Chapter 1
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Manatee County is proposing to add additional travel lanes across the Manatee River in eastern Manatee County. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide an alternative north/south transportation route between high-growth areas of Manatee County located east of Interstate 75 (I-75), separated by the Manatee River and to improve regional mobility. Studies have shown that there is a strong demand for multiple crossings over this waterway to alleviate the traffic burden on I-75 and improve regional mobility. Several specific factors demonstrate the need for the Proposed Action, including the need to:

- Accommodate existing and projected growth in eastern Manatee County,
- Improve the level of service (LOS) of the local roadway network,
- Improve emergency response times, and
- Improve evacuation capacity across the Manatee River.

The current Manatee River crossings located at I-75 and Rye Road create a circuitous route for travelers east of I-75 in eastern Manatee County that increases travel time/distance, reduces LOS, increases emergency response times, and are at capacity for evacuation scenarios.

1.1 PROJECT SETTING

The project area for the Proposed Action and for this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is bound by I-75 to the west, U.S. Highway (US) 301 to the north, Rye Road to the east, and State Road (SR) 64 to the south (**Figure 1-1**). Manatee County encompasses 893 square miles (mi^2) including water bodies, of which approximately 741 mi^2 is land area. The project area for this DEIS is approximately 38 mi^2.

For years the Manatee River has served as a natural and recreational resource to the citizens of Manatee County, but it also has served as a natural barrier to travel between residential areas to the north and employment, business, and commercial centers to the south. Over time, a series of crossings have been constructed over the Manatee River. **Figure 1-2** shows the location of these crossings, number of lanes, annual average daily traffic (AADT), and distances from the Fort Hamer Alternative crossing. They include:

- US 41 (9th Street West), near the county seat of Bradenton, approximately 9.0 miles west (four lanes);
- US 301, approximately 8.25 miles to the west (four lanes);

FIGURE 1-1
PROJECT AREA MAP

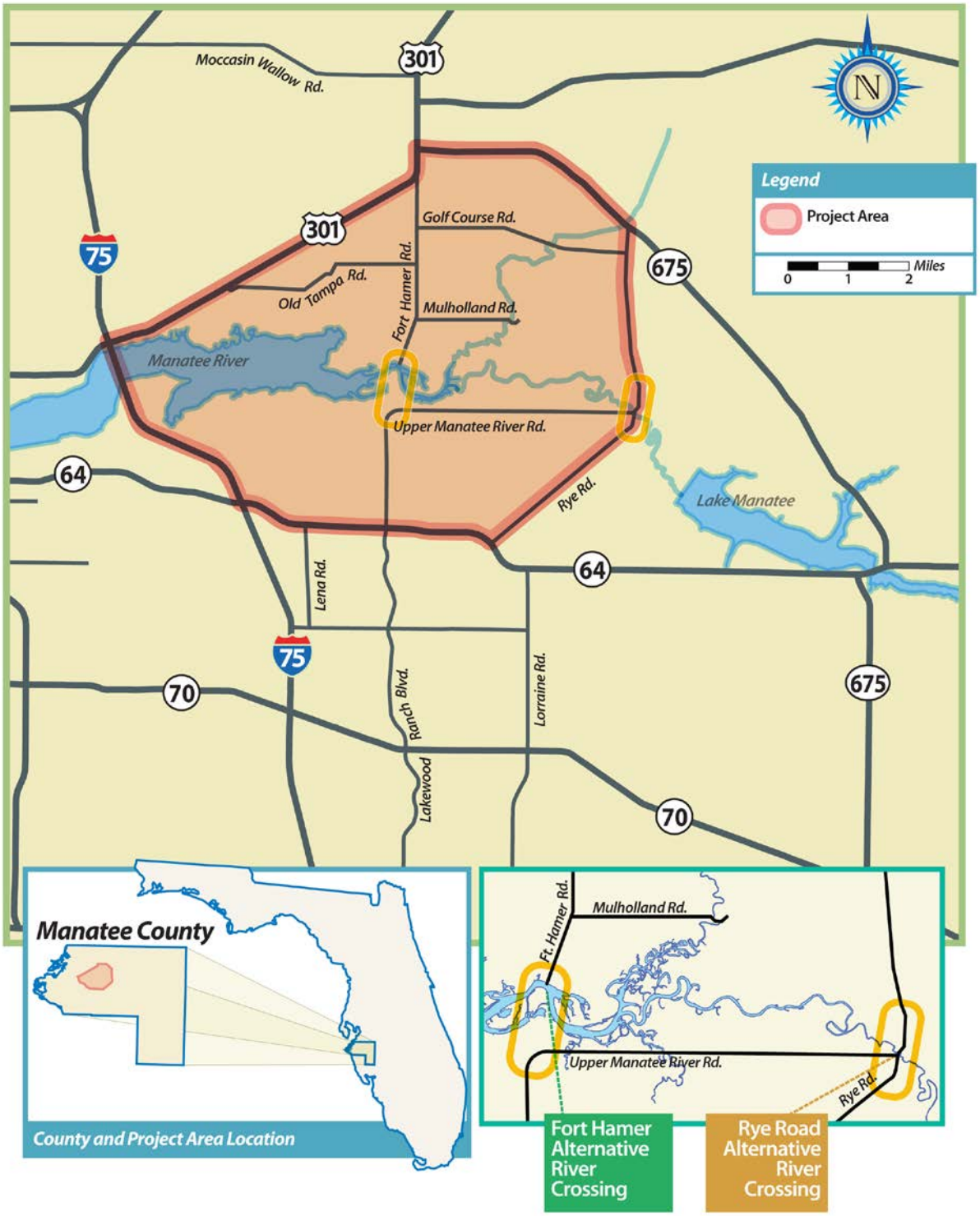
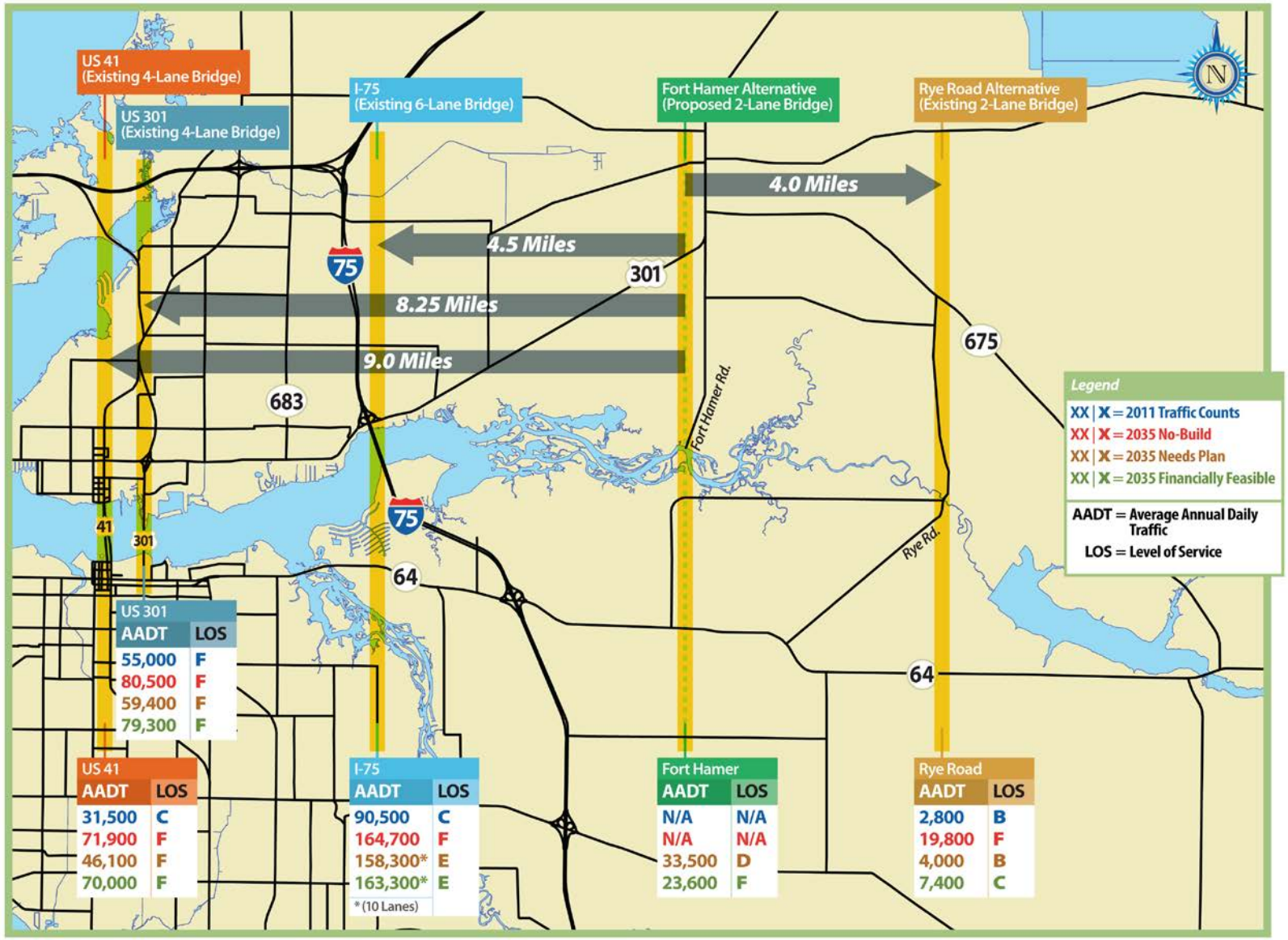


FIGURE 1-2
EXISTING CROSSINGS OF THE MANATEE RIVER



- I-75, approximately 4.5 miles west (six lanes); and
- Rye Road, approximately 4.0 miles east (two lanes).

These crossings represent a total of 16 lanes of capacity over the Manatee River.

The commercial and employment center of Manatee County is located west of the project area in the central business district of the county seat of Bradenton and farther west along the Gulf Coast beaches of Anna Maria Island, Bradenton Beach, and Longboat Key (Section 3.1.1, Socioeconomic Conditions). As detailed later in Section 3.1.2 (Land Use Characteristics) of this DEIS, much of the project area is characterized by existing Residential land uses and sparse existing Agricultural uses (Figure 3-8) that are planned for future Residential uses (Figure 3-9a).

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of this Proposed Action it to provide an alternative north/south route across the Manatee River and improve regional mobility. Several specific factors contribute to, and demonstrate the need for, an improvement in regional mobility across the Manatee River for residents and regional travelers. These interrelated factors, which should be addressed in any proposed solution, relate to:

- Accommodation of existing and projected growth in eastern Manatee County,
- Improvements in LOS to the local roadway network,
- Improvements to emergency response times, and
- Improvements to evacuation capacity across the Manatee River.

These factors are discussed in detail in the following sections.

The following alternatives were considered for analysis and evaluation in this document and meet the stated Purpose and Need. These alternatives are further analyzed and evaluated in the subsequent sections of this document:

- **No-Build Alternative** – no capacity improvements, only maintenance and safety projects currently funded in Manatee County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) (Manatee County BOCC, 2012).
- **Fort Hamer Alternative** – construction of a new two-lane bridge across the Manatee River connecting the existing local two-lane Upper Manatee River Road to the existing two-lane Fort Hamer Road.

- **Rye Road Alternative** – expansion of the current two-lane crossing of the Manatee River to four lanes and widening the existing local two-lane Rye Road from SR 64 north to Gulf Course Road to four lanes, widening the existing local two-lane Golf Course Road to four lanes, and widening the existing local two-lane Fort Hamer Road north to US 301 to four lanes.

1.2.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Continued growth in population and traffic volumes is anticipated to increase demand on the existing roadway network beyond its current capacity. This is most apparent in the capacity needs crossing the Manatee River. Currently, there are 16 travel lanes crossing the Manatee River downstream of the Lake Manatee Dam. Two four-lane bridges on US 41 and US 301 exist west of I-75. A six-lane bridge exists on I-75 spanning the Manatee River. East of I-75, only one two-lane bridge exists on Rye Road (Figure 1-2). As illustrated in **Figure 1-3**, the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO'S) 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)[1] projects that by the year 2035 all bridges crossing the Manatee River would be congested or severely congested.

The Transportation Research Board's (TRB's) *Highway Capacity Manual* (HCM) (TRB, 2010) and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO's) *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* ("Green Book") (AASHTO, 2011) define LOS as:

LOS A = Free flow

LOS B = Reasonably free flow

LOS C = Stable Flow

LOS D = Approaching unstable flow (congested)

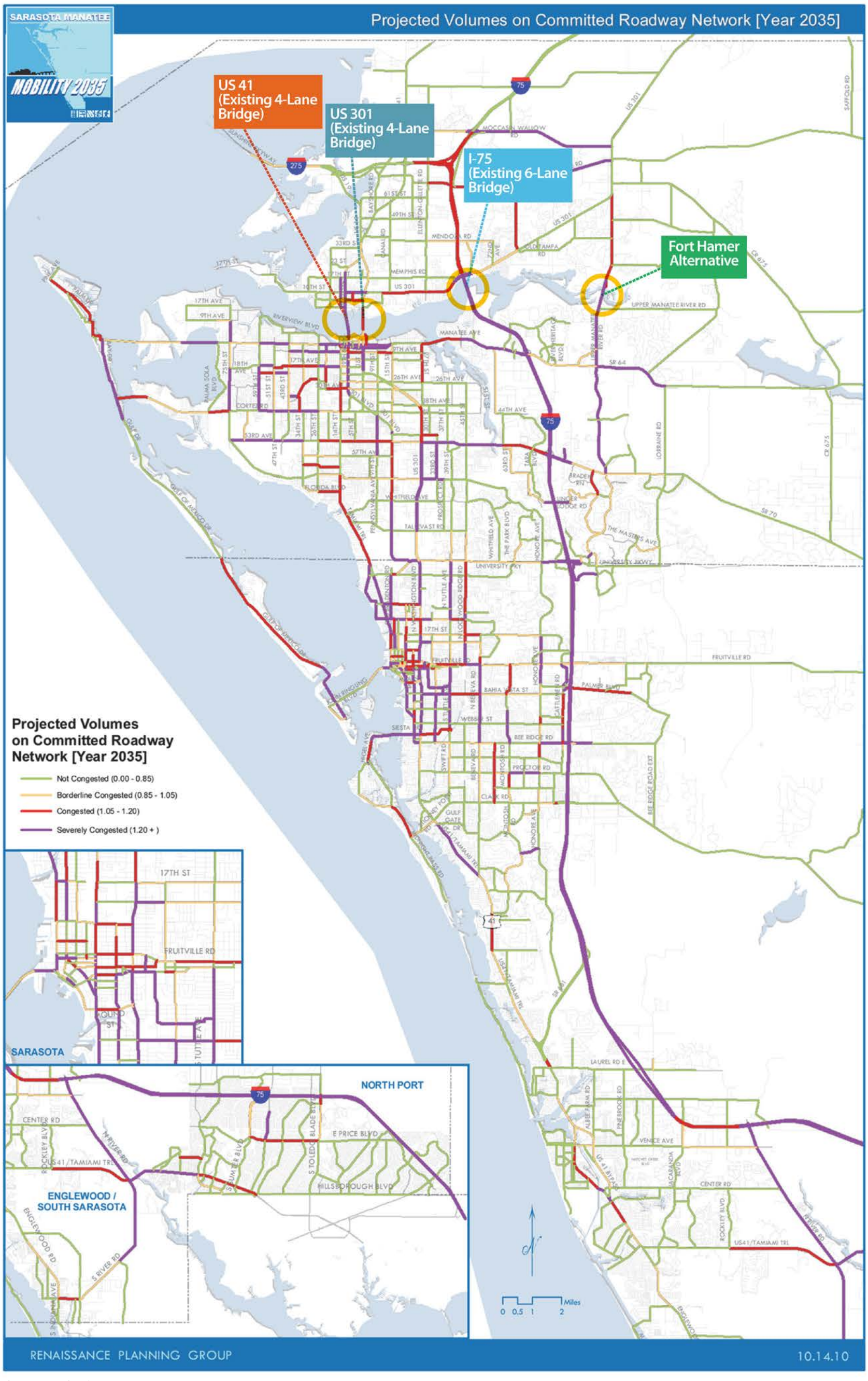
LOS E = Unstable flow (severely congested)

LOS F = Forced or breakdown flow (failure)

The Needs Plan (see footnote below) indicates a need for 28 lanes crossing the Manatee River. To accommodate the future 2035 traffic demand crossing the Manatee River, 12 lanes west of I-75 [US 41, US 301, and a new bridge at County Road (CR) 683], 10 lanes on I-75, and six lanes east of I-75 (Fort Hamer Road and Rye Road) are planned. **Figure 1-4** and **Table 1-1a** shows these bridge crossings with projected traffic volumes as AADT and LOS D roadway capacity based on the Needs Plan.

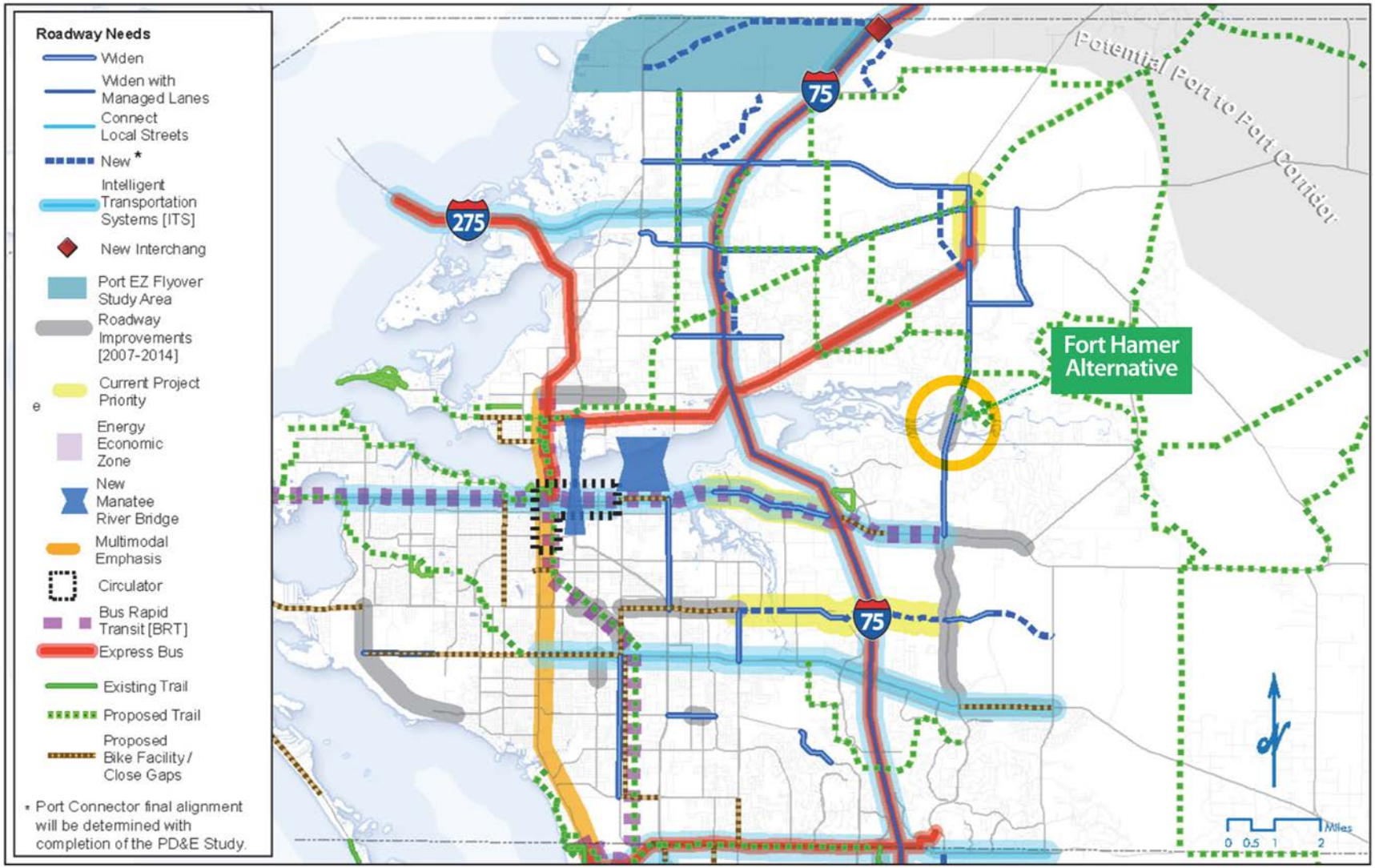
[1] The Sarasota/Manatee MPO's 2035 LRTP (aka Mobility 2035) is a strategic document for multimodal transportation strategies and investments to support and strengthen the region's economic vitality, livability, and environment. The plan entails two main elements: a Needs Plan and a Financially Feasible Plan. The Needs Plan charts a strategic direction for how the MPO, its member agencies, and partners will achieve important mobility and accessibility goals over the next 25 years. The Financially Feasible Plan identifies priority transportation projects, and their associated costs, that can be funded by the estimated year of expenditure using projected revenues from a variety of federal, state, and local sources over the planning horizon. The most recent version of the LRTP was completed in 2010 and updated in March 2012 (MPO, 2012).

FIGURE 1-3
PROJECTED VOLUMES ON COMMITTED
ROADWAY NETWORK (2035)



Source: MPO, 2012.

FIGURE 1-4
NEEDS PLAN



Source: Sarasota/Manatee MPO, 2012.

TABLE 1-1a
NEEDS PLAN - PROJECTED DAILY TRAFFIC DEMAND
AND CAPACITY OF BRIDGES ACROSS THE MANATEE RIVER

Bridge	Number of Lanes[1]	Daily 2035 AADT Traffic	Capacity[2]
US 41 (existing)	4	46,100	39,800
US 301 (existing)	4	59,400	39,800
CR 683 (new bridge)	4	62,300	39,800
I-75 (Six general use/Four new express lanes)	10	158,300	183,900
Fort Hamer Road (new bridge)	4	33,500	39,800
Rye Road (existing)	2	4,000	14,200
Totals	**28**	**363,600**	**357,300**

[1] Based on the Needs Plan.
[2] TRB, 2010.
Source: MPO, 2012.

Based on the Needs Plan, the future 28 lanes spanning the Manatee River would provide adequate capacity for 357,300 vehicles per day (vpd), but more capacity would be needed to meet the projected daily demand crossing the river (363,600 vpd). Although the Sarasota/Manatee MPO has demonstrated the need for 28 lanes across the Manatee River by 2035, financial constraints reduce the ability to meet this need.

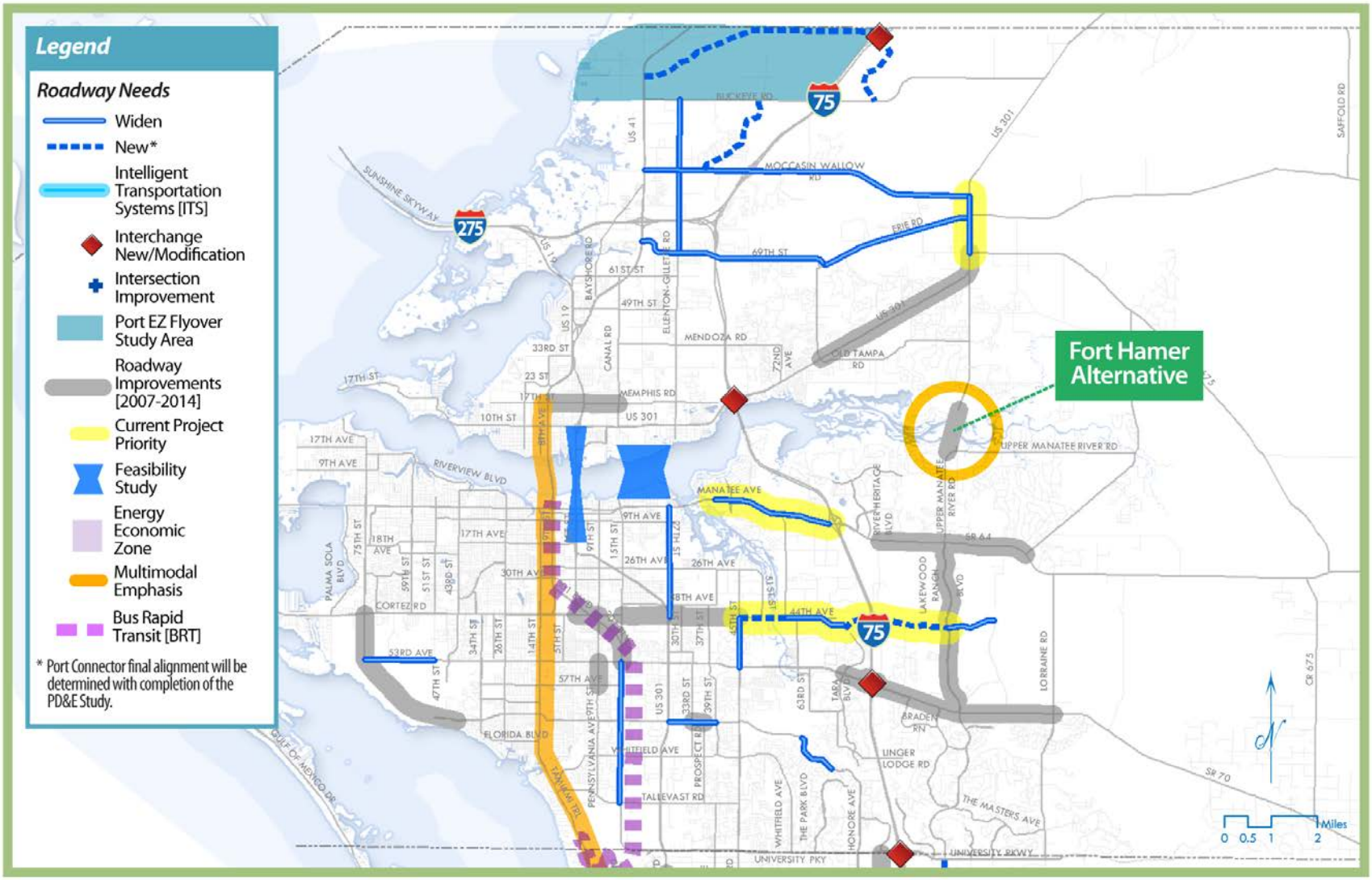
Figure 1-5 shows the Financially Feasible Plan. Most importantly, this Plan shows that the widening of I-75 is not financially feasible by 2035, thereby reducing capacity and increasing the demand for additional lanes east of I-75. The Financially Feasible Plan would provide only 18 lanes (10 fewer than the projected need) spanning the Manatee River with adequate capacity for 198,500 vpd. Additional capacity would be needed to meet the projected daily demand crossing the river (299,800 vpd). **Table 1-1b** lists these bridge crossings with projected traffic volumes as AADT and LOS D roadway capacity based on the Financially Feasible Plan. Manatee County has established LOS D as acceptable on local roadways.

TABLE 1-1b
FINANCIALLY FEASIBLE PLAN - PROJECTED DAILY TRAFFIC DEMAND
AND CAPACITY OF BRIDGES ACROSS THE MANATEE RIVER

Bridge	Number of Lanes[1]	Daily 2035 AADT Traffic	Capacity[2]
US 41 (existing)	4	46,100	39,800
US 301 (existing)	4	59,400	39,800
CR 683 (new bridge)	0	N/A	N/A
I-75 (Six general use)	6	163,300	90,500
Fort Hamer Road (new bridge)	2	23,600	14,200
Rye Road (existing)	2	7,400	14,200
Totals	**18**	**299,800**	**198,500**

[1] Based on the Financially Feasible Plan.
[2] TRB, 2010.
Source: MPO, 2012.

FIGURE 1-5
FINANCIALLY FEASIBLE PLAN



Source: MPO, 2012.

1.2.2 POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

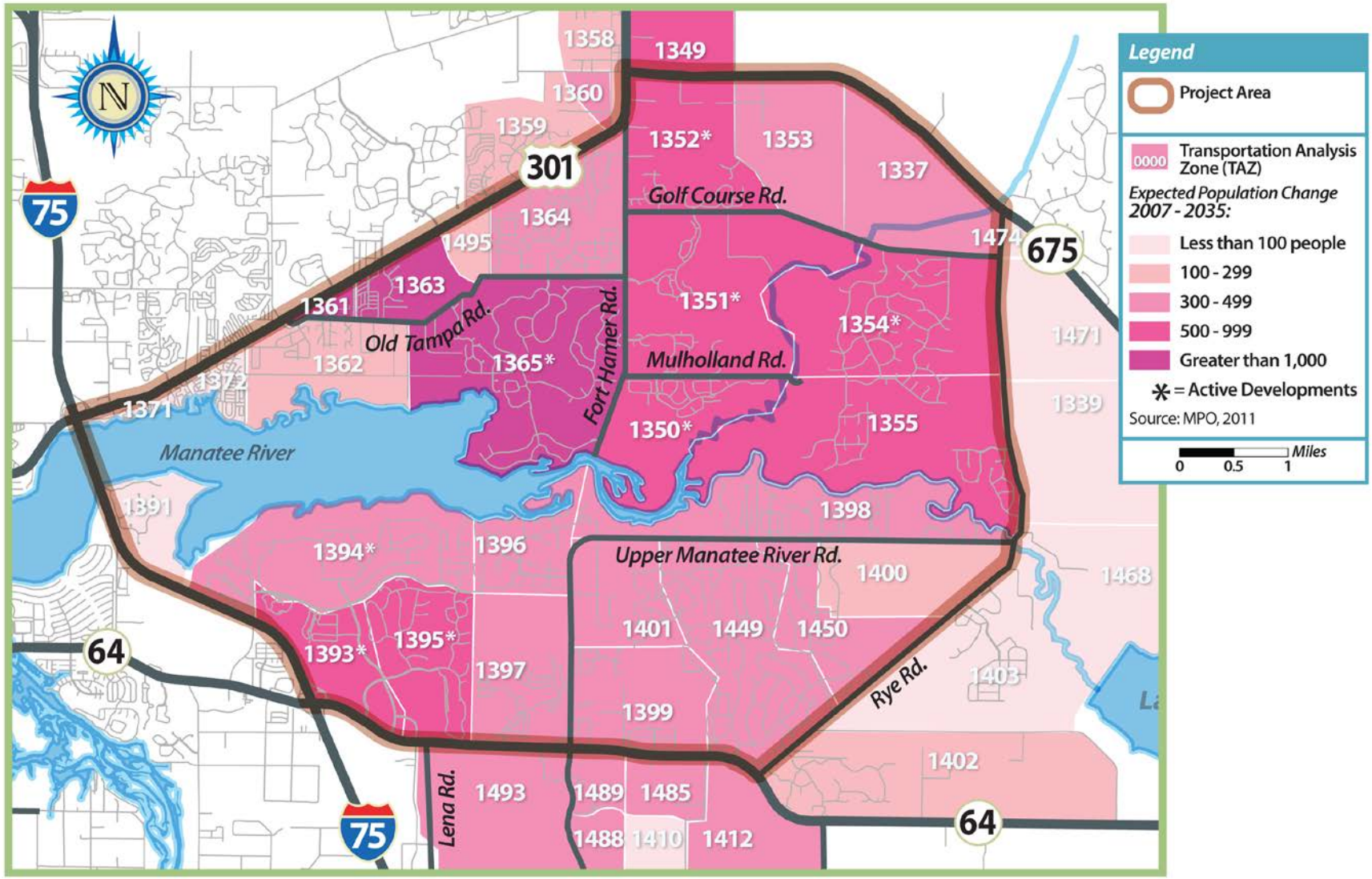
The population of Manatee County continues to expand due in part to its abundance of buildable land and proximity to major employment centers such as St. Petersburg, Tampa, Bradenton, and Sarasota. Factors such as tourism-related activities, a strong second-home market, attractiveness to retirees, and the overall historic economic growth in west central Florida contribute to the population growth in Manatee County. According to the 2010 United States (U.S.) Census, Manatee County's population was 322,833 persons, which is a 22.3 percent increase over the 2000 population of 264,002. The 2010 U.S. Census also reveals a population of 47,643 in 2010 within those census tracts that intersect the project area; this represents a 128.6 percent increase over the 2000 population of 21,002 persons within these census tracts. In 2010, 55 percent of the population within those census tracts that intersect the project area was between the ages of 20 and 65 (Census, 2010a). This indicates that a relatively high percentage of individuals in these census tracts are in the workforce and travel to and from work on a daily basis (Section 3.1.1, Socioeconomic Conditions).

As part of Manatee County's 2035 LRTP Update (MPO, 2012), the Sarasota/Manatee MPO adjusted its Travel Demand Model (TDM) and its component Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) to reflect the current economic environment and its impact to projected population growth and development. This update is required as part of *Florida's Growth Management Act* and concurrency policies.

According to projections from the Sarasota/Manatee MPO's TDM (MPO, 2011), the projected population for Manatee County in 2035 is 447,910 persons, which represents a 38 percent increase over the 2007 population of 323,940. The TAZs intersected by the project area are projected to grow in population from 25,189 in 2007 to 44,944 by 2035, an increase of 78 percent. **Figure 1-6** shows the growth in the TAZs that intersect the project area and depicts the location of the TAZs. This expected high growth in the project area is due to Manatee County's focus on residential development and associated business growth east of I-75.

Growth is anticipated to continue within the project area and surrounding areas with development being concentrated along Upper Manatee River Road and Fort Hamer Road. New housing starts within Manatee County reached a peak of 6,579 in 2004. Even with the following recession, the number of annual housing starts in the County has not dropped below 1,225 and housing starts began rising again in 2011. East of I-75, the County is growing and developing faster than the County as a whole due to the abundance of developable land. One Development of Regional Impact (DRI), Heritage Harbor, and five residential developments are in various stages of approval and/or construction at this time. These developments are located in TAZs 1350, 1351, 1352, 1354, 1365, 1393, 1394, and 1395 on Figure 1-6. Three thousand, four hundred fifty-one (3,451) new single-family units are approved for development and the Heritage Harbor DRI includes over 900 multi-family units, approximately 600,000 square feet (ft^2) of commercial floor area, and approximately 100,000 ft^2 of service floor area.

FIGURE 1-6
TAZ LOCATIONS AND EXPECTED POPULATION CHANGE IN THE PROJECT AREA (2007-2035)



Source: MPO, 2011.

Figure 1-7 depicts the historic land use changes since 1974 in the vicinity of the project area and land use changes that are approved to occur by 2030. This area has evolved from a predominately agricultural area to predominantly single-family residential and is planned to continue to develop in that way in the future. **Figure 1-8** depicts the 2030 future land use map with the current Urban Services Boundary. The Urban Services Boundary defines the area in which utilities and services such as water, sewer, and solid waste disposal are provided by the County.

1.2.3 IMPROVEMENTS LOS ON THE LOCAL ROADWAY NETWORK

As a result of the population and development growth discussed previously, travel demand on the existing transportation network is anticipated to steadily increase. **Table 1-2** summarizes several segments of the Manatee County roadway network within and adjacent to the project area expected to experience a large increase in AADT volumes. These volumes were derived by running the 2015 and 2035 LRTP Financially Feasible Plan (MPO, 2012) model with the present day (2012) roadway network and lane configuration (i.e., the No-Build Alternative).

TABLE 1-2
SUMMARY OF PROJECTED AADT VOLUMES
2015 VERSUS 2035 - NO-BUILD ALTERNATIVE[1]

Roadway	Segment	2015 AADT	2035 AADT[1]
I-75 (Assumes Six Lanes)	US 301 to I-75/I-275 Junction	102,300	138,000
I-75 (Assumes Six Lanes)	SR 64 to US 301	122,900	164,700
I-75 (Assumes Six Lanes)	SR 70 to SR 64	116,200	148,700
US 301	I-75 to Old Tampa Road	50,400	68,600
US 301	Old Tampa Road to Fort Hamer Road	12,300	24,600
SR 64	I-75 to Grand Harbour Parkway	39,800	62,400
SR 64	Grand Harbour Parkway to Lakewood Ranch Boulevard	35,300	41,900
Upper Manatee River Road (Assumes Two Lanes)	South of Waterlefe Boulevard	5,900	9,800
Fort Hamer Road (Assumes Two Lanes)	Manatee River to Old Tampa Road	1,400	2,100
Rye Road	SR 64 to Upper Manatee River Road	7,000	15,600
Rye Road	Upper Manatee River Road to Golf Course Road	2,900	19,800
Golf Course Road	Fort Hamer Road to Rye Road	1,100	11,500

[1] The No-Build Alternative assumes only those projects currently funded for construction would be in place in 2035 and no bridge would be built at Fort Hamer Road/Upper Manatee River Road.
Source: MPO, 2011

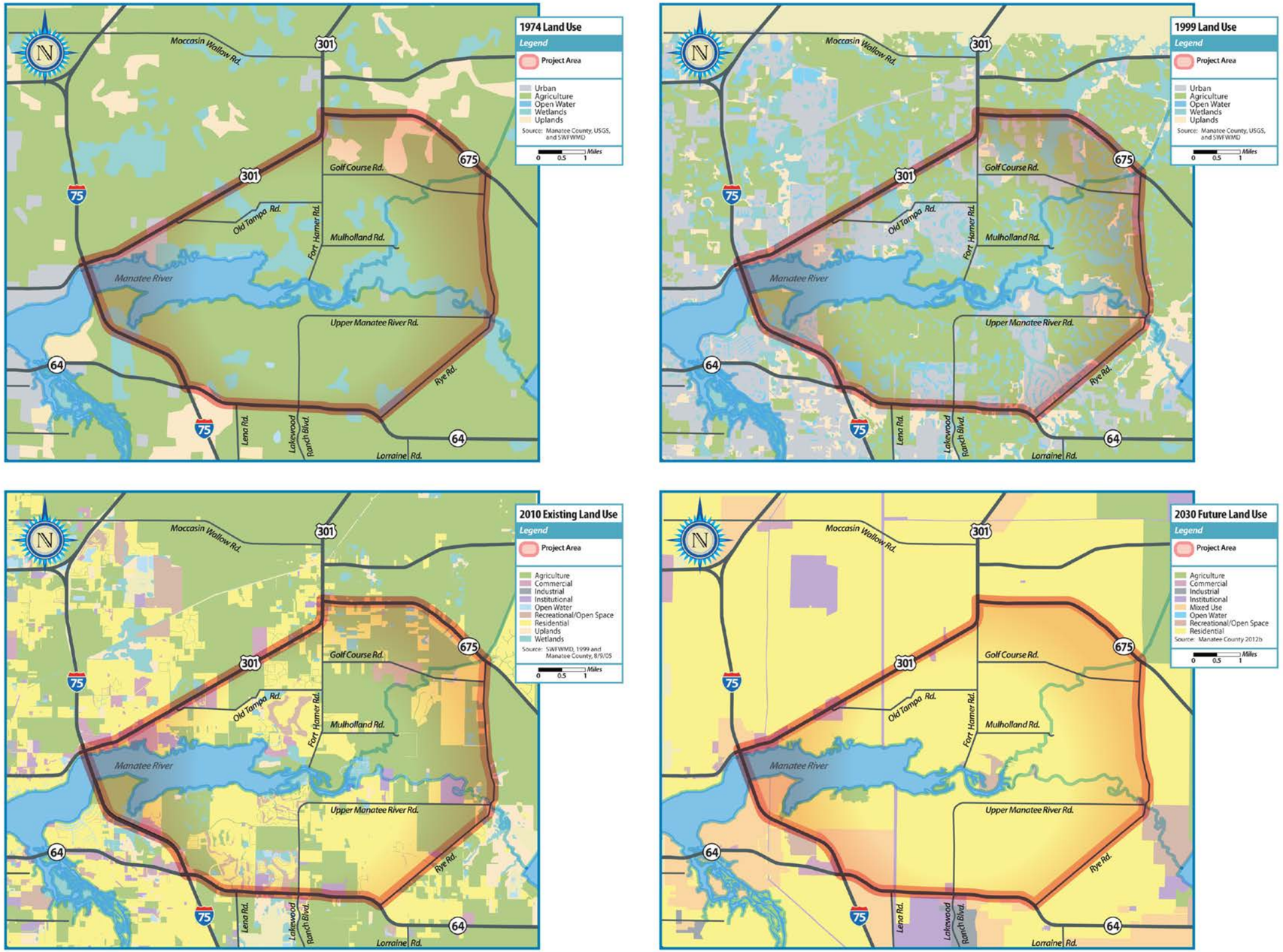
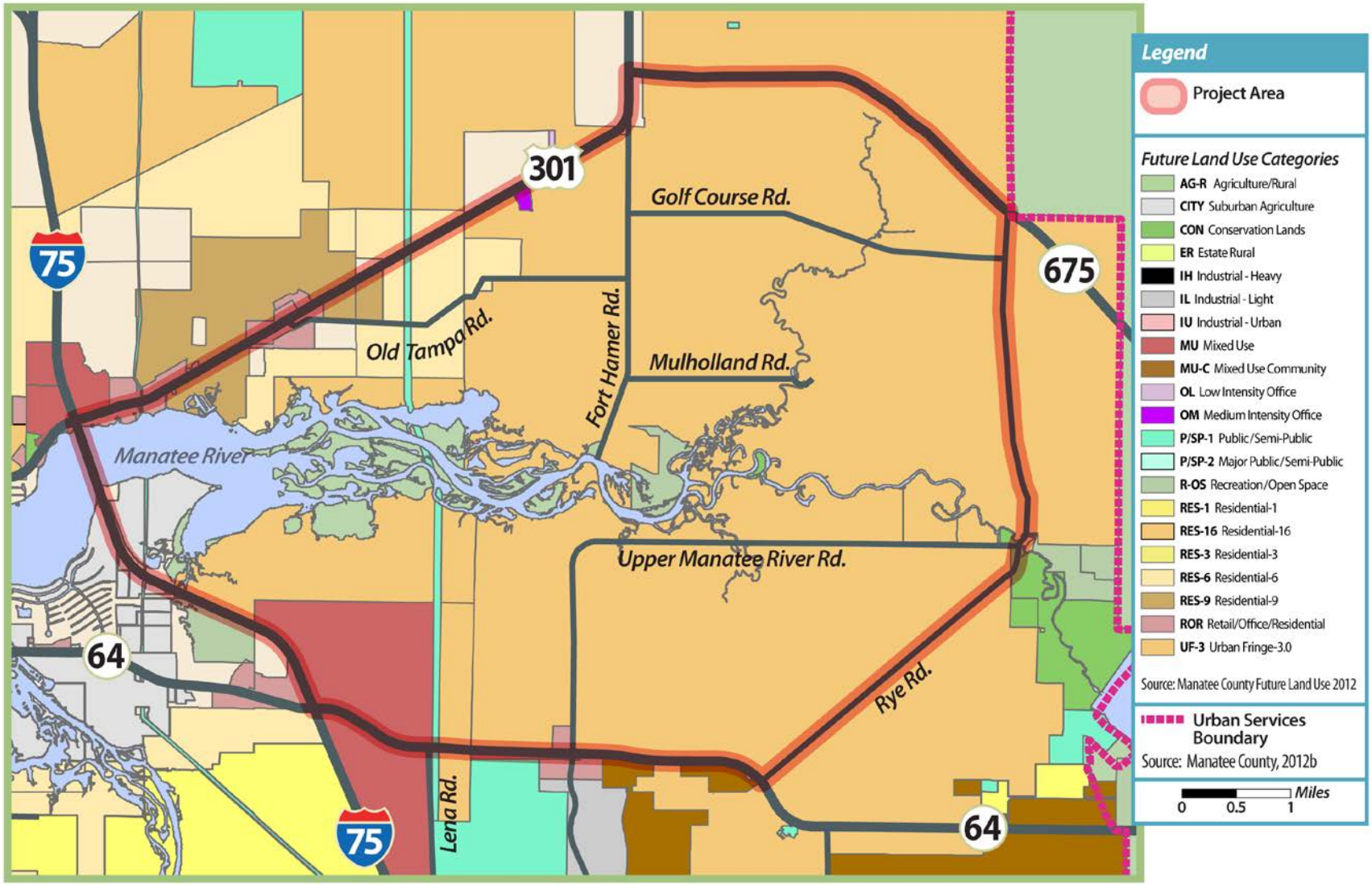


FIGURE 1-7
HISTORICAL LAND USE CHANGES
IN THE PROJECT AREA

FIGURE 1-8
2030 FUTURE LAND USE WITH URBAN SERVICES BOUNDARY



Source: MBCC, 2012.

This increase in daily volumes reflects the land use and employment patterns in Manatee County. Generalized patterns of travel flow from the northeast to the southwest across the Manatee River in the morning peak period with the reverse flow occurring in the afternoon peak.

Manatee County's LOS standard specifies to maintain LOS D for existing and 20-year design. Currently, LOS is fair (generally LOS C or better) on most of the roadway segments along the Fort Hamer Alternative and Rye Road Alternative corridors.

1.2.4 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EVACUATION ENHANCEMENT

The only existing crossing of the Manatee River east of I-75 is a single two-lane crossing at Rye Road located approximately 8.5 miles east of I-75 (Figure 1-2). The proposed Fort Hamer Alternative crossing is approximately 4.5 miles east of I-75 and would provide an opportunity for additional emergency response and evacuation.

Enhance Emergency Service Access to Northeast Manatee County

Neighborhoods within the project area are currently served by two fire stations (see **Figure 1-9**). These include:

- The Parrish Fire Control District at 12132 US 301 North, Parrish and
- The East Manatee Fire Rescue Station #3 at 150 Rye Road East, Bradenton.

The Parrish Fire Control District is located north of the Manatee River and the East Manatee Fire Rescue Station #3 is located south of the river. Currently, emergency responders from these stations must use either I-75 or Rye Road to service locations on the north or south side of the river, respectively. An additional river crossing at Fort Hamer Road would improve response times to allow either station to deploy assistance in the event an emergency surpasses the ability of one station to respond. It should be noted that this condition also applies to local police and sheriff responses.

According to Manatee County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) records, the current (2013) average response time for the 17 ambulances County-wide is 7.5 minutes (7 minutes 30 seconds) (**Figure 1-10**).

The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) Standard 1710 states that for Fire Suppression Services Deployment (NFPA 1710 §5.2.4) and Emergency Medical Services Deployment (NFPA 1710 §5.3.3.3) of the Initial Arriving Company shall be within 4.0 minutes (240 seconds) of the incident 90 percent of the time (NFPA, 2010).

FIGURE 1-9
EMERGENCY SERVICE FACILITIES WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA

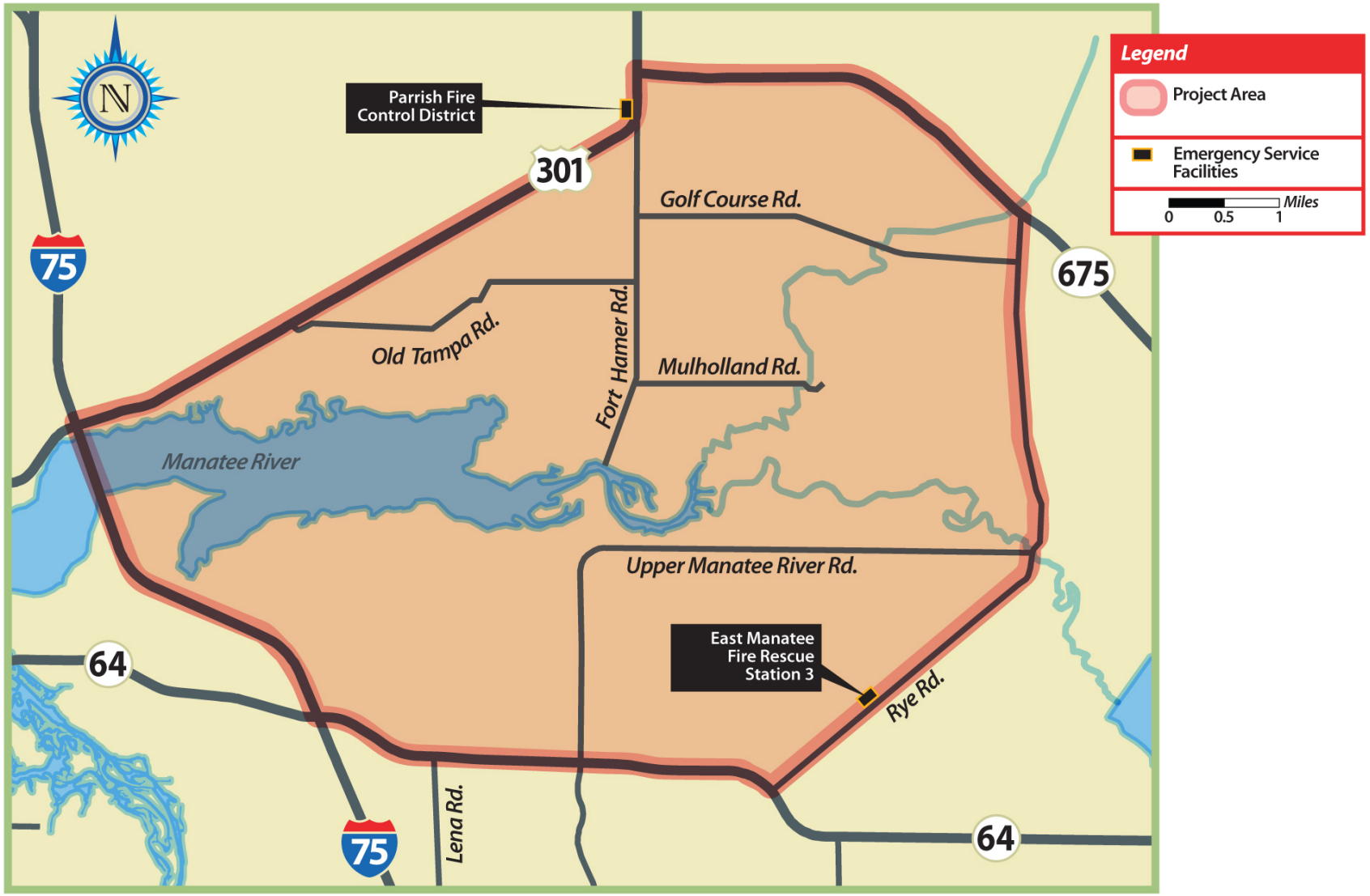
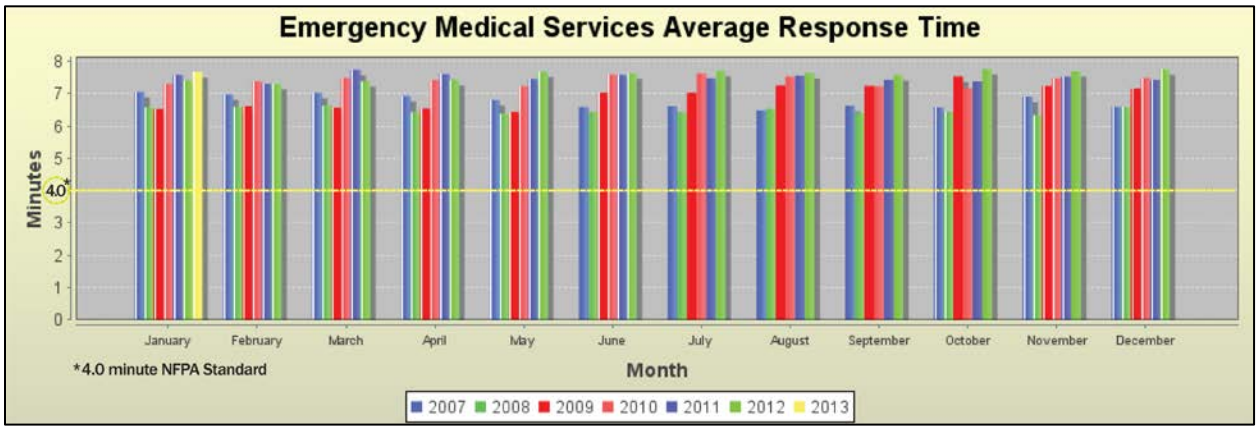


FIGURE 1-10
COUNTY-WIDE AVERAGE AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES (2007-2013)



Note: This chart reflects the average response time for 17 ambulances County-wide. The measurement begins when the ambulance is notified of the call and ends when they arrive on-scene.
Source: EMS, 2013.

The East Manatee Fire Rescue Fire Chief and the Manatee County EMS Chief submitted the following opinions related to the need for an additional crossing of the Manatee River east of I-75:

- In a memorandum dated March 7, 2012, Byron J. Teates, Fire Chief, East Manatee Fire Rescue (Appendix A-4), states:

  "[a]s Fire Chief, I believe that a new bridge crossing in the area of Fort Hamer would substantially reduce fire service mutual-aid response times in certain areas of the East Manatee Fire Rescue District, as well as those to Parrish and North River Fire Districts."

- In a memorandum dated January 13, 2011, Ronald J. Koper, Jr., Manatee County EMS Chief (Appendix A-4), states:

  "…it is the position of the Manatee County Public Safety Department and EMS Division, that an additional crossing connecting the existing Upper Manatee River Road and Fort Hamer Road would improve public safety through decreased emergency response times and more efficient geographic coverage of areas proximate to the river."

Currently, if the Parrish Fire Control District is needed to respond to an emergency south of the river in the approximate location of the proposed Fort Hamer Alternative (e.g., Waterlefe Golf Course), the response travel distance is 11.2 miles and would require 17 minutes at 60 miles per hour (mph) to arrive. Conversely, if the East Manatee Fire Rescue Station #3 is needed to respond to an emergency north of the river in the approximate location of the proposed Fort Hamer Alternative (e.g., Fort Hamer Boat Ramp), the response travel distance is 10.0 miles and would require 10 minutes at 60 mph to arrive. If the Fort Hamer Alternative were in place travel

distances and response times would be reduced to 4 miles in 4 minutes and 6 miles in 6 minutes, respectively.

In addition to emergency response concerns, the need for emergency detour and traveler rerouting is critical to regional travel along I-75.

There have been a series of accidents on the I-75 Bridge that have occurred in recent history requiring the complete closure of the I-75 crossing and the detour of traffic to the local roadway network including:

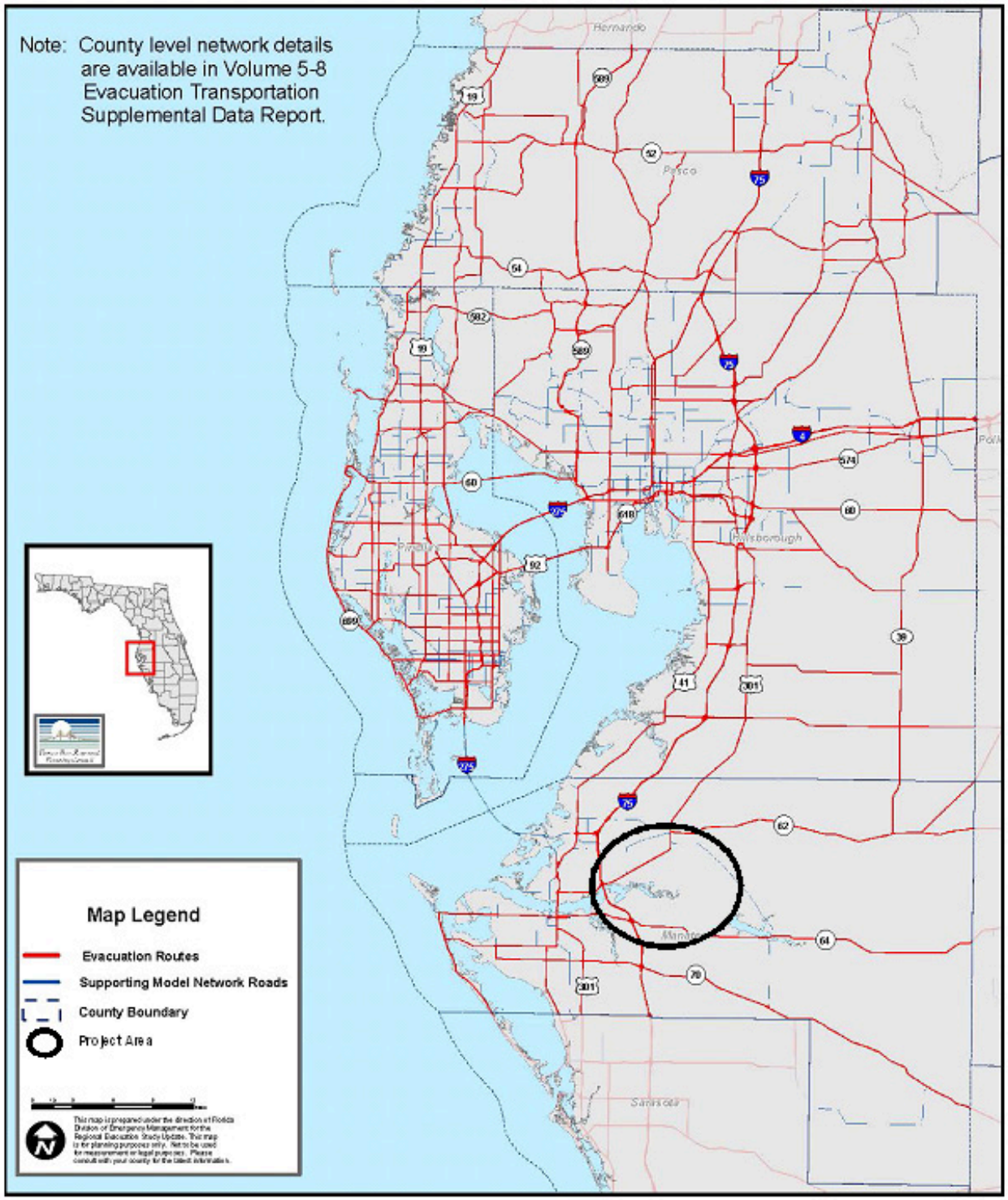
- April 4, 2013: semi-trailer went over the guardrail into the river; northbound traffic detour lasting over 4 hours.
- June 5, 2008: tanker explodes on the US 301 underpass; I-75 closed for 2 weeks.

1.2.5 HURRICANE EVACUATION

As shown in **Figures 1-11 and 1-12**, I-75 and US 41/US 301 are the only north/south designated hurricane evacuation routes over the Manatee River. Currently, there is no north/south hurricane evacuation route designated east of I-75 that crosses the Manatee River. However, US 301 and SR 64 are both designated as east/west evacuation routes paralleling the river. A new crossing within the project area would allow local inland residents the opportunity to travel north to US 301 without having to first travel west to I-75 or east to Rye Road. In addition, residents of the counties south of Manatee County would also be utilizing I-75 in the event of a hurricane evacuation. An additional crossing across the Manatee River in the project area has the potential to relieve some congestion on the adjacent segment of I-75 during an evacuation.

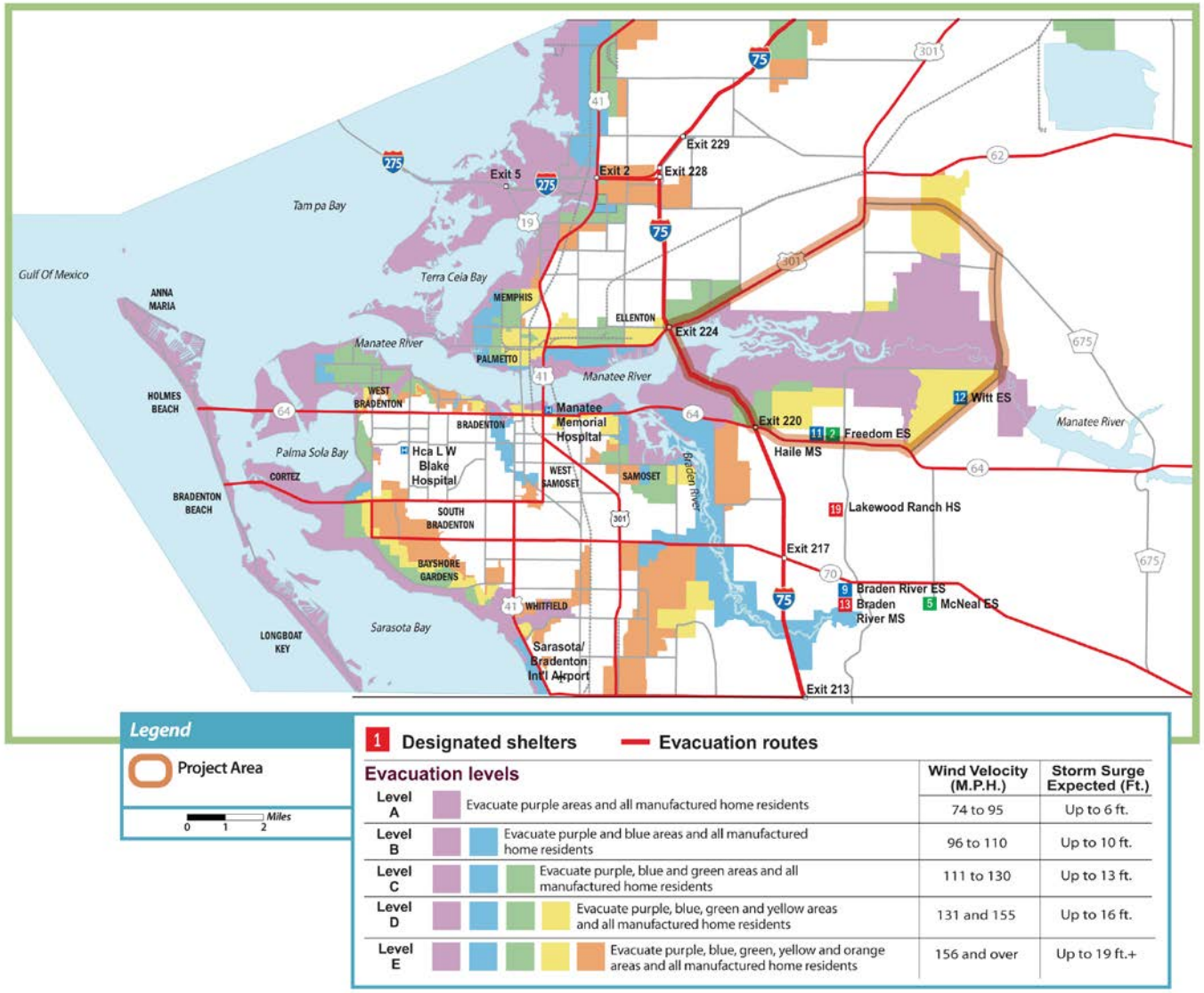
In 2010, the State of Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT) developed the Statewide Regional Evacuation Study Program, which examined evacuation clearance times for the 11 emergency management regions within the state. Manatee County is within Tampa Bay region along with Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco counties. **Table 1-3** summarizes the projected clearance times in various operational scenarios for this region in 2015. **Table 1-4** summarizes maximum evacuating population by time interval in 2015.

FIGURE 1-11
STATE OF FLORIDA DESIGNATED REGIONAL HURRICANE EVACUATION ROUTES (2013)



Source: SERT, 2010.

FIGURE 1-12
MANATEE COUNTY HURRICANE EVACUATION PLAN



Source: Manatee County Department of Emergency Management, 2013.

TABLE 1-3
2015 CLEARANCE TIMES FOR OPERATIONAL SCENARIOS (HOURS)

County	Evacuation Level A	Evacuation Level B	Evacuation Level C	Evacuation Level D	Evacuation Level E
Clearance Time to Shelter					
Hillsborough	12.0	15.5	26.0	38.0	78.0
Manatee	10.0	13.0	19.0	27.0	69.5
Pasco	12.0	13.5	23.5	40.5	78.5
Pinellas	10.0	13.0	19.5	25.5	71.0
In-County Clearance Time					
Hillsborough	12.0	15.5	26.0	38.0	78.0
Manatee	11.0	14.0	20.0	33.5	73.5
Pasco	12.0	14.5	23.5	40.5	78.5
Pinellas	11.0	14.0	20.0	31.0	72.0
Out of County Clearance Time					
Hillsborough	12.0	15.5	25.5	38.0	78.0
Manatee	11.0	14.0	20.0	33.0	75.0
Pasco	11.5	14.5	26.0	37.0	78.0
Pinellas	10.5	14.0	20.0	31.0	72.0
Regional Clearance Time					
Tampa Bay	12.0	15.5	26.0	38.0	78.0

Source: SERT, 2010 – Table VI-14.

TABLE 1-4
MAXIMUM EVACUATING POPULATION BY TIME INTERVAL FOR 2015

Time Interval	Evacuation Level A	Evacuation Level B	Evacuation Level C	Evacuation Level D	Evacuation Level E
Hillsborough County					
12-Hour	222,025	200,654	201,348	168,531	152,174
18-Hour	286,782	300,982	302,021	252,796	228,260
24-Hour	N/A	376,227	486,590	337,061	304,347
36-Hour	N/A	N/A	N/A	505,592	456,521
Manatee County					
12-Hour	94,284	119,100	100,436	94,896	81,446
18-Hour	113,927	148,875	150,654	142,344	122,168
24-Hour	N/A	N/A	200,872	189,791	162,891
36-Hour	N/A	N/A	N/A	284,687	244,337
Pasco County					
12-Hour	115,150	103,170	79,950	61,446	68,109
18-Hour	158,331	154,754	119,925	92,168	102,163
24-Hour	N/A	193,443	159,900	122,891	136,217
36-Hour	N/A	N/A	239,850	184,337	204,326
Pinellas County					
12-Hour	274,378	371,367	351,987	283,481	173,326
18-Hour	320,108	433,262	527,981	425,221	259,989
24-Hour	N/A	N/A	571,979	566,961	346,652
36-Hour	N/A	N/A	N/A	661,455	519,978

Source: SERT, 2010 – Table VI-16.

The results of this study show that the time to clear evacuees within Manatee County to designated shelters would require 10.0 to 69.5 hours depending on the evacuation scenario and potentially involve up to 284,000 county residents. In a more regional evacuation scenario (e.g., counties to the south or north being evacuated and residents from other counties moving through Manatee County), out of county clearance time is 11.0 to 75.0 hours and involve in excess of 660,000 out of county residents.

Providing two additional lanes of north/south capacity across Manatee County is anticipated to improve overall evacuation times by allowing intra-county local evacuation movements to occur off of I-75. The reduction of unnecessary volume on the I-75 corridor would lead to improved flow and therefore improved evacuation times.

1.3 SYSTEM LINKAGE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

Fort Hamer Road and Upper Manatee River Road are owned and maintained by Manatee County. A bridge connecting these two roads is consistent with the adopted Sarasota/Manatee MPO's 2035 LRTP Financially Feasible Plan (MPO, 2012) (Figure 1-5) and Manatee County's Comprehensive Plan. Manatee County would be solely responsible for funding the planning, design, and construction phases of this project.

Rye Road and Golf Course Road are owned and maintained by Manatee County. Adding additional capacity to Rye Road is not part of the Financially Feasible Plan nor is it part of Manatee County's Comprehensive Plan.

I-75, through Manatee and Sarasota counties (29 miles) has received Location Design and Concept Acceptance (LDCA) from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for expansion to eight lanes; however, this planned expansion is currently not funded for construction.

1.4 CONSISTENCY WITH LOCALLY ADOPTED TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The Financially Feasible Plan identifies a new crossing of the Manatee River in the location of the Fort Hamer Alternative providing two new lanes (Figure 1-5). No other capacity improvements across the Manatee River, east of I-75, are identified in the Financially Feasible Plan. Improvements to Rye Road, including widening the existing two-lane crossing to four lanes, is not consistent with current plans and would require a plan amendment and update.

1.5 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Proposed alternatives to improve regional mobility across the Manatee River were evaluated according to several transportation performance measures that related to the stated project needs. These measures are used in this document to ascertain each proposed alternative's satisfaction of the stated needs.

Accommodate the existing and projected growth in eastern Manatee County:

- Vehicle hours traveled (VHT) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) – these are measures produced by the locally-adopted TDM and establish a measure of effectiveness to reduce travel time and trip distances.
- Congested Speed – this measures the average speed, in a given link, during peak a.m./p.m. volume periods.

Improvements in LOS to the local roadway network:

- VHT and VMT – these are measures produced by the locally-adopted TDM and establish a measure of effectiveness to reduce travel time and trip distances.
- Congested Speed – this measures the average speed, in a given link, during peak a.m./p.m. volume periods.

Improvements to emergency response times:

- Distance of response trip from station to furthest point in response area – this provides an approximation of "worst case" response time based on distance and average response speeds.

Improvements to evacuation capacity across the Manatee River:

- Total length of "new" route and that route's connections to other evacuation routes – this provides an approximation of effectiveness as a parallel north/south alternative to I-75 in local or regional evacuation scenarios.

1.6 CONCLUSION

Careful evaluation of the needs of Manatee County has demonstrated the need for improvements to regional mobility across the Manatee River. Current growth in Manatee County and the project area has stressed the capacity of existing Manatee River crossing and has resulted in increased travel times and travel distances for residents and visitors. Projected growth through 2035 indicates that conditions only worsen without improvements to capacity across the Manatee River. Reduction in regional mobility also leads to increased response times for emergency services across the Manatee River, in particular, east of I-75. Likewise, additional capacity, in

some location other than I-75, would provide added capacity for a north/south alternative to I-75 in a localized or regional evacuation scenario.

Consideration of potential, reasonable solutions to the stated project needs within this document is consistent with the requirements of the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA). The evaluation of various, reasonable solutions in a single document, such as this document, provides the general public and all interested parties an understanding of the full importance of the project and provides the project sponsors the ability to make a fully informed decision. The potential, reasonable solutions to the stated project needs may also have similar or cumulative environmental impacts (e.g., socioeconomic, cultural, natural, and physical) that should be analyzed together in a single document to provide comparative evaluation of all potential impacts. The results of this analysis and evaluation contained here within this DEIS, therefore, achieve the intent of NEPA. Though the No-Build Alternative does not satisfy the stated Purpose and Need, it is being retained for further evaluation to provide a comparative baseline to the two build alternatives. The following alternatives will be considered and discussed throughout the remainder of this DEIS:

- No-Build Alternative,
- Fort Hamer Alternative, and
- Rye Road Alternative.