

An Open Letter
to
Governor Ron DeSantis
Florida Representative Byron Donalds
Florida Representative Adam Botana
FDOT Personnel, Brian Bollas

The I-75 Road Widening from 6 lanes to 10 lanes
Specifically, from Alico Road to Immokalee

How would you react if your home was close to the I-75 expansion?

Written by Allan Bowditch, President, Engage Estero.

On August 31st, FDOT held a workshop at the Estero Community Association in Estero to update residents on the latest information about the road-widening plans. Although the meeting announcement went out only 12 days in advance and was held while many residents were still in their northern residences, more than 200 people attended.

Residents expressed concerns after learning that FDOT's early noise impact model suggested it might not implement noise mitigation measures. In Estero and Bonita Springs, residents have repeatedly asked FDOT for a continuous 20-foot noise wall. This request is supported by the Lee County MPO, Estero Village management, and Engage Estero, a nonprofit organization with over 25 years of experience helping residents in Greater Estero. FDOT has not shared the input data used in its model, raising residents' concerns that the expansion's full impact does not account for expected population growth over the next 5 to 8 years.

We ask that you support residents in Southwest Florida by urging FDOT to implement a sound mitigation barrier wall, as requested, to protect residents from the health-related impacts and the resulting decline in home values that would directly result from this expansion, even though it is a needed development.

To date, residents and other notable individuals have taken the following actions:

- Over 200 residents signed a petition explaining their concerns about the potential increase in traffic noise following an article published by Engage Estero.
- Letters have been sent to FDOT by the Presidents of the Brooks Communities on behalf of thousands of concerned residents. This communication has been endorsed by
 - Commissioner David Mulika
 - The Estero Village Management
 - The Estero Council headed by Mayor Joanne Ribble

- The Lee MPO
- Engage Estero's Board of Trustees and Executive management team headed by President Allan Bowditch
- Local Press and WINK News have covered residents' concerns. 130 residents attended the planned April meeting, where FDOT was expected to address them, but the meeting was canceled at the last minute.

Engage Estero recently conducted research to examine what had occurred during other major highway expansions that closely matched the I-75 plans through Estero and Bonita Springs.

The following highways were examined:

- **Copenhagen M3** — Noise annoyance *decreased* after widening, but only because the project included **18 km of noise barriers, quieter pavement, and building insulation.**
- **Glasgow M74** — Residents living near the expanded motorway experienced a *statistically significant deterioration in mental well-being two years after opening*, with noise, vibration, and visual intrusion identified as contributors.
- **Nashville I-65** — A comparable 3-to-5-lane expansion through established neighborhoods **warranted detailed acoustic analysis, field measurements, and noise barrier construction, the same level of scrutiny Southwest Florida residents should expect.**

The impact of the road expansion has indicated that:

- ✓ **Lane Expansion Does Produce Measurable Noise Increases.** The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) modeling indicates that **freeway widening consistently increases noise levels** by approximately 2–3 dB for a 4-to-6-lane expansion and 3–5 dB for a 4-to-8-lane expansion.
- ✓ **Traffic Growth Is the Greater Long-Term Threat Because traffic noise is logarithmic, even modest traffic growth compounds over time.**
- ✓ **Trucks and Nighttime Traffic Are Disproportionately Impactful. Heavy trucks and nighttime vehicles contribute far more to perceived noise than passenger cars. Have these factors been incorporated into the FDOT model?**
- ✓ **Health Issues: Intrusive traffic noise** diminishes the experience of sitting on a lanai, walking through a neighborhood, sleeping with a window open, or enjoying an outdoor amenity. It **harms people's health and lowers property values.**

Technical experts have indicated that modeling studies used by organizations like FDOT, notably Leq (equivalent continuous sound level), an hourly energy average used to assess noise impact, **can mask real-world changes in noise frequency and intensity.**

FDOT personnel should be aware that the population in the Greater Estero area and in South Lee County is expected to double in the next 5 to 8 years (see Appendix 1). In addition, **because**

there is no rail infrastructure to accommodate the increased demand for goods from this population growth, truck traffic on I-75 will double. Because trucks contribute far more noise than passenger cars, **has the FDOT model properly accounted for this?**

The impact of an increase in decibel noise is as follows:

Changes in Sound Level, dB	Changes in Apparent Loudness
1	Almost imperceptible
3	Just perceptible
5 - 6	Clearly noticeable
10	Twice (or half) as loud

Note: This chart can also be loosely applied to changes in STC ratings.

Ref <http://www.trafficnoise.org/>

Given the significant increase in trucks, higher speeds of passenger cars (and their increased volume) will undoubtedly lead to an increase greater than 5 dB, which, as the chart above indicates, is clearly noticeable.

A World Health Organization (WHO) study based on European data reports that noise pollution ranks second only to air pollution as an environmental health issue. Every year, “. . . European citizens lose one million healthy life years due to disability or disease caused by traffic noise.”

These ailments include cardiovascular disease, sleep disturbance, tinnitus, and annoyance. Researchers in Denmark followed 57,000 people over ten years and found that for every 10-decibel increase in noise, the risk of a first heart attack rose by 12 percent.

The Key question is:

“If you were faced with the same threat and had a home within a reasonable proximity to such a highway expansion, wouldn’t you want a barrier wall put in place?

It is disingenuous to imply, **as some FDOT staff have**, that because a person bought a home near a major highway, they should expect highway expansion and increased traffic noise. Many bought their homes 20-25 years ago, when traffic was light, and the health impacts were less established. Such remarks are inappropriate.

We trust you will assist residents:

- ❖ **Please urge FDOT to be transparent with the mathematical Model inputs.**
- ❖ **Given the impact of a doubling of the population in the greater Estero area over the next 5-8 years, a doubling of truck traffic, and the proven impact on residents' health, please urge FDOT to protect residents with a continuous 20 ft wall in areas bordering the 6-lane to 10-lane expansion.**

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This letter has been endorsed by the following:

- Larry Conroy, A Tidewater by Del Webb Representative. Email larryceemec@gmail.com
- Len Reid, Copperleaf, Head of the Residents Committee Addressing the I-75 Impact. Email lfreid51@icloud.com
- Steve Chappell, President, Shadow Wood Community Association, Email sgchappell@att.net

Appendix:

Population Growth in the Greater Estero Area

The chart below shows the current and likely population estimates along East Corkscrew Road.

[illegible]

(The population estimates are based on 2.2 times the number of homes (determined June 30, 2026. The chart illustrates population data by the number of occupied dwellings.)

Note: The Kingston Development will include approximately 10,000 new homes, with a population estimate of 22,000. The FFD development will affect about 5,208 residential units (single-family and multi-family), with an estimated population of almost 11,500. Together, the two developments will support a combined population of 33,500.

However, permitting issues may make these developments take longer than initially envisioned. The Corkscrew Grove development, located nearby in Collier County, would add another 20,000 residents to the area, bringing the total to over 50,000 on top of the current population along East Corkscrew of 22,000: a projected overall population of over 70,000.

The Build-out Process in Lee County, provided by Lee County MPO.

The build-out chart below has been provided by the Lee County MPO. The MPO has been seeing permanent population growth of around 2% per year. The 2050 Long Range Plan projects a 35% increase in population by 2050, calculated from this year.

The current numbers are:

Cluster	Single faml Units	Multifamil Units	Total Housin Units	Permanent PO ulation	Lee County Total Buildout Seasonal PO ulation	Summary Hotel Rooms	Transient PO ulation	Retail S ft	Office S ft	Industrial S ft	Government S ft	institution Sqft
Cluster	Single faml Units	Multifamil Units	Total Housin Units	Lee Permanent PO ulation	County Total Buildout Seasonal PO ulation	Summary Hotel Rooms	Transient PO ulation	287,067	176,219	11,327	199,839	57,336
Total Grou Quarters				13,126				109,967	181,695 58,774	8,278	46,219 702,662	43,713 53,954
Bayshore	6,580	282	6,862	14,501	1,245			107,301				
Boca Grande	1,205	286	1,491	1,226	1,490	196	392	152,011 23,770	104,996 15,200	8,483 40,935		5,415 1,074
Buckingham Burnt Store	2,882 1,476	93 1,498	2,975 2,974	6,630 4,774	413 1,338			89,034 4,751,463	353,032 4,683,926	240 3,512,191	19,912 806,865	29,717 653,405
Cape Coral	57	27	84	161	22							
Captiva	1,432	870	2,302	649	2,663	775	1,550					
Cit of	26,040	18,605	44, 645	64,004	22,623	2,030	4,060	13,699,703	9,863,754	15,241,746	4,599,283 8,079,551	2,395,626 3,371,521
Bonita Springs	125,104	45,786	170,890		29,955	1,558						
City of Cape Coral				385,620			3,116 8,140	597,467 801,088	735,788 1,168,330	8,976 249,335	306,627 19,343	217,979 209,015
City of Fort Myers	25,452	50,516	75,968	149,620	9,623	4,070						
Myers City of Sanibel	4,616	3,327	7,943	6,666	6,588	1,175	2,350	375,919 1,812,896	143,882 842,892	2,281,762 996,022	206,032 848,487	314,783 234,123
Daniels Parkway	4,890	6,163	11,053	19,793	2,821	1,011	2,022	4,562,954	4,749,952	30,009,814	3,998,066	230,397
Fort Myers	1,844	427	2,271	5,958	498	177	354	2,746,774	2,124,326	2,316,290	1,525,775	515,196
Fort M ers	16,913	2,204	19,117	40,331	3,771	631	1,262					
Shores	6,553	3,849	10,402	23,178	1,475	2,455	4,910	4,139,795	2,718,171	3,361,552	2,648,571	623,423
Gateway/Airport									3,072,889	2,969,026	1,296,014	595,887
Iona/McGregor	19,951	15,900	35,851	49,475	16,326	1,297	2,594					
Lehigh Acres	118,406	18,413	136,819	401,416	8,827	229	458	1,569,494 1,072,930		68,330 690,530	476,770 102,247	57,019 156,855
North Fort Myers	39,326	9,368	48,694	79,414	12,219	1,425						
Northeast Lee County	9,120	113	9,233	22,264	843	600	1,200 142	4,317,198	1,596,512 6,996,635	3,488,576 8,968,528	4,372,465 4,096,013	226,883 1,273,356
Pine Island	11,396	1,199	12,595	16,868	6,341	71				947,668	238,194	3,576
San Carlos	14,982	12,536	27,518	57,465	5,577	690	1,380					
South Fort Myers	14,940	24,456	39,396	65,103	8,984	1,339	2,678					
Southeast Lee County	28,884	2,517	31,401	73,280	6,877	690	1,380	478,359 4,526,199	174,229 3,242,685	86,942 410,391	157,739 693,976	85,229 241,026
Town of Fort Myers												
Beach	2,549	6,438	8,987	5,907	8,692	3,398	6,796 4,256	80,197,768	56,305,770	85,745,551		11,596,508
Village of Estero	16,756	17,164	33,920	54,790	12,809	2,128						
Tota :	501,354	242,037	743,391	1,562,221	172,022	25,945	51,890					