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# 1. Description of the Proposed Action

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The Wekiva Parkway (SR 429)/SR 46 Realignment Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study is jointly managed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District Five and the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority (Expressway Authority). The proposed project would complete the Western Beltway (SR 429) around metropolitan Orlando, improve safety in the SR 46 travel corridor, and provide congestion relief on study area roadways; it includes substantial measures to minimize harm to the environmentally sensitive Wekiva River Basin and enhance the connectivity of existing wildlife habitat corridors within the basin area.

## 1.1 Background

In 2004, the Florida Legislature enacted the *Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act*, Chapter 369, Part III, Florida Statutes (F.S.), in order to address the need for an expressway through the Wekiva River Basin by adopting the recommendations of the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force, the SR 429 Working Group, and the Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee. The legislation was the culmination of more than 20 years of discussions and various actions taken to complete the Western Beltway around metropolitan Orlando while protecting the fragile Wekiva River Basin and springshed. At the bill signing ceremony, the Governor of Florida stated “This legislation represents unprecedented collaboration among diverse interests to safeguard the springs of the Wekiva and make Central Florida a better place to live and work. The parkway strikes a delicate balance between environmental protection and economic growth, providing relief for motorists and protection for Florida’s land and waters.”

The proposed Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) is one component of a comprehensive plan developed through Executive Orders, subsequent task force and committee findings of diverse stakeholders, and the resultant legislation. The strategic priorities address growth management and a sustainable environment, including master stormwater management, water supply protection, land use strategies, and land acquisition for conservation. The stakeholder’s findings and the subsequent legislation recognize the importance of the Wekiva Parkway since it would complete the Western Beltway (SR 429) around the Orlando metropolitan area and provide a safe, high capacity east-west travel facility between Lake County and Seminole County.

The following key steps and related documents have resulted in the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) reaching the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study stage:

- **1986:** The Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority (Expressway Authority) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) conducted a study for the Western Beltway Parts A and B. (Part A from Florida’s Turnpike to US Highway 441 has since been built.) Part B was proposed from US 441 to Interstate 4 (I-4), within portions of northwest Orange County, east Lake County, and Seminole County.
- **Late 1980’s:** FDOT prepared a state-level Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) entitled *Northwest Beltway Study, Part B (State Road 417) from U.S. 441 (State Road 500) to Interstate 4 (State Road 400)* and approved a preferred alignment for the previously proposed Western Beltway. Since that time, however, several properties were purchased by the state for conservation. There was no funding to move the Western Beltway forward, so it

was removed from the long-range transportation plans. (Note: The Eastern Beltway is now SR 417, also known as the Central Florida GreeneWay and the Seminole Expressway; the Western Beltway became SR 429 when Part A was built.)

- **September 26, 2002:** Governor Jeb Bush issued Executive Order No. 2002-259 creating the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force to recommend alignment and design features for the route connecting SR 429 in Apopka to I-4 in Seminole County, and to address potential impacts of roadway expansion and growth pressures on the Wekiva River Basin ecosystem. The task force consisted of 16 members representing counties, state and regional agencies, and the business and environmental communities.
- **January 15, 2003:** Wekiva Basin Area Task Force issues its final report, *Wekiva Basin Area Task Force Final Report: Recommendations for Planning and Locating the Wekiva Parkway while Preserving the Wekiva River Basin Ecosystem*. Among the 17 recommendations were five addressing the need for the Wekiva Parkway, specific elements to be included in the Parkway design, and four parcels identified to be acquired as conservation land.
- **July 1, 2003:** Governor Bush signed Executive Order No. 2003-112 creating the Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee to address specific issues related to the definition of the study area. The Coordinating Committee also was charged with identifying land use planning strategies and development standards; reviewing permitting requirements, water supply, surface water protection and land acquisition; and evaluating a funding plan for the implementation of the Wekiva Parkway.
- **January 16, 2004:** The SR 429 NW Extension Working Group, created by the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force, issued its final recommendations. The Working Group had received input from the Mount Plymouth/Sorrento communities that they wanted to maintain existing SR 46 as a two-lane facility (minimizing land use impacts) and provide a southern bypass for through traffic. In response to the communities' desires, the Working Group recommended a revised Wekiva Parkway corridor.
- **March 16, 2004:** Using the corridor location input from the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force and the SR 429 Working Group, the Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee issued its final report, *Wekiva River Coordinating Committee Final Report: Recommendations for Enhanced Land Use Planning Strategies and Development Standards to Protect Water Resources of the Wekiva River Basin* which further refined the Wekiva Parkway corridor.
- **June 29, 2004:** Governor Jeb Bush signed into law Chapter 369, Part III, Florida Statutes, known as the *Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act*, which was essentially based on the recommendations of the Task Force and the Coordinating Committee.
- **September 23, 2004:** As recommended by the Coordinating Committee and in the *Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act*, Governor Bush appointed 19 members to the Wekiva River Basin Commission. This commission was assigned to monitor and ensure the implementation of state, regional and local efforts with regard to the Wekiva Parkway and other area issues consistent with the Coordinating Committee's recommendations.
- **November 10, 2004:** First meeting held of the Wekiva River Basin Commission. FDOT and the Expressway Authority drafted and submitted a preliminary Wekiva Parkway funding plan prior to this meeting, as required by statute.
- **December 2004:** The Expressway Authority began the required acquisition process for buffer/conservation areas along the Wekiva Parkway corridor.
- **January 19, 2005:** Wekiva Parkway (SR 429)/SR 46 Realignment (formerly known as the SR 46 Bypass) PD&E Study was officially kicked off.

## 1.2 Project Overview

The Wekiva Basin Area Task Force was tasked with recommending a study area within which alignment alternatives could be evaluated to connect SR 429 (the Western Beltway) in Apopka to I-4 in Seminole County. The task force issued its final report in January of 2003 which included recommendations addressing the need for the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) and a suggested study area. The Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee was charged with addressing several specific issues within the study area, including the Wekiva Parkway. The SR 429 Working Group received input from local communities and suggested revisions to the Wekiva Parkway study area, including a SR 46 Bypass to avoid an increase in traffic through the rural communities of Sorrento and Mount Plymouth. Using the study area recommendations from the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force and the SR 429 Working Group, the Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee further refined the Wekiva Parkway study area in its March, 2004 final report.

The *Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act* is based in large part on the recommendations of the Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee and the previous task force. The study area for the Wekiva Parkway and SR 46 Bypass was established by that legislation and served as the starting point for the alternatives analysis conducted during the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429)/SR 46 Realignment PD&E Study. The project study area is depicted in **Exhibit 1-1**.

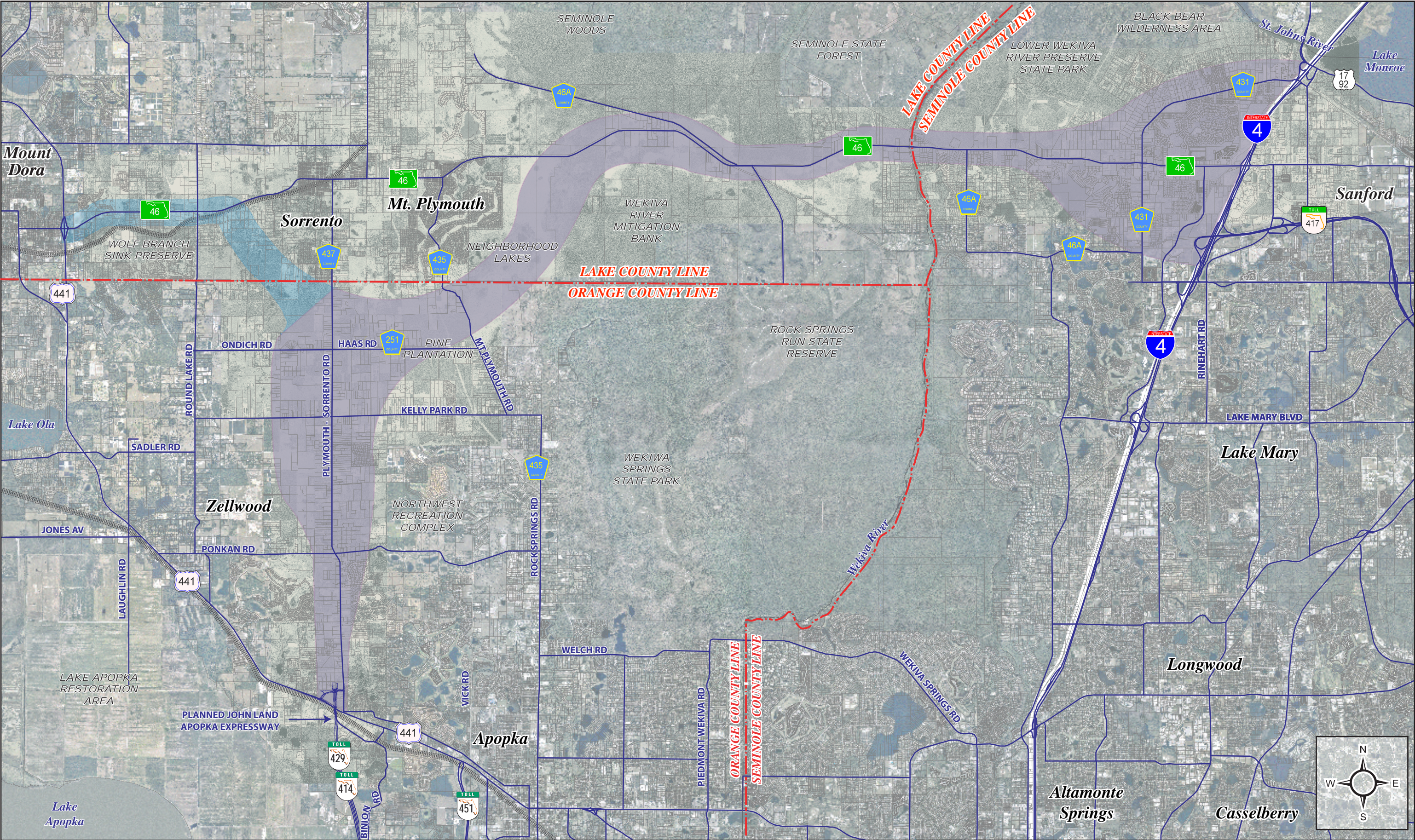
The Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) is proposed as a limited access expressway that will complete the Western Beltway (SR 429), a regional transportation corridor around the Orlando metropolitan area, linking SR 400 (I-4) in Osceola County to SR 400 (I-4) in Seminole County. The project is located in Orange, Lake, and Seminole Counties, Florida. Portions of the project are located within the jurisdictions of the City of Apopka in Orange County, the City of Mount Dora in Lake County, and the City of Sanford in Seminole County. A partial realignment of SR 46 in Lake County is integrated with the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) project.

## 1.3 Project Description

In early 2005, the Expressway Authority and District Five of FDOT began the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429)/SR 46 Realignment PD&E Study under joint management. The study addresses the following proposed project components:

- **The Wekiva Parkway**, a four-lane divided (expandable to six-lane divided) limited access toll facility, which would begin in Orange County at the planned terminus of the John Land Apopka Expressway at US 441 just west of CR 437 and extend to the north/northeast into Lake County, turning east and crossing the Wekiva River into Seminole County and terminating at I-4. The approximate length of the Wekiva Parkway is 20.94 miles, with 8.16 miles in Orange County, 7.37 miles in Lake County and 5.41 miles in Seminole County.
- **SR 46 Reconstruction and Realignment**, which would begin at the SR 46/US 441 interchange in Lake County and extend along the existing SR 46 corridor to the east, then turning southeast on a new alignment and entering Orange County with a systems interchange connection at the Wekiva Parkway. It is expected that the SR 46 improvements would provide six-lane divided controlled access along the existing alignment from US 441 to east of Round Lake Road, while the remaining alignment





**LEGEND**

- Wekiva Parkway Study Area
- SR 46 Realignment Study Area

**Exhibit 1-1**  
**Project Study Area**



to the southeast is expected to be limited access. The approximate length of the SR 46 Reconstruction and Realignment is 4.79 miles, with 4.01 miles in Lake County and 0.78 mile in Orange County.

- **CR 46A Realignment**, a two-lane rural (expandable to four-lane rural) roadway, which would begin on existing CR 46A in east Lake County and extend to the south on a new alignment and tie into existing SR 46 with an access connection to the Wekiva Parkway. The approximate length of the CR 46A realignment is 2.72 miles.
- **Wekiva Parkway Access Improvements** would be required between the realignment of CR 46A in Lake County and Orange Boulevard (CR 431) in Seminole County to allow access to the private property along existing SR 46. A two-lane, non-tolled service road would be parallel to the Wekiva Parkway from north of the Wekiva Parkway interchange near Neighborhood Lakes to just east of the Wekiva River in Seminole County. Two-lane, one-way non-tolled frontage roads would be parallel to the Wekiva Parkway from east of the Wekiva River to Orange Boulevard in Seminole County. Those service and frontage roads would provide access to properties while also providing a non-tolled alternative for local trips.

## 1.4 Logical Termini

The logical termini for the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) are the planned SR 429/SR 414 John Land Apopka interchange with US 441 in Orange County and an interchange with I-4 at the existing SR 417/I-4 interchange in Seminole County. The SR 46 Realignment portion of the project includes reconstruction of existing SR 46 from the existing US 441/SR 46 interchange in Mount Dora to a realigned section of SR 46 that would begin west of the communities of Mount Plymouth and Sorrento and would connect with the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429) at the proposed Wekiva Parkway (SR 429)/SR 46 Realignment Systems Interchange in Orange County.