

4.1.2 Community Cohesion

In general, potential impacts to community cohesion may occur as a result of bisecting neighborhoods, social isolation of a portion of an ethnic group or neighborhood, facilitation of new development, urban renewal, decreased neighborhood size, joint land use, changes in property values, changes in neighborhood or community access, changes in quality of life, changes in neighborhood identification, and/or separation of residences from community facilities. Such impacts may be beneficial or detrimental to the affected community.

The Proposed Build Alternative does not divide or isolate any existing communities or established, defined neighborhoods, and there is no separation of residences from community facilities. Minimization of social impacts was one of the primary issues evaluated during the initial alternatives evaluation phase of the project. As a result, the portions of the project on a new alignment within the study area generally follow a path through some of the least developed areas within Apopka and unincorporated Orange, Lake, and Seminole Counties, thereby reducing the potential for impacts to community cohesion. The alignment alternatives evaluated within this study area further sought to minimize potential impacts to neighborhoods and individual parcels. Extensive coordination with homeowner's associations and individual property owners, as well as local government officials, has occurred throughout the course of the PD&E study. The Proposed Build Alternative was selected, in part, based on the results of the evaluation of community and property impacts.

Efforts to avoid and minimize potential impacts to communities included the consideration of proposed developments. The existing and planned communities are shown on **Exhibit 4-2**. One proposed subdivision in Orange County, Plymouth Harbor PD, would be impacted by the Proposed Build Alternative. Coordination meetings were held during the PD&E Study to discuss measures to minimize potential impacts to this proposed subdivision.

The communities adjacent to the portions of the proposed alignment that follow the existing SR 46 alignment will experience increased safety and mobility as a result of the widening and reconstruction improvements which will enhance the quality of life for existing residents. However, some neighborhoods will have altered access to the improved facilities. The modified access will not affect existing community facilities. In some cases, the proposed access management measures will likely improve neighborhood entrances and result in increased neighborhood identification.

During development of the conceptual alternatives, and especially during analysis of the Proposed Build Alternative, maintenance of access was a key evaluation measure. Access maintenance alternatives were developed for some specific areas in Orange, Lake and Seminole Counties. However, maintenance of access will need to be addressed in greater detail during final design. Those areas or parcels where access is proposed to be maintained by bridging, realigned roads, or other measures are identified in the *Preliminary Concept Plans* for the Proposed Build Alternative. The concept plans are part of the *Preliminary Engineering Report* prepared for the PD&E Study.

FDOT and the Expressway Authority are committed to working with affected property owners during the final design and right-of-way acquisition phases of the project to maintain or optimize, to the extent feasible, access to impacted parcels. Access management in specific areas of each county will be a part of the Public Hearings.

Based on the results of the evaluation of potential social impacts, no community cohesion issues are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Build Alternative. This project has been developed in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and related statutes. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age sex, religion, disability, or family status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under any program of the Federal, State or local government. Title VIII guarantees each person equal opportunity in housing.

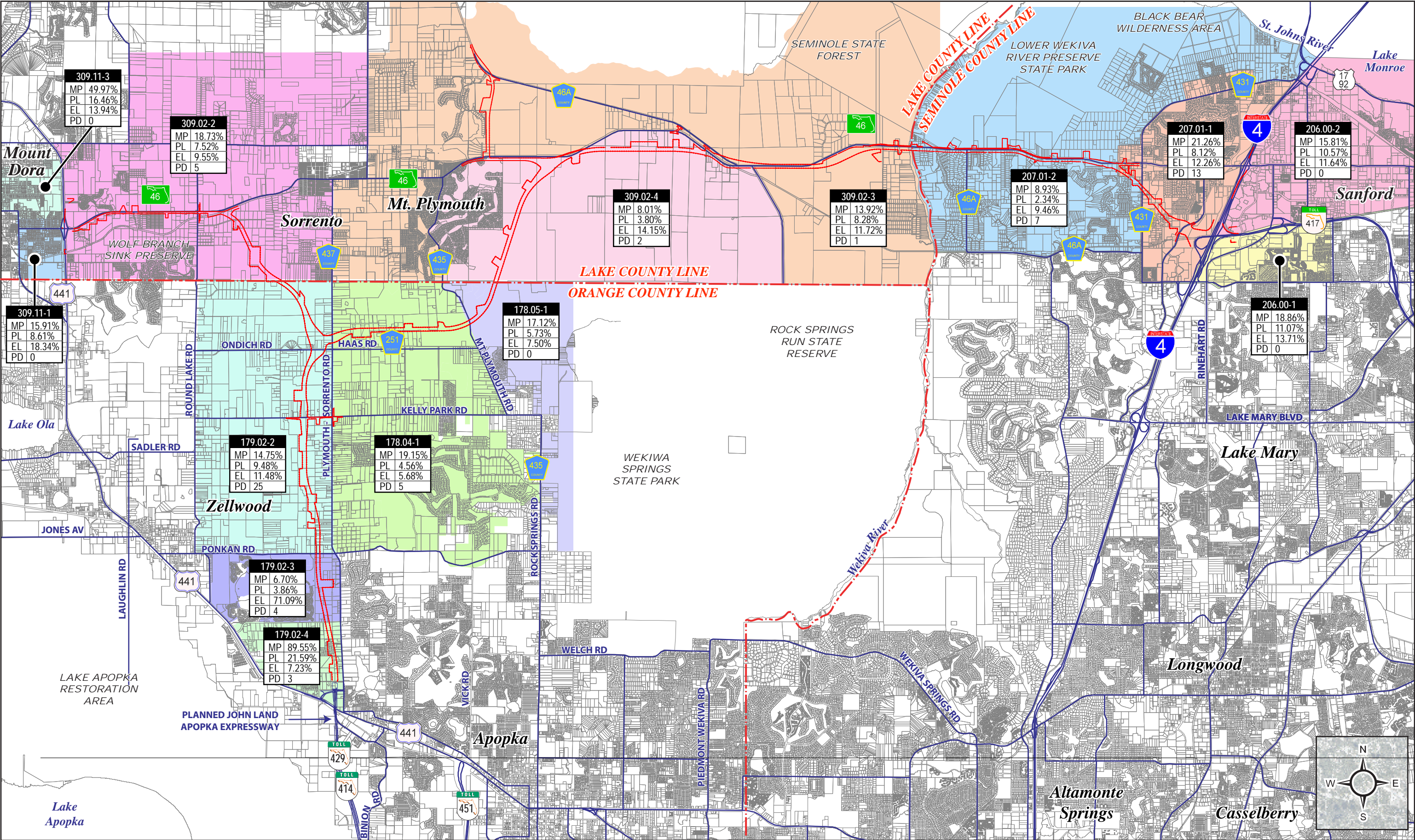
4.1.3 Environmental Justice

In addition to the requirements of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and related statutes as referenced above, this project has been developed in accordance with *Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994*. Executive Order 12898 is meant to ensure that minority and/or low-income households are not adversely impacted by major transportation projects in a disproportionate manner.

To determine the specific demographics of the study area, census tract block group data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Demographic Profile and Orange, Lake and Seminole Counties Property Appraisers' data were used. **Exhibit 4-3** shows the geographic locations of the census block groups within the study area and the overall alignment of the Proposed Build Alternative. The percentages of minority, below poverty level, and elderly populations, as well as the number of potential displacements, are provided for each census block group on Exhibit 4-3.

A census block group in Orange County (census tract 179.02, block group 4) exhibits the highest percentage of minority population (89.55%) and the highest percentage with income below poverty level (21.59%) in the study area. Most of those households are within the Plymouth area north of US 441 which is not impacted by the Proposed Build Alternative. A census block group in Lake County (census tract 309.11, block group 3) exhibits the second highest percentage of minority population (49.97%) and the second highest percentage with income below poverty level (16.46%) in the study area. That area of Mount Dora west of US 441 is not impacted by the Proposed Build Alternative. A census block group in Seminole County (census tract 207.01, block group 1) exhibits the third highest percentage of minority population (21.26%) and the sixth highest percentage with income below poverty level (8.12%). Many of those households are within the Bookertown area north of US 46 which is not impacted by the Proposed Build Alternative. A census block group in Orange County (census tract 179.02, block group 3) exhibits a 71.09% elderly population. Most of those households are in the Zellwood Station retirement community which is not impacted by the Proposed Build Alternative. The highest number of potential impacts by the Proposed Build Alternative is in census tract 179.02, block group 2 in Orange County with 25 displacements; that census block group exhibits a 92.29% white population and 90.52% of the population above poverty level. Based upon this information, the proposed Wekiva Parkway project is not expected to have a disproportionately adverse impact on minority or low-income households.

Another consideration under Environmental Justice for minority and/or low-income households is the potential impact on travel opportunities if the entire Wekiva Parkway (SR



429) mainline is a toll facility. If the entire 20.94 mile alignment of the Wekiva Parkway is tolled, there will be adequate and accessible alternate roadway facilities available for those who do not wish to pay a toll. For north-south trips in Orange County, available alternate roadways would include US 441, Plymouth Sorrento Road (CR 437) and Mount Plymouth Road (CR 435). For east-west trips in Lake County, available alternative roadways would include a widened SR 46 east of Mount Dora, existing SR 46, and the non-tolled service road parallel to the Wekiva Parkway. For east-west trips in Seminole County, available alternate roadways would include the non-tolled frontage roads parallel to the Wekiva Parkway, a widened SR 46 west of the SR46/I-4 interchange, and other local roads. For some trips these alternate routes may be incrementally less direct which may result in nominal increases in travel time, nevertheless, they would be accessible and available as non-tolled travel options for those do not wish to pay tolls.

A general principle of Environmental Justice is to ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process. The Public Involvement Program for this project has been on-going since commencement of the PD&E Study. Advance notification of all public workshops has been provided by direct mail to all property owners and tenants within and adjacent to the study area to augment multiple media advertisements. Also, periodic project update newsletters have been provided by direct mail.

4.1.4 Land Uses

The following sections describe the existing land use within the study area, proposed future land use, consistency with state and local government comprehensive plans and policies, and joint land use development.

4.1.4.1 Existing Land Use

The generalized existing land uses within the study area are shown in **Exhibit 4-4**. Existing land use within the project study area varies from county and state-owned conservation lands to High Intensity Planning (HIP) areas. Development within the study area is more concentrated at the project boundaries in Apopka and unincorporated Orange County, at the southern limits of the corridor; in Mount Dora, at the western limits of the corridor in Lake County West; and in Seminole County from Orange Boulevard to I-4. The remainder of the corridor consists of low density residential, agricultural, and State owned conservation lands, including Rock Springs Run State Reserve, Seminole State Forest, Neighborhood Lakes, and Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park. The boundaries of the Wekiva River Protection Area extend from CR 435 in Orange County to Orange Boulevard in Seminole County. The 1988 *Wekiva River Protection Act* ensures that the rural density and character of the lands within the Wekiva River Protection Area (WRPA) is preserved.

Orange County

The Orange County portion of the study area is characterized by low to medium density residential, agricultural, and commercial land uses. Apopka is known as the “indoor foliage capital of the world” and there are numerous plant nurseries and backyard greenhouses in the study area. The project study area encompasses lands within unincorporated Orange County and the City of Apopka. This area has seen considerable growth in recent years, and several new developments in various stages of completion are located within and adjacent to the project study corridor. Development in this area is denser in the vicinity of US 441

