scarpe, Ashley Moore and other support associates.

## Communicating with Communities

CFX and FDOT over the years have remained committed to ensuring the community has multiple and varied opportunities to learn about and provide input into the parkway's development. Outreach activities follow the strategies of the Wekiva Parkway Corridor-wide Community Awareness Plan (CAP). Intensive and ongoing public engagement since 2005 was accomplished via 34 public meetings and hearings drawing more than 8,000 attendees, and more than 900 stakeholder and community group meetings and special events reaching well over 10,000 people.

The long-term, robust communications helped fuel the development of a project that addresses diverse community and natural resource needs and concerns, while also creating a transportation facility that has become a source of community pride and an example of regional collaboration. The agencies have employed grassroots and digital strategies to broaden the public's access to project information. The project website, [www.wekivaparkway.com](http://www.wekivaparkway.com), finished 2024 with more than



45,500 visits for the year. All told, the site has amassed 498,633 visits from its launch in 2012 through December 31, 2024. Social media project accounts have nearly 2,800 followers and reach many more individuals via subsequent shares.

Over the years, communications staff have responded to thousands of queries via the project hotline, email address, social media, and personal contact. All public interactions were shared with the agencies and project teams and documented in the project database.

Throughout this project, coordination with agency staff and project design-build and construction teams remained critical to keep officials, the media and other community members apprised of road and ramp closures and detours.

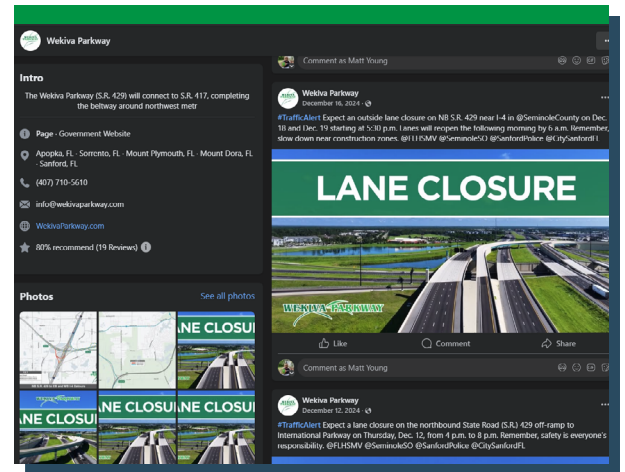
Following are the project agencies, key firms and opening dates for each parkway section:

<b>Project Section</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Design Firm</b>	<b>Construction Oversight Firm</b>	<b>Contractor</b>	<b>Open to Traffic</b>
<b>Section 1A</b>	CFX	HNTB	RK&K	Prince Construction	July 2017
<b>Section 1B</b>	CFX	Bowyer Singleton & Associates (now Dewberry)	GAI	Superior Construction	July 2017
<b>Section 2A</b>	CFX	Parsons	KCCS	Superior Construction	March 2018
<b>Section 2B</b>	CFX	Atkins	A <sup>2</sup> Group	Southland Construction	March 2018
<b>Section 2C</b>	CFX	DRMP	Jacobs	GLF Construction	March 2018
<b>Section 3A</b>	FDOT	Moffatt & Nichol	RK&K	GLF Construction	November 2020
<b>Section 3B</b>	FDOT	Lochner	RK&K	GLF Construction	November 2020
<b>Section 4A/4B Design-Build</b>	FDOT	FDOT	Jacobs	The de Moya Group	January 2016
<b>Section 5</b>	FDOT	CDM Smith	FDOT	Halifax Paving	October 2019
<b>Section 6 Design-Build</b>	FDOT	GAI	RS&H	Superior Construction (Design Partners: Arcadis & WGI)	May 2022
<b>Section 7A</b>	FDOT	AECOM	Conсор	SEMA Construction	August 2022
<b>Section 7B</b>	FDOT	JMT	FDOT	Masci Contractors	July 2022
<b>Section 8 Design-Build</b>	FDOT	AtkinsRéalisis	Metric Engineering	Lane Construction (Design Partner: DRMP)	January 27, 2024





Following the conclusion of major construction, the communications team continued to address public inquiries as finishing work and landscaping efforts progressed along the corridor. To ensure the public had ample, advanced warning about traffic impacts due to construction, the communications team distributed numerous construction alerts in 2024. That effort included social media and website posts and e-blasts to officials, the media, residents and businesses in the project database. Agency and communications team staff also coordinated with navigational map services.



## Celebrating Historic Connections

To mark the historic opening of the final parkway section, FDOT hosted more than 150 national, state, regional, local agency and government leaders, environmental and community stakeholders and project staff at a January 26, 2024, ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Many of those in attendance had been involved with the parkway's development for years, some for decades. The event - leading up to and on the day of - was broadly and positively covered by the media.

The Department in February also held a free community festival inviting the public to join in the historic celebration. About 200 people attended the festival featuring guest speakers and a tree planting, 30 booths and law enforcement vehicle exhibits, a bike ride, guided nature hikes, a high school jazz ensemble and food truck.





## Documenting the Wekiva Parkway Legacy

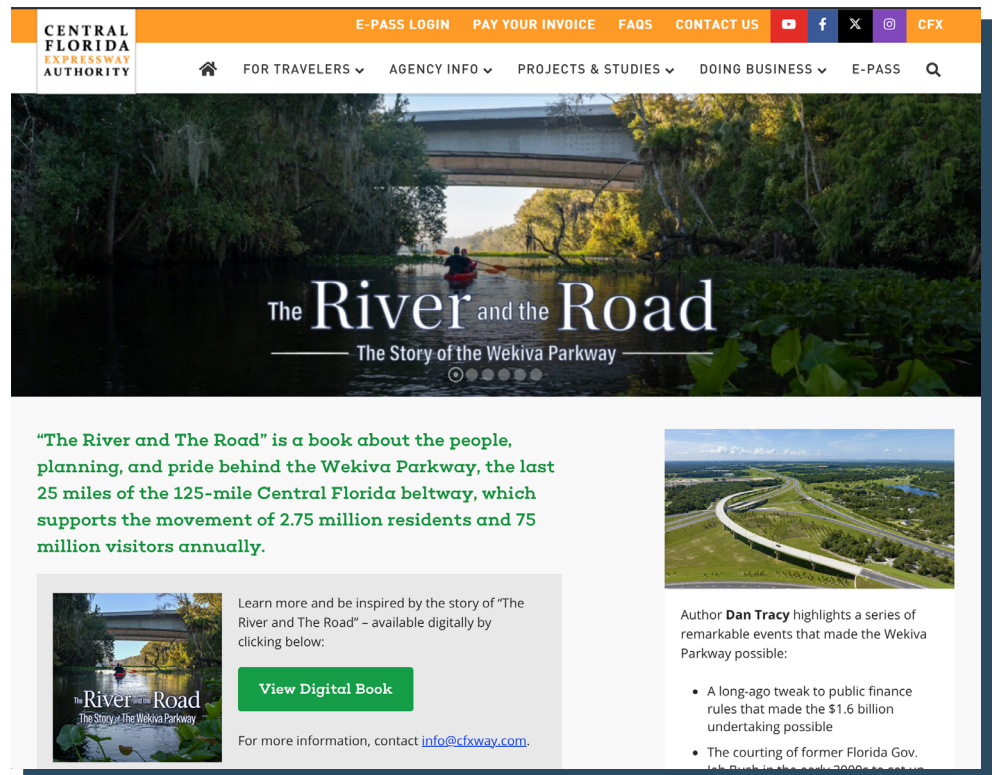
Now that the decades-long Wekiva Parkway vision has been fully realized, the agencies that brought this massive project to life have turned to memorializing its legacy. CFX and FDOT developed prominent reminders paying homage to this enormous achievement of regional collaboration, enhanced mobility and natural resource protection.

CFX in 2024 published “The River and The Road” digital book, detailing the story of the parkway. The book includes dramatic photos and video of the parkway corridor and interviews with those who were instrumental in helping the vision to become reality. The digital book can be viewed [here](#).

FDOT also implemented several measures to commemorate the scale and importance of the parkway.

As part of the community festival held on February 24, 2024, dignitaries unveiled a commemorative plaque

the Department installed at the Neighborhood Lakes Trailhead near the S.R. 429 interchange in Sorrento. The plaque honors the commitment to safeguard the Wekiva Parkway’s natural resources, as well as the hard work, dedication and regional collaboration that inspired the parkway’s incredible journey. The plaque includes the logos of all of the agencies and other partners who worked together to make the parkway a success.







The Department also designed Challenge Coins that have been shared with many of the area leaders, other officials and key stakeholders who have played a part in developing the Wekiva Parkway. On one side, the coin features the logos of the various agencies that came together to make the parkway a reality, and on the other side, a tribute to the parkway's commitment to safety and sustainability.



FDOT in December 2024 finished installing a Wekiva Parkway gateway monument near the interchange of S.R. 429, S.R. 417 and I-4. The monument serves as a reminder of the decades of monumental efforts, stakeholder engagement and regional collaboration that went into completing Central Florida's beltway. The monument mirrors one installed in 2018 by CFX on the other end of the parkway north of U.S. 441 in Apopka.

The gateway monument also alerts drivers that they are entering the revered Wekiva River Basin, home to dozens of rare and threatened species.



In 2024, the Department approved a design for Wekiva Parkway scenic highway signs to be placed along the corridor. In early 2025, crews began installing both large panel, free-standing signs as well as smaller panels below the road designation shields.

The signs aim to remind drivers about the corridor's natural protections and to encourage them to be vigilant for wildlife in the Wekiva River Protection Area.

The slogan, "Keeping It Wild," is a nod to the goal of ensuring the basin's natural resources will be preserved and enjoyed for generations to come.



# PIECE BY PIECE: **BUILDING THE WEKIVA PARKWAY**

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

Even after FDOT opened the final piece of the parkway – Section 8 – in early 2024, finishing work continued through much of the year on that section. The Department also continued implementing the bold landscaping plan on various sections. Communications staff continued to address questions and concerns from community members on completed parkway sections, as well as matters relating to the final signage, landscaping and other finishing work.

### **Section 3A/3B**

The non-tolled road improvements in Mount Dora included widening more than three miles of S.R. 46 and U.S. 441 to six lanes in anticipation of the increased traffic trying to get to the parkway. Work began in October 2017 and was successfully completed in the fall of 2021.

The project included converting the former U.S. 441/S.R. 46 interchange into a more modern, signalized intersection with a flyover bridge. Work included installing medians, streetlights and pedestrian and cycling improvements.



The opening of the flyover bridge in September 2020 represented one of many safety and mobility milestones for this project in Lake County. The flyover bridge helped to eliminate traffic backups that existed at the intersection prior to the project.

The communications team in 2024 continued to address questions and concerns on this section regarding drainage, signage, streetlights and landscaping, as well as visibility concerns from the Southernaire Mobile Home Park related to their noise wall.

### **Section 4A/4B**

The first stretch of the parkway, the 3.14 miles of Sections 4A and 4B, opened to traffic in 2016. This parkway section – which introduced Central Florida to all electronic tolling – stretches from C.R. 435/Mount Plymouth Road in Orange County, across the county line and ending in an interchange at S.R. 46 near Camp Challenge Road in Lake County.





This section includes a floodplain bridge that during the dry season allows animals to safely pass under traffic to get between habitats.

With the opening of the adjoining parkway stretch to the east, Section 6, traffic on Sections 4A and 4B grew dramatically. In 2024, this stretch averaged 21,500 daily trips.

## Section 5

Wekiva Parkway Section 5 involved realigning about a mile of C.R. 46A out of the Seminole State Forest. The newly realigned C.R. 46A opened in late 2019.

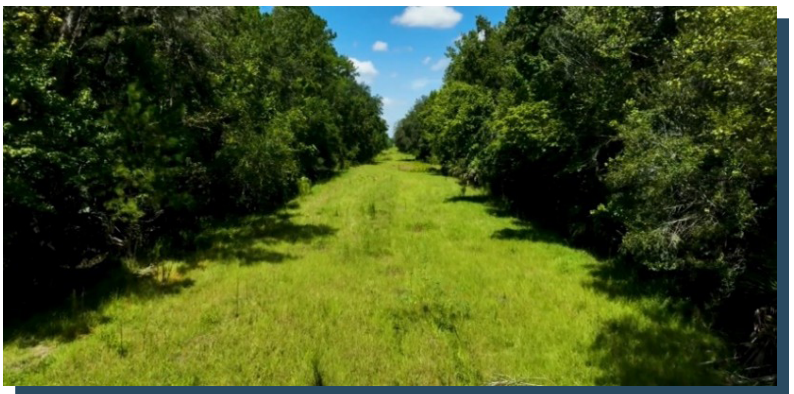
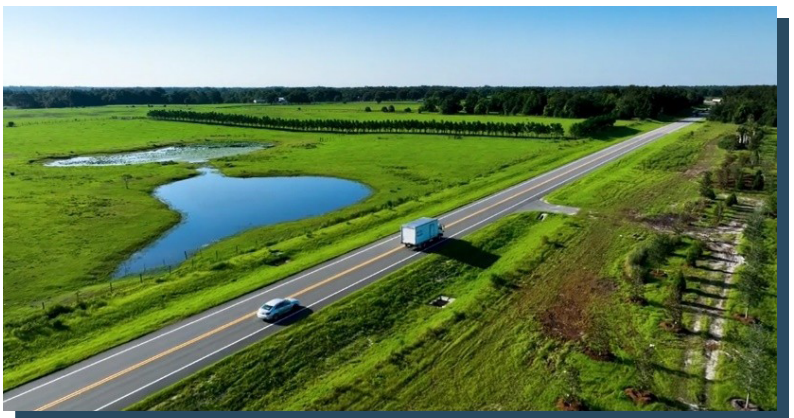
With FDOT's commitment to communities, and after extensive resident coordination and input, the Department expanded the landscaping project from 1,788 plant specimens to 2,055 specimens.

The realignment was a key requirement of the 2004 Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act. The goal in relocating the roadway was to allow wildlife to safely cross between habitats in the state forest - out of harm's way from vehicular traffic.

By 2024, nature was already reclaiming the abandoned roadway corridor as intended.

## Section 6

The parkway's longest stretch is also one of the most used, averaging approximately 30,500 daily trips in 2024. This 6.6-mile section extends from Longwood-Markham Road to the S.R. 429 interchange near Camp Challenge Road in Sorrento. The \$232.4 million design-build project contains the lion's share of the wildlife protections on the parkway.





Section 6 is largely elevated and is paralleled by the S.R. 46 frontage road and a multi-use trail. There are 1.5 miles of wildlife crossing bridges – providing nearly 100 times the protection for animals as the previous two tunnels near Rock Springs State Reserve. The wildlife crossing bridges are designed for the safety of both the road users and the animals in the Wekiva River Basin.

At 3,900 feet long, the Wekiva Parkway wildlife crossing at Rock Springs Run Reserve is the second longest span designated specifically for the safe passage of animals in the state. (The longest wildlife crossing spans 4,751 feet over the Yellow River along S.R. 87 in northwest Florida.) All together, the Wekiva Parkway's multiple wildlife crossing bridges are the longest series of structures (7,710 feet) built along the same roadway section to accommodate wildlife in Florida.

This section also features special wildlife fencing to deter animals from entering the corridor. The fencing is 10 feet high, with two feet underground to discourage animals from burrowing into the right of way. Jump outs – or breaks in the fencing – allow animals that wander onto the roadway corridor to safely return to their habitat. Bat houses also are present to support that species.

One of the wildlife crossings is the signature feature for the parkway – the Wekiva River bridges.

The three, 60-foot-tall bridges put the deck in the tree canopy to visually buffer it from surrounding communities. Animals can pass safely underneath along the riversides, as opposed to having to cross S.R. 46.





The new, much higher Wekiva River crossing features enhanced aesthetics to help the structure blend in with the natural surroundings. Dark brown coloring and concrete forming on the bridge piers mimics the interwoven tree trunks found along the riverside. Bridge beams are slightly arched to provide almost a cathedral experience for those using the river.

The bridges were built using “top-down construction.” No equipment was placed in the river to minimize impacts to the nationally recognized waterway.

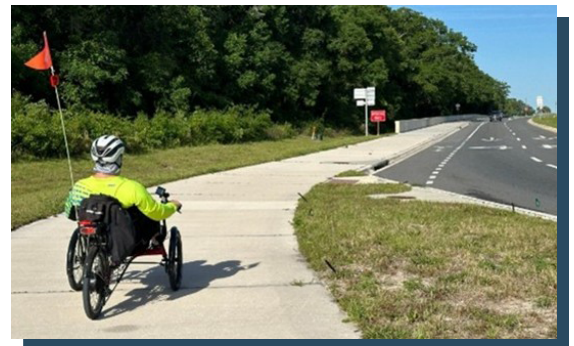
In keeping with the Department’s commitment for bold landscaping, FDOT’s contractor installed more than 10,000 trees, shrubs and other plants along Section 6 in Lake County. Project team members coordinated closely with adjacent residents on their questions and requests regarding the types, condition and location of trees and plants.

## Wekiva Parkway Trail

The parkway on this section is paralleled by a non-tolled, service road for local travel and a multi-use trail. Section 6 holds the majority of the 10-mile trail, which is enhancing pedestrian and cyclist mobility along the corridor, as well as improving access to the adjacent state conservation lands.

The Wekiva Parkway Trail provides a critical connection between the planned Lake-Wekiva Trail, Seminole Wekiva Trail and planned extension of the West Orange Trail.

The parkway service road bridge provides a crucial crossing of the Wekiva River for area trails. The parkway trail also runs concurrently with part of the renowned Florida National Scenic Trail.



## Community Coordination

In 2024, Department and communications staff continued to work closely with residents, business owners and county officials on myriad project questions and concerns. Staff coordinated with community members on issues including drainage, signage, landscaping, lighting and mowing.

FDOT coordinated extensively with the design-build team and county officials regarding residents’ concerns that a dry pond at Wekiva Park Drive was not operating as planned. Communications staff diligently provided Seminole County Commissioner Andria Herr, county Public Works staff and residents with ongoing updates on efforts to redesign and permit the drainage system modifications to address the concerns. The Department also continued





working diligently to address drainage concerns by a large landholder on Webb's Way.

Despite placing signs to discourage people on River Oaks Circle from driving, parking and using recreational vehicles under the Wekiva River bridges, the destruction of landscaping and drainage facilities, and potential damage to the sidewalk continued. The activity also lessened the likelihood that animals would use the area to safely pass under parkway traffic.

The Department tried a number of measures, including a chainlink fence, to address the concerns.

In December of 2024, FDOT, the Department's Asset Management contractor and communications staff met with Wekiva River Oaks HOA board members to discuss options that could help. The Department and HOA board members agreed to place farm style fence several feet behind the River Oaks Circle sidewalk under the bridges to discourage the malicious activity. The fence type was chosen to keep with the rural nature of the area, and was to be located so as not to block the view of the community's entrance.



There was also discussion about perhaps placing landscaping and possible hardscape features in front of the new ranch style fence to keep people from driving and parking on the sidewalk.

The Department in 2024 continued to collaborate with adjacent property owners regarding what they wanted to see for landscaping in their locations. This included field meetings with residents such as those abutting an easement on the west side of Wekiva Park Drive.

FDOT also communicated with residents in the fall of 2024 regarding erosion and other repairs that were made following hurricanes in September and October.

The four-lane parkway along Section 6 has brought convenience to area residents, making travel easier and reducing commute times between Sanford and Mount Dora, among other destinations.

## Section 7A

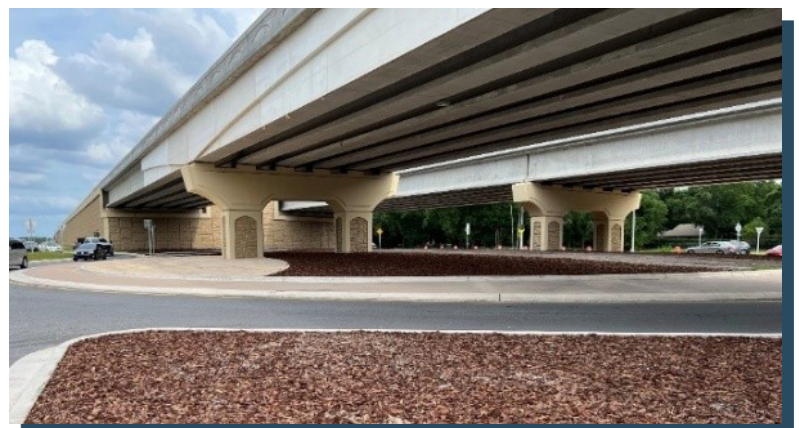
Section 7A, which opened in 2022, fulfilled the Department's commitment to provide an elevated expressway option through the Wekiva River Protection Area. The goal was to get as much traffic as possible onto the elevated parkway, helping to reduce collisions between vehicles and wildlife at ground level on S.R. 46.

The \$108.3 million project included slip ramps to enter and exit the parkway, 12 bridges over side streets and the parallel S.R. 46 frontage road. Work began on Section 7A in April 2018; the portion along S.R. 46 was opened to traffic in August 2022. The remainder of Section 7A opened on January 27, 2024, in conjunction with Section 8.

Preparation work and installation of landscaping continued through 2024 and was anticipated to finish by the spring of 2025. Prepping the area involved installing electrical lines, irrigation and water meters, as well as installing planting soil. FDOT and the landscaping contractor worked closely with Seminole County staff, as the county will be maintaining the landscaping along S.R. 46.

The three-mile stretch from Longwood-Markham Road to Orange Boulevard in Sanford averaged approximately 30,000 daily trips in 2024. That's traffic that otherwise would have used S.R. 46 in potential conflict with area wildlife.

Section 7A also includes roundabouts as safety enhancements at the intersections under the parkway. The roundabouts eliminate left-turn collisions and require vehicles to slow down upon approach. A 10-foot-wide sidewalk runs along the eastbound service road as well as bike lanes.





## Section 7B

FDOT in 2024 continued landscaping Section 7B, which widened S.R. 46 to six lanes from Orange Boulevard to Wayside Drive-Oregon Street near I-4. Landscaping was an ongoing topic of coordination with stakeholders along the corridor.

Communications staff worked frequently with the Lake Forest HOA's landscaping committee and property manager on requests for plans, desired type and placement of plants.



Section 7B involved 1.3 miles of improvements, including medians, streetlights, sidewalk, bike lanes, traffic signal upgrades and drainage. A 10-foot-wide sidewalk has improved mobility for pedestrians and cyclists along the south side of S.R. 46. Work on this section began in 2019 and finished in summer of 2022.

Project and communications staff continued in 2024 to work with community members on issues including landscaping, lighting and drainage.

## Section 8

In January 2024, the project team delivered a completely open Section 8 to the public, closing the chapter on the region's quest to complete Central Florida's 100-plus mile beltway. A \$263.3 million design-build project, Section 8 built the parkway interchange with I-4, S.R. 429 and S.R. 417 in Sanford.



The 2.63-mile project constructed nearly two dozen bridges, aesthetic walls, a toll gantry, drainage, lighting and other roadway features. This section also built the general use lanes for the future I-4 Beyond the Ultimate project from south of S.R. 417 to south of S.R. 46. Motorists have wasted no time enjoying the benefits. By the end of 2024, this stretch averaged more than 25,000 daily trips.

While building Section 8, communications staff were peppered with motorists' questions about when the project would be finished. They were eager to be able to travel from S.R. 429 to S.R. 417 in Sanford, noting significant travel time savings. Project and communications staff provided dozens of updates on construction traffic impacts and detours, as well as new ramp openings.





Project and communications staff also worked with adjacent stakeholders on the project to address their questions and concerns. Coordination took place with citizens regarding vehicle and property damage claims, construction closure schedules and detours, erosion, drainage, sod and mowing, signage, litter and fencing.

FDOT and communications staff coordinated extensively – including holding field and virtual meetings to review landscaping concepts and plans – with the Tall Trees HOA and Ligonier Ministries. Stakeholder input was taken into consideration as landscaping plans were developed, with refinements being made based on community input. FDOT worked diligently in particular with residents and Seminole County on solutions to address noise, visibility and other concerns from the Tall Trees community backing up to the parkway at Wilson Road.



The Department finished the final touches and Section 8 was final accepted on December 20, 2024. With the final section complete, it's exciting how the Wekiva Parkway is already transforming Central Florida travel by making trips easier and safer. This milestone achievement is a testament to the dedication, collaboration, and unwavering effort of everyone involved – from FDOT, CFX and Florida's Turnpike leadership and staff to agency partners, consultants, contractors, and the broader Central Florida community. This journey united everyone for a cause and delivered a trailblazing parkway for current and future generations.

## Central Florida Expressway Authority

Nowhere is the importance of the Wekiva Parkway more apparent than on the Central Florida Expressway Authority's sections. More than 42,000 trips per day are made through the toll gantry just south of Ponkan Road in Apopka, CFX's busiest section of the parkway.

The CFX stretch of S.R. 429 in Apopka has helped to relieve rush-hour backups on Plymouth Sorrento Road, Round Lake Road and U.S. 441.

CFX continues its commitment to making the agency's portion of the Wekiva Parkway a source of community pride and an iconic thoroughfare for the region. CFX has installed more than 24,000 native and Florida-friendly plantings along their section and soon will be adding in-fill and other parkway landscaping, including at the Kelly Park Road interchange.



CFX built, operates and maintains about 10 miles of the parkway between U.S. 441 at Connector Road in Orange County, S.R. 46 near Round Lake Road in Lake County and C.R. 435 in Orange County.

CFX opened their first five miles of the expressway in 2017, and the remainder in 2018. Traffic volumes since then show how the Wekiva Parkway has become a vital, safe, and convenient way for Central Floridians to travel through this fast-growing area of northwest Orange and east Lake counties.



## Community Presentations and Events

Even as parkway construction neared completion, FDOT project and communications staff continued to provide updates to local leaders, community groups and neighborhoods – both virtually and in person. The agencies continued to get positive feedback during such interactions, which made accurate, up-to-date information directly available to community members.

Community presentations also allowed people to get their questions answered and concerns addressed, further building trust in the agencies and support of the project.





## Special Events

2024 was a banner year for milestone events celebrating the completion of the Wekiva Parkway.

### Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting January 26, 2024

This event marked the opening of the Wekiva Parkway's final section, and the historic connection between S.R. 429, S.R. 417 and I-4, thereby completing Central Florida's beltway. The event was held to celebrate the culmination of a decades-long journey and to acknowledge the many agency staff, leaders from all levels of government, environmentalists and other community stakeholders that played a role in ensuring the parkway vision was realized.

The parkway was lauded by state and government officials who spoke, including FDOT Secretary Jared W. Perdue and FDOT District Five Secretary John E. Tyler, for its ingenuity, community focus, safety enhancements and commitment to protecting the Wekiva River Basin's natural treasures.







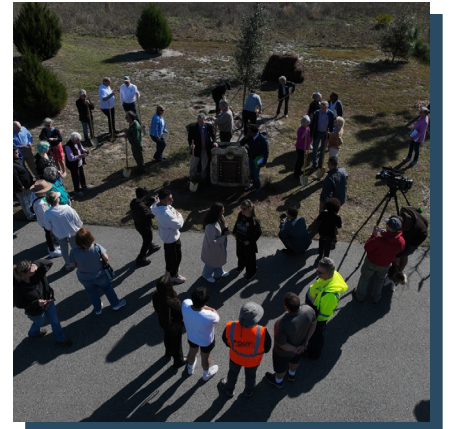
## Community Festival February 24, 2024

Hundreds turned out for FDOT's free Community Festival hosted at the Neighborhood Lakes Trailhead in Sorrento to celebrate the opening of the final parkway section. The festival, coordinated in partnership with Lake County, spotlighted the parkway's 10-mile trail, with guided nature tours and organized bike rides, as well as the adjacent conservation lands.

Dignitaries remarked about the parkway's unique natural protections and regional collaboration, followed by a tree planting and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque. Nearly 30 agencies and organizations shared games, fun activities and specialized vehicles with event-goers.







## FDOT Final Internal Partnering Meeting June 26, 2024

The FDOT hosted the Final Internal Partnering Meeting at the Wayne G. Sanborn Activity & Events Center in DeLand, welcoming about 65 current and former Department leaders and employees to share their Wekiva Parkway project experiences and reflections. Awards and honors were distributed to staff, recognizing them for their outstanding contributions to the profound success of this legacy project.







## Media Relations

The communications team has worked diligently with the agencies over the years to build positive, trusting and constructive relationships with area media outlets. The agencies have worked in transparency over the long term in providing parkway information to the media. The media's exceedingly positive coverage of the project reflects their understanding and trust in key messages.

The Department communicated extensively with media groups to help inform the community of new ramp openings, construction alerts and milestone events. Our close collaboration and the media's responsible reporting portrayed the parkway's positive impact on the quality of life for drivers and that of the surrounding communities.

Media coverage in 2024 focused on the parkway's completion, benefits and reception by drivers and neighboring communities. Sample coverage of major project milestones and other activities is noted as follows:





## 2024

January 26, 2024 - WFTV Ch. 9:

**Happening today: FDOT to cut ribbon on final stretch of Wekiva Parkway in Seminole County**

January 26, 2024 - WOFL FOX 35:

**Wekiva Parkway, 25-mile toll road, officially opens in Central Florida**

January 26, 2024 - WKMG Ch. 6:

**Final stretch of Wekiva Parkway to open in Seminole County**

January 28, 2024 - 352today:

**Central Florida's newly opened beltway will get its first rush-hour test Monday**

January 28, 2024 - Flagler News Weekly:

**FDOT Cuts Ribbon on Final Segment of Wekiva Parkway**

January 28, 2024 - WFTV Ch. 9:

**What's next for Orlando's Wekiva Parkway, I-4 Express expansion and other FDOT projects**

January 31, 2024 - World Highways:

**US\$1.6 billion road project for Orlando, Florida complete**

January 31, 2024 - Sanford Herald:

**Final connection of Wekiva Parkway opens, completing Central Florida's beltway**

February 21, 2024 - Sanford Herald:

**FDOT to hold festival this weekend to celebrate Wekiva Parkway completion**

February 24, 2024 - ClickOrlando:

**Festival celebrates completion of conservation-conscious Wekiva Parkway**

February 26, 2024 - 352today:

**Ease for commuters and environmental protections showcased at celebration of Wekiva Parkway in Lake County**

June 16, 2024 - Orlando Sentinel:

**Will a \$1.6 billion highway save Central Florida's Wekiva River – or doom it?**

August 5, 2024 - Newswire Feed 2:

**Central Florida Expressway Authority Publishes 'The River and the Road' About Wekiva Parkway**



August 19, 2024 – Apopka Chief:

## ***Pathway to parkway was complicated, Orange County Commissioner Christine Moore letter to the editor***

### **Pathway to parkway was complicated**

I sit as an Orange County Board of County Commissioners' representative on the Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX). I have enjoyed my service advocating for Altamonte Springs and Lockhart area residents with the new bridge slated for the area creating a limited access highway from I-4 West to SR 429.

This year I attended a groundbreaking for the new section linking SR 429 with the Clermont area. This will greatly help Horizon West residents. And last Thursday, I received a commemorative book on the development of the beltway around Orlando called "The River and the Road" written by Dan Tracy, which CFX commissioned. You may access this

County Commissioner  
District 2



Christine Moore

beautiful publication from the CFX website at: <https://www.cfxway.com/wekiva-parkway-book/>

I was keenly aware through my friends, former Commissioners Brenda Carey, Fred Brummer, and Lee Constantine, about the difficult process taking place around 2004. However, I did not realize there were actually seven decades involved in building the beltway! According to "The River and

the Road" by Dan Tracy, following is a summation of the seven decades in making the roadway come to fruition:

1950s- "First public mention about building a beltway around Metro Orlando"

1963- "Orlando Orange County Expressway Authority (OOCEA) created, board envisions a regional beltway"

1971- "Walt Disney World opened, triggering unprecedented growth and the need for more expressways"

1983- "OOCEA changed its public finance structure so bond monies could fund an entire system of roads"

1986- "Wekiva Parkway first concept design ap-

See MOORE Page 4A

## **Awards and Recognition**

The Wekiva Parkway continues to receive accolades for its massive mobility solutions, innovative construction and unprecedented natural resource preservation. The recognition of this legacy project has come from state and international industry organizations, and from local and regional governments.

The awards typically recognized CFX, FDOT and Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, as well as the design, construction oversight and contracting firms.

**Following are a few examples of Wekiva Parkway awards and recognition received in 2024:**





**American Segmental Bridge Institute (ASBI) 2024:** Section 6 was selected for the Bridge Award of Excellence in the “Bridges Over Water” category. The awarding organization’s reviewers mentioned, “The project and team showed unique problem solving and a drive to push innovation for the segmental bridge industry through its use of robotics, construction monitoring solutions, and innovative and safe construction techniques.”



American Segmental Bridge Institute

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[Return to Projects](#)

### The Wekiva Parkway Section 6 Project – DeLand, Florida

The signature Wekiva Parkway Section 6 project rehabilitated a vital stretch of the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) \$1.6 billion Wekiva Parkway through conscientious design and construction practices. The Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) connects to SR 417, completing a beltway around Central Florida. FDOT divided its Wekiva Parkway project into eight self-contained contracts and hired the Superior Construction-WGI, Inc. design-build team to complete Section 6 of the parkway. WGI, Inc. (WGI) was the lead designer for the project, supported by Finley Engineering (now COWI) for the segmental portion of the project.

This \$243 million design-build project, which received the American Council of Engineering Companies of Florida (ACEC-FL) Grand Engineering Excellence Award, redirects traffic from the congested I-4 corridor and improves traveler safety. Section 6 of the Wekiva Parkway comprises nearly six miles of limited access toll road primarily along the existing SR 46 corridor from SR 429 to just west of Longwood-Markham Road. The project scope included a non-tolled service road for local travel, three new bridges over the Wekiva River, and nine wildlife bridges to allow animals to pass safely between the Seminole State Forest and Rock Springs Run State Reserve, for a total of 18 bridges with over 1.268M square feet of new bridge deck.

The design-build team used 13 alternative technical concepts to improve upon the preliminary design, maximize mobility during construction, expedite construction, and enhance safety without compromising the



#### PROJECT DETAILS – ASBI Members in Bold

##### 2023 ASBI Bridge Award of Excellence

Category: Bridges Over Water

State:

Florida

Owner:

**FDOT**

Owner's Engineer:

**FDOT**

Designer:

**Finley Engineering Group**

Design-Build Team:

**Superior Construction** and WGI

Contractor:

**Superior Construction**

**Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA), Florida Chapter 2024:** Praised for its wildlife safeguards and community benefits, Section 6 was selected for the Honor Award for Transportation Structures. The design-build strategy helped the project cautiously progress over a challenging and sensitive Wekiva River Basin.

## TRANSPORTATION STRUCTURES

### DBIA Florida Region Design-Build Honor Award

#### **Wekiva Parkway Section 6** Seminole County FL

#### **SUPERIOR/WGI Team**

#### **Design-Builder/General Contractor:**

Superior Construction

#### **Owner:**

Florida Department of Transportation

#### **Owner Advisor:**

RS&H

#### **Engineers:**

WGI

Arcadis

WSP USA Environmental & Infrastructure Inc.

COWI

#### **Key Specialty Subcontractor:**

Ranger Construction Industries



The Wekiva Parkway Section 6 project extended a beltway that increases capacity between Florida's Lake and Seminole Counties, diverting traffic from the congested I-4 corridor. Its benefits to the community and environment cannot be overstated. Crossing a federally-designated Wild and Scenic River, the design-build team prioritized minimizing impacts on the Wekiva River Basin resources, maintaining wildlife habitat connectivity, and reducing vehicle-wildlife conflicts. Its most visible aspect is the Wekiva River Crossing — three segmental bridges (370,172 sf of bridge deck) that carry the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) and a service road/shared-use path over the Wekiva River.



## East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC) 2024 Diamond Awards:

Section 6 was selected for the Conservation and Countryside Award for its efforts to simultaneously advance mobility for Central Floridians and protect the native wildlife and natural areas. The award recognizes projects, like the Wekiva Parkway, for their positive impacts on rural communities and the preservation of natural water systems, among other things.



## America's Transportation Award SASHTO Region 2024:

Section 7A garnered a prestigious 2024 America's Transportation Award for the Southeastern (SASHTO) region, recognized for boosting safety, alleviating traffic and enhancing mobility for a thriving community. Wekiva Parkway 7A was among 10 projects from state departments of transportation in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia that won top prizes in the regional 2024 America's Transportation Awards competition.

Selected from 25 projects nominated by eight state DOTs in the SASHTO region, they are among 106 nominations submitted by 39 state DOTs as part of the annual America's Transportation Awards contest. Sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), AAA, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the America's Transportation Awards competition showcases how state DOT projects strengthen their local communities.

Section 7A was selected in the Quality of Life/Community Development category for large projects.

"The America's Transportation Awards competition highlights the critical role state DOTs play in improving safety, enhancing mobility, and improving quality of life for their communities," said AASHTO Executive Director Jim Tymon.



## America's Transportation Awards



Overview What to Submit Judging Criteria This Year's Projects Past Years' Projects

### Florida Department of Transportation's Wekiva Parkway Section 7A

Led by Florida Department of Transportation, the Wekiva Parkway project sought to complete Central Florida's beltway while also protecting wildlife and other natural resources surrounding the Wekiva River, a National Wild and Scenic River and Florida Outstanding Waterway. This \$117.3 million project included a 25-mile corridor that traverses three counties – boosting safety and alleviating traffic. In Seminole County, the former S.R. 46 along what would become Section 7A had local traffic from neighborhoods, churches and businesses competing with long-distance, heavy commuter traffic – all through the Wekiva River Protection Area. Section 7A transformed 3.5 miles of this corridor into an elevated expressway, with parallel, non-tolled frontage roads for local traffic. Wekiva Parkway Section 7A exemplifies Florida DOT's mission to provide a safe, reliable transportation system that ensures the mobility of people and goods, enhances economic prosperity, and preserves the quality of our environment and communities. Section 7A also makes travel between the Lower Wekiva River Preserve and other parks in the river basin easier as well as the Wekiva trail, helping attract thousands of bicyclists to the area, who then patronize local businesses.

The 2024 America's Transportation Awards NASTO Region

Check out the winners of the America's Transportation Awards NASTO region.

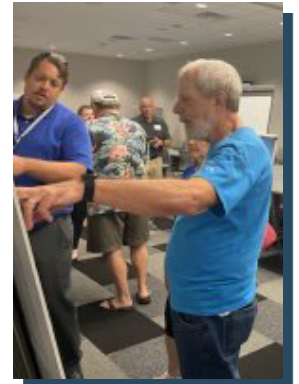
The 2024 America's Transportation Awards SASHTO Region

Check out the winners of the America's Transportation Awards SASHTO region.

ATA Sponsors

## Stakeholder Recognition

To conclude the final Wekiva Parkway Public Information Annual Report, the agencies would like to thank all elected officials, agency and government partners, environmentalists, business interests, civic and community groups, neighborhoods and other community members for helping the Wekiva Parkway vision to become a reality. Through your input and collaboration, Central Florida now has a nationally and internationally recognized beltway that will serve our community, while helping to protect the natural resources in the esteemed Wekiva River Basin for generations to come.



**For more information contact:**

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