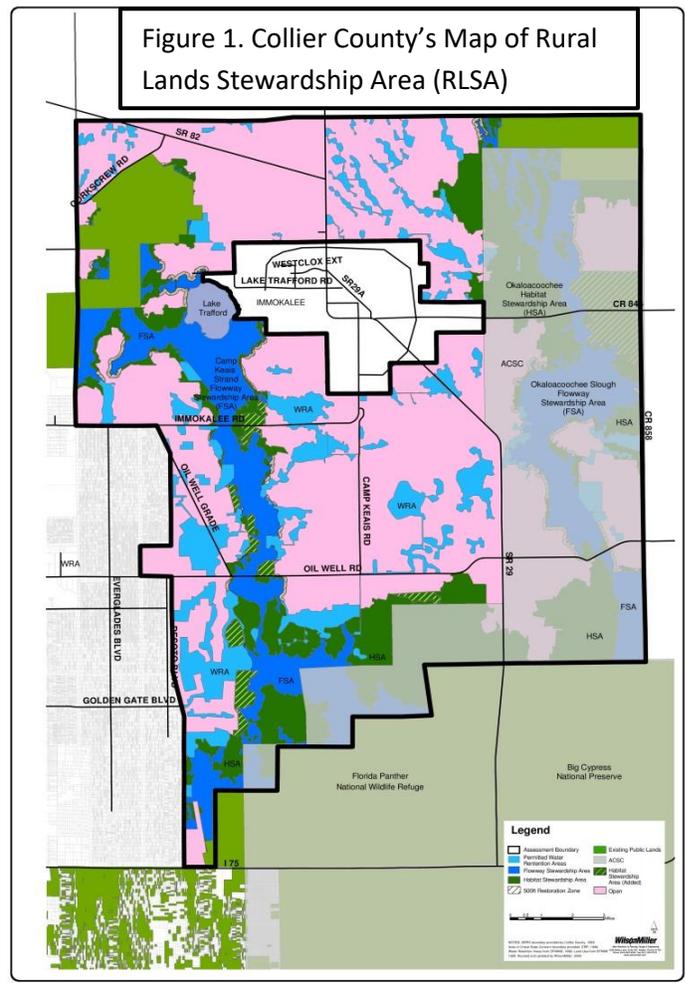


Summary of Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay (RLSA) & Conservancy’s Concerns & Solutions for a Better Program

Decisions are being made now that will considerably alter the quality of life in Collier County for future generations. It is up to you to decide what type of community you would like to leave for your children and grandchildren for them to live, work, and raise their families.

Collier County is one of the fastest growing areas in the United States. At build-out the county could have more than one million residents. Much of that growth is anticipated in eastern Collier County, in a planning area called Rural Lands Stewardship Area (RLSA) (Figure 1). Collier County’s Growth Management Department is hosting public workshops and asking for the community’s input to re-evaluate the RLSA. The Conservancy believes the RLSA program is in need of a major overhaul.

The RLSA is approximately 16 miles east of I-75 and consists of nearly 300 square miles of agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands. There are enough “Open” areas available in the RLSA to build 11 new towns the size of Ave Maria, and the county will need to build a sprawling roadway network at the cost of \$7.8 billion to connect to these new towns! Without your help, these new towns and roads could be



built where many endangered species call home and in areas important to our wetlands and water supply. A new town, called Rural Lands West, is already proposed in a location that will have grave impacts on our natural resources and could burden taxpayers financially.

The good news is that the RLSA plans can be changed to better protect resources for future generations. But we need your help now, while the County is in the process of the RLSA review.

The RLSA program is complex, but important facts and information can be easily summarized. Following this summary are the Conservancy’s concerns of the program and our solutions to better protect natural resources and to ensure that smart growth principles are implemented. We encourage you to ask questions and help strategize solutions for the RLSA.

Rural Lands Stewardship Area (RLSA) Summary	
LOCATION	Eastern Collier County (east of Golden Gate Estates). The RLSA surrounds Immokalee and is adjacent to both Lee and Hendry Counties.
SIZE OF RLSA	195,000 acres or 300 square miles (Fig. 1) (182,000 acres of RLSA are privately owned)
POTENTIAL FOR NEW TOWNS AND VILLAGES (Called SRAs or Stewardship Receiving Areas)	11 new towns the size of Ave Maria or two towns the size of Fort Lauderdale could be built in the RLSA! ¹
ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT ALLOWED	Thousands of homes on 5 acre sites could be built outside of the towns and villages (43,700 acres worth)
PROJECTED POPULATION IN RLSA	270,000 to 390,000 at build-out ²
WHAT WE WERE TOLD VS. REALITY	Original intent of the RLSA program was to cluster development on less than 10% of the lands (16,800 acres). Reality is that we could have 230% more development than what we were originally told (43,300 acres of new towns).
COST OF LANDOWNERS’ PROPOSED ROADWAY NETWORK (Cost of new roads + widened roads)	\$7.8 Billion ³ (See Fig. 3 & 4)
MILES OF PROPOSED NEW ROADS	87.7 miles ⁴ (See Fig. 4)

¹ The current program allows for 43,300 acres worth of new towns, villages, hamlets or compact rural development (Stewardship Receiving Areas or SRAs) within the “Open” areas. The towns are the largest of the SRAs. The size of each town can be up to 4,000 acres; however, each town can be built adjacent to each other to create mega-towns.

² Figures from Collier County’s 2008 Interactive Growth Model and 2005 Collier County Residential Build-Out Study, Preliminary Report, 8. County website: <https://www.colliercountyfl.gov/home/showdocument?id=830>

³ Conservancy figured construction costs from the roadway network provided by Wilson Miller’s “Conceptual Build-Out Roadway Network”. The calculations were based on Collier County’s 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan 2015 financial figures.

⁴ Road network is from Wilson Miller’s “Conceptual Build-Out Roadway Network” map which provides a conceptual road network that could accommodate 45,000 acres of development in RLSA. Wilson Miller is consultant to Eastern Collier Property Owners (EPCO), who are the major landowners in the RLSA. Conservancy figured miles of new roadway segments and road widening projects based on Wilson Miller’s map.

April Olson – Senior Environmental Planning Specialist - Conservancy of Southwest Florida
1495 Smith Preserve Way, Naples, FL – 239.262-0304, ext. 250 – AprilO@Conservancy.org Sept. 2018

MILES OF PROPOSED WIDENED ROADS	111.61 miles (See Fig. 4)
LISTED SPECIES THREATENED BY DEVELOPMENT IN THE RLSA	<u>Federally listed species</u> – Florida panther, Florida scrub-jay, crested caracara, wood stork, red-cockaded woodpecker, Everglades snail kite, eastern indigo snake, Florida bonneted bat (candidate species or under review: gopher tortoise, Eastern diamondback rattlesnake, gopher frog). <u>6 state listed species</u> – burrowing owl, Florida sandhill crane, little blue heron, roseate spoonbill, Southeastern American kestrel, tricolored heron, Big Cypress fox squirrel, Everglades mink.
ACREAGE OF WETLANDS	74,907 ⁵ acres
IMPORTANT FLOWWAYS & WATERSHEDS within RLSA. (These are areas where it is important to maintain connections between large wetlands systems and critical habitat areas.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Camp Keis Strand 2. Okaloacoochee Slough 3. Corkscrew Regional Ecological Watershed (CREW)
AREA OF CRITICAL STATE CONCERN (ACSC) –Areas designated as having environmental and natural resources of statewide importance.	Big Cypress Area of Critical State Concern -63,700 acres of RLSA (33% of total RLSA area) ⁶
IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL CONNECTIONS TO STATE & FEDERAL PRESERVES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Big Cypress National Preserve 2. Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge 3. Picayune Strand State Forest 4. Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park 5. Collier-Seminole State Park 6. Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge
INCIDENTAL TAKE PERMIT (ITP) & EASTERN COLLIER MULTI-SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN	<p>Landowners⁷ drafted a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in connection with an application for an incidental take permit (ITP), under the Endangered Species Act.</p> <p>Landowners would like to see that the ITP is approved, which would cover actions that would impact eight federally listed species, including the Florida panther on 45,000 acres in the RLSA. The HCP proposes 22,045-24,587 acres of Primary Zone loss within the RLSA.</p>
RLSA ACRONYMS & TERMS	<u>SSA – Stewardship Sending Area</u> – Areas designated by the landowners to remain primarily in agriculture in exchange for securing credits to develop towns, villages, or hamlets at higher densities of up to 4 units per acre (SRAs).

⁵ Acreage of wetlands from Wilson Miller (2000) Immokalee Area Study Report Stage 1.

⁶Figure from Wilson Miller (2002) Report and Recommendations of the Collier County Rural Lands Assessment Area Oversight Committee for the Immokalee Area Study, p. 12.

⁷ The Eastern Collier Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan and ITP application were submitted by Eastern Collier Property Owners (EPCO) who own 154,124 of the 182,000 acres of private lands in the RLSA. Nine major landowners make up EPCO.

	<p><u>SRA – Stewardship Receiving Area</u> – Areas that can be designated for towns, villages, hamlets, or compact rural development using credits earned from SSAs. (93,000 acres)</p> <p><u>WRA – Water Retention Area</u> – Lands currently permitted by South Florida Water Management District to function as agricultural water retention areas, which are available for inclusion as a SRA or SSA(18,200 acres).</p> <p><u>FSA – Flowway Stewardship Area</u> – Wetland areas to be protected within Okaloacoochee Slough & Camp Keais Strand, which can be designated as SSAs (31,100 acres)</p> <p><u>HSA – Habitat Stewardship Area</u> – Agricultural lands to be protected that are also habitat for listed species, which can be designated as SSAs (45,782 acres)</p> <p><u>SC – Stewardship Credits</u> – Credits created from lands within SSAs that can be used to create SRAs (towns).</p>
<p>WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ON RLSA WORKSHOPS AND RLSA RESTUDY EFFORTS.</p>	<p>Collier County’s RLSA webpage: https://www.colliercountyfl.gov/your-government/divisions-s-z/zoning-division/community-planning-section/rural-lands-stewardship-area-restudy</p> <p>Conservancy of Southwest Florida’s webpage: https://www.conservancy.org/our-work/policy/rural-lands-stewardship-area</p> <p>Or contact April Olson for more questions: AprilO@Conservancy.org / 239-262-0304, ext. 250</p>

Conservancy’s Concerns & Solutions for a Better Program

The Conservancy was actively involved in the creation of the RLSA program and continues to be actively engaged in the current restudy. As mentioned previously, the original intent of the program was to cluster development on less than 10% of the nearly 200,000 acres of land in the RLSA, while preserving the remaining lands for agriculture and conservation. Days prior to adoption of the RLSA program, policies were added that greatly increased the capacity for new towns and development in the RLSA by 230%. The Conservancy believes that this tremendous increase in development potential will have grave impacts on listed species, natural resources, and could burden taxpayers currently residing in Collier County. Below are our concerns of the current program and our solutions to better ensure that the program meets the very goals it

**April Olson – Senior Environmental Planning Specialist - Conservancy of Southwest Florida
1495 Smith Preserve Way, Naples, FL – 239.262-0304, ext. 250 – AprilO@Conservancy.org Sept. 2018**

aims to achieve: (1) protect wetlands and listed species habitats, (2) discourage sprawl, (3) protect agriculture.

CONCERN: The RLSA program will jeopardize the recovery and survival of the endangered Florida panther.

SOLUTION: *The current RLSA program must be modified to incorporate primary zone panther habitat and adult breeding habitat when assessing locations of new towns, villages, and new roads. Panther scientists state that these areas are crucial to the survival of the panther. The Conservancy's 2018 RLSA Vision Map (see Figure 2) depicts areas that are more appropriate for development and that are outside of the primary zone and adult breeding habitat areas.*

CONCERN: The program needs to be re-evaluated to avoid sprawl.

SOLUTION: *Under the current program towns and villages (called SRAs) can be located anywhere in the open areas (Pink areas on Figure 1). SRAs should be located outside of primary zone panther habitat and closer to urbanized areas. This will lead to more compact communities, less need for new roads and infrastructure, and greater protections of agricultural lands and listed species habitat. (See Conservancy's 2018 Vision Map- Figure 2 – for example)*

CONCERN: The Stewardship credit system needs to be re-evaluated.

SOLUTION: *The number of available credits that can be earned by landowners to build new towns and villages has increased considerably. No new credits should be added to the system, and the credit system in its entirety should be reassessed. Currently, landowners can earn credits by simply stating they will dedicate their lands to conservation, but the county or taxpayers could be responsible for the costs of restoring the lands. The program should be reevaluated to better define what constitutes restoration (i.e. should exotics removal be considered restoration?) and modified so that credits are earned only on lands that have been truly restored, and not for lands that have only been dedicated to restoration. The plan should require specific criteria and benchmarks for the land restoration aimed at restoring hydrological and wildlife connections, protecting surface and groundwater resources, and restoring native habitat.*

CONCERN: Developments are allowed to surround water retention areas (WRA), which will reduce the functionality of habitats in WRA.

SOLUTION: *Many WRAs are important for listed species habitat, including the Florida panther. Policies need to be created to prohibit SRAs from surrounding water retention areas (WRAs) if the SRA reduces or hinders the functionality of habitat for listed species and/or cut off important connections to habitat stewardship areas (HSAs).*

CONCERN: Stewardship Sending Areas (SSAs) can be non-contiguous and fragmented, thereby providing fewer benefits to listed species and water resources than contiguous conservation lands.

SOLUTION: *Modify approval process for SSA (Stewardship Sending Areas) so that lands are approved as SSAs only if they provide contiguous connections between habitat and wetland flowways, conservation lands, other SSAs, or Areas of Critical State Concern.*

CONCERN: The landowners' conceptual proposed roadway network is too costly for taxpayers and bisects primary panther habitat.

SOLUTION: *The Conservancy's 2018 RLSA Vision Map (Figure 2) provides locations where development is more appropriate. The areas called "Potential Development Areas" are outside of the primary panther zone. New development built within the "Potential Development Areas" are denser and provide connections to existing towns; thereby primarily utilizing existing roadways and infrastructure and saving taxpayers money.*

CONCERN: Certain uses within SSAs are inappropriate and should be removed permanently.

SOLUTION: *SSAs are the lands that are to be protected and preserved because they contain important natural resources, including wetlands, listed species habitat, and vital habitat connections. Therefore, all*

mining, gas and oil drilling and exploration, and golf courses should be prohibited in SSAs.

CONCERN: There needs to be a mandatory review of the RLSA program every 5 years.

SOLUTION: The RLSA is a vast area with abundant natural resources. It is important to frequently assess whether the program is meeting the goals it aims to achieve. Changes to the program may be needed as more SRAs are approved, based on changing demographics, updated science, budgetary constraints, water supply impacts, and impacts to wildlife and habitat. We recommend that a policy is added to Collier's Growth Management Plan that requires a review of the program every 5 years.

Figure 2.

Conservancy's 2018 Vision Map shows locations that are more appropriate for development by protecting critical habitat. The pink areas are the Potential Development Areas located outside of Primary Zone panther habitat. Those are the locations where new towns and villages (SRAs) would be more appropriate.

The yellow areas are within the Primary Zone habitat and should be preserved as Habitat Stewardship Areas (HSAs).

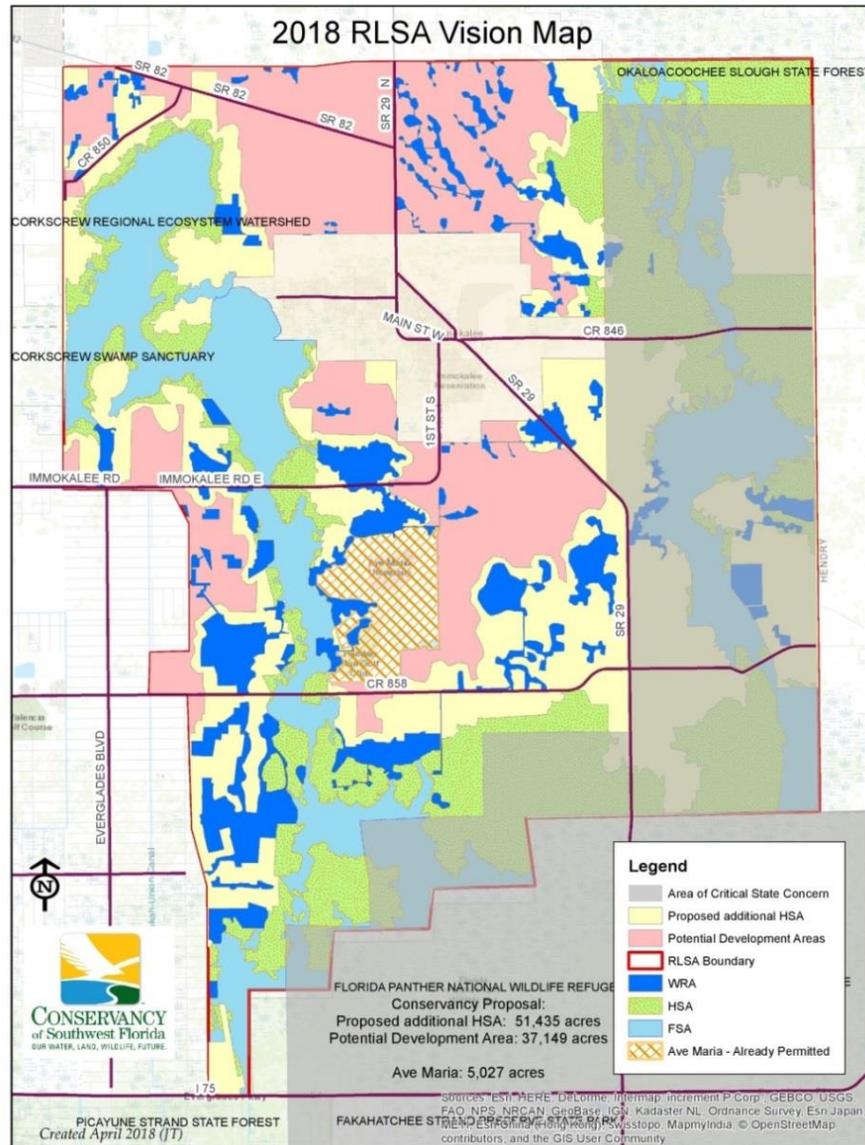


Figure 3. Wilson Miller’s “Conceptual Build-Out Roadway Network” map depicts a road network that could accommodate 45,000 acres of development in RLSA. Wilson Miller is consultant to Eastern Collier Property Owners (EPCO), a group of major landowners in the RLSA.

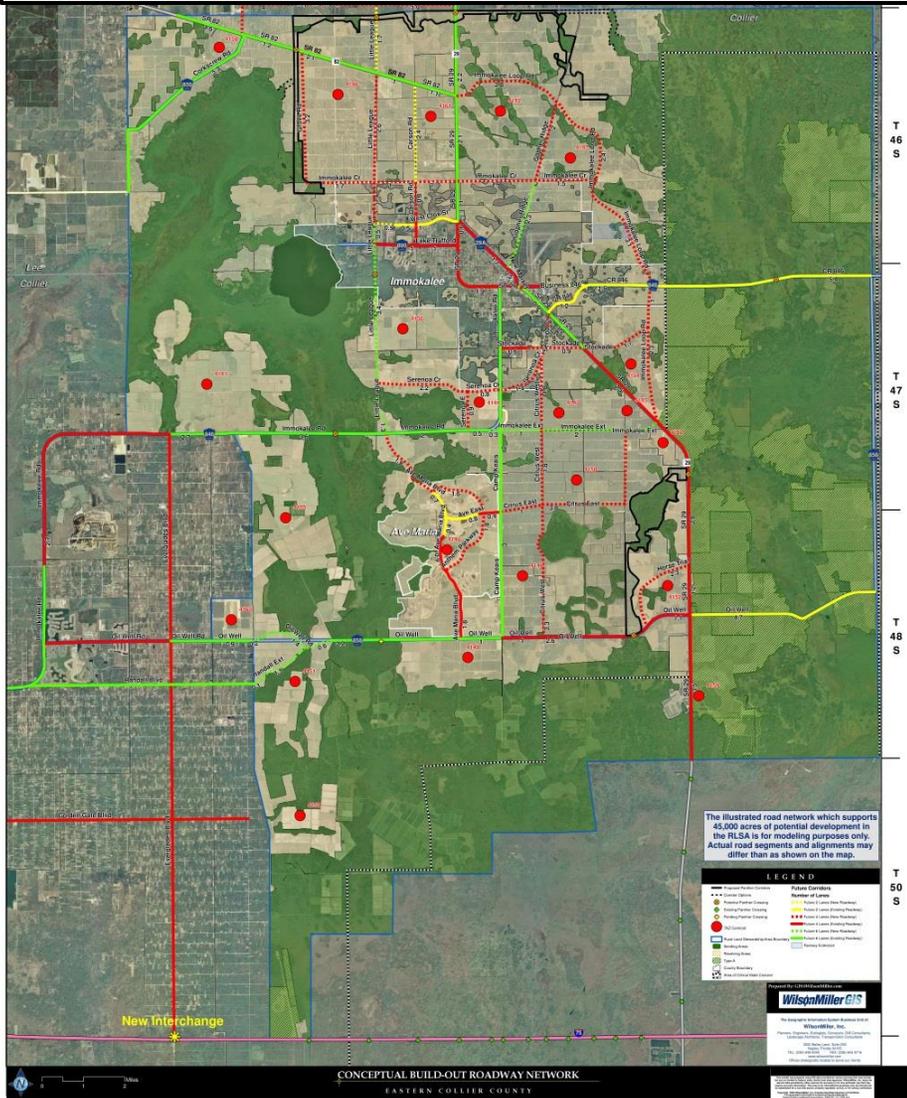


Figure 4. The Conservancy of Southwest Florida calculated the construction costs for Wilson Miller’s “Conceptual Build-Out Roadway Network.” Costs are calculated using Collier County’s 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan 2015 financial figures.

Collier County RLSA: The REAL Cost of Building Roads					
Name of Proposed Road	Length	Type		Cost Per Mile, Per Lane *	Total
Jeffery Flory	3.4 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 145,946,400.00
Ave Maria Blvd.	1.9 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 11,582,400.00
Big Cypress Parkway	5 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 214,480,000.00
Carson Road	2.3 miles	2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 31,919,400.00
Carson Road	0.8 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 34,316,800.00
Ortega East	4.8 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 265,900,800.00
Ortega West	6.8 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 291,492,800.00
County Line Road	5.9 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 253,806,400.00
Gopher Ridge	2 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 5,792,000.00
Gopher Ridge	2.3 miles	6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 186,355,200.00
Greve Road	3.2 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 137,267,200.00
Horse Trail	2.3 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 90,640,800.00
Immokalee Tr	7 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 300,272,000.00
Immokalee Extension	4.2 miles	6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 340,360,800.00
Immokalee Loop Road	11.7 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 501,883,200.00
Little League	1.7 miles	2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 23,592,600.00
Little League	3.6 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 154,425,600.00
Little League	5.1 miles	6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 413,222,400.00
01 Well Road	1.5 miles	6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 121,536,000.00
Randall Ext	2.2 miles	6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 178,252,800.00
Serenoa Circle	5.5 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 235,928,000.00
Serenoa East	0.9 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 38,646,400.00
Shuckale	3.1 miles	4 Lanes		\$ 10,724,000.00	\$ 132,977,600.00
West Oax	0.5 miles	2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 6,939,000.00
Total: 87.7 Miles					Total All New Roads
*Cost includes ROW, Construction, Design based on the 2015 LRTP					\$ 4,214,756,600.00
Name of Road With Proposed Upgrade	Length	From - To		Cost Per Mile, Per Lane*	Total
Ave Maria Blvd.	1.1 miles	Existing to 2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 15,245,800.00
Ave East	0.8 miles	Existing to 2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 11,182,400.00
Business 0166	1 miles	Existing to 2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 13,878,000.00
CR 046	8.1 miles	Existing to 2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 112,111,800.00
01 Well Road	4.7 miles	Existing to 2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 45,236,600.00
West Oax	1.5 miles	Existing to 2 Lanes		\$ 6,539,000.00	\$ 20,817,000.00
Ave East	0.5 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 7,400,000.00
Ave Maria Blvd.	2.6 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 38,231,600.00
Business 0166	0.5 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 7,400,000.00
Carson Road	0.76 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 11,240,160.00
Everglades	5 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 74,000,000.00
Immokalee	6 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 88,996,000.00
New Market	2.2 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 32,595,200.00
Lake Trafford	2 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 29,520,000.00
01 Well Road	7.7 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 114,883,200.00
Shuckale	0.6 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 7,400,000.00	\$ 8,895,600.00
**SR 29 STATE ROAD	13.8 miles	2 Lanes to 4 Lanes		\$ 8,555,000.00	\$ 236,118,000.00
Camp Teas	5 miles	2 Lanes to 6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 270,080,000.00
Immokalee Road	15.8 miles	2 Lanes to 6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 853,452,800.00
01 Well Road	6.9 miles	2 Lanes to 6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 372,710,400.00
Randall	5.4 miles	2 Lanes to 6 Lanes		\$ 13,504,000.00	\$ 291,686,400.00
**SR 29 STATE ROAD	7.4 miles	2 Lanes to 6 Lanes		\$ 15,599,000.00	\$ 461,730,400.00
**SR 82 STATE ROAD	7 miles	2 Lanes to 6 Lanes		\$ 15,599,000.00	\$ 436,772,000.00
Gerkerrow Road	5.25 miles	4 lanes to 6 lanes		\$ 8,126,000.00	\$ 85,323,000.00
** State Cost Estimates Will Be Slightly Different					Total 111.61 Miles
NOTE: 01 Well Road is currently under construction and in various stages of upgrading.					*Cost includes ROW, Construction, Design based
					Total Existing Road Improvements
					\$ 3,659,348,260.00
Grand Total					\$ 7,874,104,960.00