Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How is the project addressing Vision Zero goals and the potential for more cars leaving the expressway into neighborhood streets?

A: Multiple improvements and countermeasures will be made to the South Selmon (Himes Avenue to Whiting Street) that will improve overall safety and mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Tampa-Hillsborough Expressway Authority worked with the City of Tampa to determine safety and operational needs. The South Selmon PD&E Study identified improvements to address current deficiencies related to pedestrian and bike movements. The following is an overview of the identified countermeasures designed to ensure consistency with the Vision Zero Framework.

Improvements for Pedestrians

For a safe and enhanced walking environment, this project will install the following at multiple interchanges / cross streets:

- Pedestrian countdown heads: Euclid Avenue Ramp Terminus and Willow Avenue Ramp Terminus
- Enhanced ITS Technology: Pedestrian detection to extend crossing time when pedestrian is detected within the intersection at all ramp terminus
- High visibility crosswalk: Euclid Avenue Ramp Terminus and Willow Avenue Ramp Terminus
- Raised medians and pedestrian refuge islands along corridor access points
- Intersection lighting / crosswalk lighting: Euclid Avenue and Willow Avenue interchanges (including street lighting, under-deck decorative lighting, as well as lighting along Selmon Expressway)
- Pedestrian yield signs: Euclid Avenue Ramps and Willow Avenue Ramps

Improvements for Bicyclists

To improve safety and access for bicyclists, this project will install the following at multiple interchanges / cross streets:

- Bike lanes (Euclid Avenue and Willow Avenue)
- Green colored bike pavement markings (Willow Avenue)

Improvements for Motorists

To improve safety and slow vehicle speeds at the ramps, the project will include the following:

- Signal timing improvements (Euclid Avenue, Bay to Bay Boulevard, and Willow Avenue)
- New traffic signals at unsignalized intersections (Euclid Avenue Ramp Terminals)
- Right turn on red restrictions (Cleveland Street to Willow Avenue northbound)

Traffic analysis also shows that the capacity improvements will help maintain adequate traffic flows and keep cars from neighborhood streets like Bayshore Boulevard and MacDill Avenue. For example, with the South Selmon improvements in place, the expressway will draw approximately 150 vehicles per hour from Bayshore Boulevard during peak hours. Overall, the surrounding neighborhood streets can expect to experience substantial reduction in vehicles as a result of the South Selmon project.

Q: What is being done to minimize potential noise impacts and air pollution that could result from the project?

A: THEA is committed to building walls the entire length of the project on both sides of the roadway to help mitigate traffic noise. Walls will be constructed as early possible to also help with any construction noise associated with the project. The noise analysis performed for the project indicates that even with the South Selmon improvements in place, the walls will reduce noise levels by up to 7 decibels over existing conditions (reduction depends on location). The benefits of noise barriers are well documented by the Federal Highway Administration and are proven to be one of the most effective means of mitigating traffic noise. Noise barriers are built between the highway (noise source) and the impacted land use area (receptor) for the purpose of reducing noise levels for people nearby. This is achieved by blocking the sound from the impacted land use area. Sound produced by highway traffic comes mainly from the tires, engines, and mufflers of cars and trucks. However, no barrier can eliminate all traffic noise. Noise barriers create a shadow zone whereby the impacted land use areas that are in the shadow zone would benefit the most from the noise barrier.

Our capacity improvements will also help reduce emissions by keeping traffic flows moving and reducing the amount of start-stop traffic. An air analysis was conducted following the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines and air quality model. By reducing start-stop traffic, the capacity improvements are projected to reduce carbon emissions. As such, the proposed project is not expected to create adverse impacts on air quality.

GENERAL COMMENTS / QUESTIONS

Q: Why isn't the money allocated to the project being used to invest into neighborhoods and make them more resilient?

A: All revenues collected on the Selmon Expressway stay in Tampa and Hillsborough County, and the dollars are reinvested back into the community. THEA has partnered with numerous community organizations on everything from beautification to economic development to education and is committed to enhancing the community and activating urban spaces. THEA constructed the Selmon Greenway, a 1.7-mile multi-use trail that runs east-west under the Selmon Expressway through downtown Tampa and connects with the City's Riverwalk and the Meridian Trail. Along Selmon Greenway, THEA has built a series of pocket parks with landscaping, benches, and artwork that enhance downtown Tampa's aesthetics, one of which is the award-winning Deputy Kotfila Memorial Dog Park. THEA has also partnered with multiple Homeowner and Neighborhood Associations to improve spaces and landscaping at the Selmon Expressway underpasses including at Bay to Bay Boulevard, Mississippi Avenue, Morrison Avenue, and Swann Avenue. Since THEA uses no tax dollars, the reduced use of neighborhood streets that toll roads promote means that limited, finite tax dollars can be better spent on neighborhood resiliency or mass transit solutions than on neighborhood roadway operation and maintenance.

Q: Has the Reversible Express Lane (REL) between Brandon Drive and downtown Tampa been effective?

A: Although not part of the South Selmon PD&E Study, the REL has been successful at addressing regional traffic growth and reducing congestion, particularly during peak travel times. In the 14 years since the REL opened, THEA has seen traffic on the Selmon Expressway more than double, as our region's population has grown exponentially. Congestion mitigation technologies like the REL and all-electronic tolling have contributed to helping the region address and mitigate growth by helping to maintain adequate traffic flows and keeping cars from neighborhood roads like Bayshore and Bay to Bay Boulevards. The REL has also provided traffic relief to arterial roadways like SR 60.

Q: Why isn't THEA considering transit as a viable alternative to traffic congestion?

A: We believe that congestion mitigation tools, such as capacity improvements, and innovative technologies, such as the REL and all-electronic tolling, help maintain adequate traffic flows and keep cars off local streets. This amounts to reduced use of neighborhood streets, which means that limited, finite taxpayer dollars can be better spent on mass transit solutions rather than on neighborhood and state roadway operation and maintenance dollars. THEA believes that tolls and transit greatly complement one another, and we support bringing all transportation options to market.

In addition, CSX-owned and operated tracks are parallel to the South Selmon Expressway, but are outside of THEA's existing right-of-way. THEA in no way prohibits or hinders the activation of these tracks for transit use.

Q: How will THEA's facilities help address future population growth and increased traffic congestion?

We believe that congestion mitigation tools, such as capacity improvements, and innovative technologies, such as the REL and all-electronic tolling, help maintain adequate traffic flows, address future traffic congestion resulting from population growth, and keep cars off local streets. THEA is undertaking several transportation initiatives to address growth and accommodate congestion include the following:

- Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Studies – THEA is conducting numerous studies to evaluate adding capacity, improving safety, and improving mobility along the Selmon Expressway including the South Selmon PD&E (Selmon Expressway West Extension Project to Whiting Street), Whiting PD&E, East Selmon PD&E (Brorein Street to I-75), and Nebraska PD&E.
- Selmon Extension – A 1.6-mile toll lane above the median of Gandy Boulevard in Hillsborough County that will offer a transportation choice for residents and regional travelers. By separating commuter traffic from local trips, the Selmon Extension will offer safer and smarter regional connectivity while alleviating traffic congestion on Gandy Boulevard and creating greater capacity and access to neighborhoods and businesses.
- THEA Connected Vehicle Pilot Program – The THEA Connected Vehicle Pilot employs innovative technology to improve safety and traffic conditions in downtown Tampa. THEA's Connected Vehicle Pilot aims to evaluate the effectiveness and scalability of this technology with the hope of transforming the experience of drivers, transit riders, and pedestrians in downtown Tampa by preventing crashes, enhancing traffic flow, improving transit trip times, and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

Q: Is THEA's sole purpose to build expressways?

A: THEA was established by the Florida Legislature in 1963 as a transportation option to bring roadway infrastructure projects online sooner using non-conventional funding. As an independent agency of the state, THEA owns, maintains, and operates four facilities within Hillsborough County: the Selmon Expressway, the Brandon Parkway, Meridian Avenue, and the Selmon Greenway. Although legislation established THEA as a roadway agency, THEA often partners with other transportation entities in the region to drive innovation and improve mobility and safety throughout the Tampa Bay region. THEA provides over 100,000 daily travelers with safe, reliable, and financially sustainable transportation solutions and, by reinvesting toll revenues back into the community, helps further a variety of multi-modal transportation measures.