

SECTION 1

Proposed Action

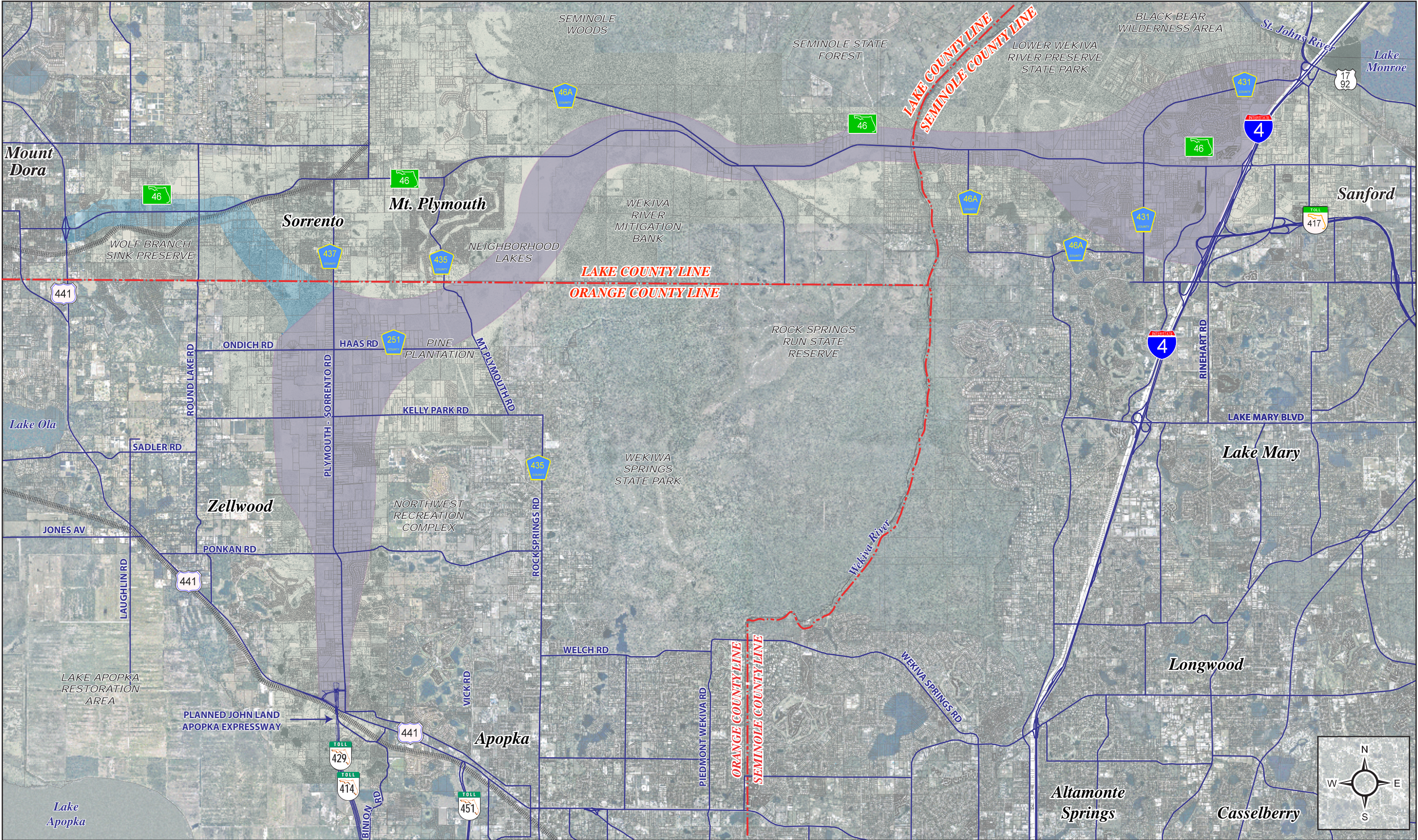
The Wekiva Parkway (SR 429)/SR 46 Realignment Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study is jointly managed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District Five and the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority (Expressway Authority). Based on preliminary engineering, the study has evaluated the potential environmental effects of the proposed improvements in Orange, Lake and Seminole Counties, Florida. The proposed project includes the Wekiva Parkway (SR 429), reconstruction and realignment of portions of SR 46, CR 46A realignment, and other project-related access modifications. These proposed improvements involve the use of public land resources protected under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 [Title 49, USC, Section 303] and [Title 23, USC, Section 138], as amended.

The purpose of this document is to provide the necessary information to reach the determination that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the Section 4(f) resources as described in this *Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation*, and that the proposed improvements include measures to minimize harm. This document summarizes the proposed action, including a discussion of project purpose and need, and describes the involved Section 4(f) resources, related impacts and findings, avoidance and minimization measures, coordination with public land managers, and agency correspondence. The conclusion includes a discussion supporting the applicability of this *Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation* to the proposed improvements.

The Section 4(f) resources described within this document are limited to public parks, recreation areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges; an *Addendum* to this document under separate cover addresses the Wekiva Wild & Scenic River Section 4(f) recreation resource. Potential Section 4(f) impacts and evaluations related to Section 106 historic resources have been documented under separate cover in an *Individual Section 4(f) Evaluation*.

1.1 Project Background

In the mid and late 1980s, the Expressway Authority and FDOT conducted corridor and alignment studies for the proposed Northwest Beltway (SR 429) from US 441 near Apopka in Orange County to I-4 near Sanford in Seminole County. However, there was no funding to move the project forward. 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 2004 State Statute entitled the *Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act*. 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. A partial realignment of SR 46 in Lake County is integrated with the Wekiva Parkway project. The study area developed through the stakeholder's findings, and subsequently recommended in the legislation, is depicted in **Exhibit 1**. A copy of the *Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act* is provided in **Appendix A** of this document.



LEGEND

- Wekiva Parkway Study Area
- SR 46 Realignment Study Area

Exhibit 1
Project Study Area

1.2 Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of and need for the project were originally documented in the October, 1989 state-level EIS prepared by FDOT for the Northwest Beltway Study, Part B. In November 2002, FDOT again documented the purpose of and need for the northwest portion of the Western Beltway (SR 429) in a presentation to the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force. The *Environmental Assessment* for the proposed Wekiva Parkway (SR 429)/SR 46 Realignment project provides an updated purpose and need statement which is summarized below:

- **Complete the Western Beltway (SR 429) around metropolitan Orlando**

The Wekiva Parkway will complete the Western Beltway (SR 429) from Interstate 4 (I-4) in Osceola County to I-4 in Seminole County. SR 429 currently terminates at US 441 in Apopka. The Wekiva Parkway will provide a system to system connection for regional mobility between the Eastern Beltway (SR 417), the Western Beltway (SR 429), and I-4.

The Wekiva Parkway is designated as a planned addition to Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). Florida's SIS is an integrated transportation network consisting of statewide and regionally significant transportation facilities, services, modes of transportation and linkages. The SIS was established to focus limited state resources on transportation facilities that are critical to Florida's economy and quality of life.

The regional transportation network in the metropolitan Orlando area currently consists of I-4 (SR 400), Florida's Turnpike, SR 408 (East-West Expressway), SR 528 (Beachline Expressway), SR 417 (Eastern Beltway), and completed portions of the Western Beltway (SR 429), all of which are heavily traveled SIS facilities. The Regional Transportation Network with the current and future heavily congested corridors, based on 2008 Traffic Data by the FDOT Transportation Statistics Office, is shown in **Exhibit 2**. Heavy congestion in urban areas is considered bumper to bumper or stop and go traffic movement during peak periods (Level of Service (LOS) "E" or worse). For rural areas, passenger and truck traffic is so heavy during peak periods that changing lanes is very difficult (LOS "D" or worse). The future system includes all cost feasible improvements through 2035. All SIS facilities in the metropolitan Orlando area will be heavily congested by 2035, with the exception of portions of SR 429 (Western Beltway). The segments of SR 429 that are not projected to be heavily congested by 2035 include the recently constructed segment of SR 429 between I-4 in Osceola County and Florida's Turnpike in Orange County and the planned Wekiva Parkway.

Completion of the Western Beltway will allow regional traffic to bypass the most heavily congested segment of I-4 (from south of the Osceola/Orange County line to south of the Seminole/Volusia County line) which travels through the City of Orlando and is the main thoroughfare providing access to Walt Disney World, Sea World, Universal Studios, and other area attractions. In addition to providing relief to regional motorists, the completed Western Beltway will ease congestion on local roadways and provide a needed expressway connection between northwest Orange, eastern Lake, and western Seminole Counties.

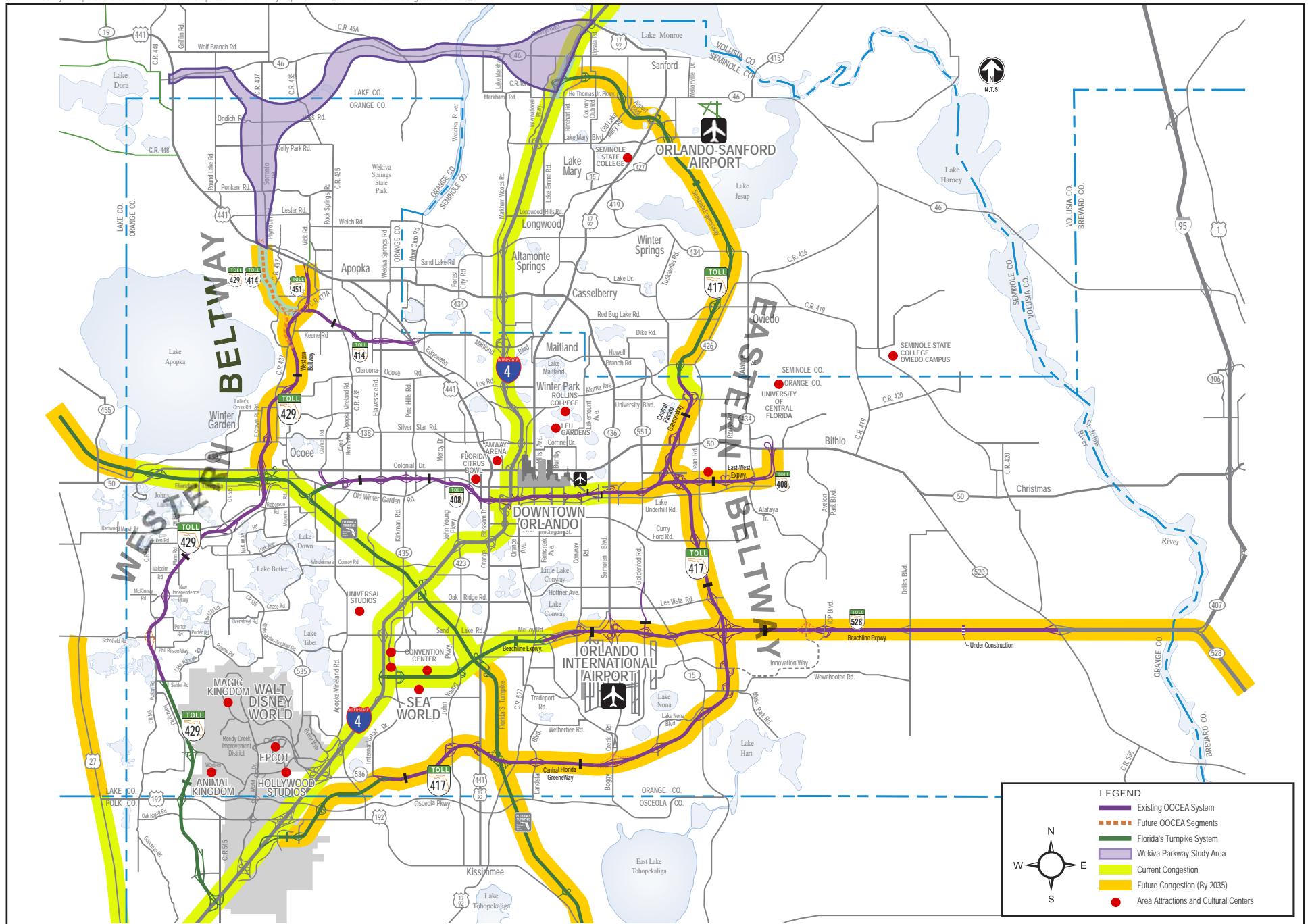


Exhibit 2
Regional Transportation Network with Heavily Congested SIS Facilities