

BLUE ZONES

“Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.” – Hippocrates



Between 2018 and 2023, the percentage of congested miles of roads in Collier County was expected to double. GETTY IMAGES

Planning long range transportation and congestion management in Collier County

Eric Ortman
Blue Zones Project-SWFL

Collier County's population in 2017 was estimated at 367,000. By 2045, the county's population is estimated to be 516,000 representing a 40 percent increase from today, or 150,000 new county residents.

A transportation system that efficiently moves all types of traffic — cars, trucks, buses, pedestrians, and bicyclists — is a fundamental part of our daily actions, yet is often overlooked and taken for granted.

The Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization or MPO is responsible for the development and implementation of an integrated multimodal transportation network to achieve the mobility needs of today and tomorrow. The MPO follows federal requirements in carrying out a Comprehensive, Cooperative and Continuing “3C” planning process that is inclusive, socially equitable, and includes all parts of the county's transportation system.

The MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a central part of achieving what is needed to the transportation system of today and tomorrow. LRTP's are updated every five years and have a 25-year time horizon. The MPO is currently working on the 2045 LRTP which will be adopted in December. Through extensive modeling and analyses of today's transportation system, and of 2045 which includes socio-economic analyses, a list of needs (projects) to accommodate the expected growth is being developed.

After extensive review and comment, and required additional analyses, the list of needs (projects) will be refined into a shorter list of projects. The MPO and its transportation partners will use this shorter list to seek funding for these projects in the coming years to ensure that all people, goods, and services are able to move throughout the county in an efficient manner. The MPO is currently soliciting comments on the LRTP which can be made directly to the MPO on their website at colliermmpo.org. Additional information about the LRTP can be found by visiting colliermmpo.org/lrtp.

Blue Zones Project supports the MPO and its transportation partners in the development of a transportation system that improves the movement of people, goods, and

services; and that includes investments in the bicycle and pedestrian networks, the transit system, and the roadway system in an inclusive and socially equitable manner.

Congestion

Congestion may be grouped into two general categories: normal daily commuter congestion, and congestion as a result of a crash or inclement weather. National estimates place the cost of congestion to the average American at 54 hours per year and 21 gallons of gasoline.

Between 2018 and 2023, the percentage of congested miles of roads in Collier County was expected to double. The large seasonal influx of people during the winter only exacerbates the problem. Road widening to accommodate more traffic is simply not feasible in many areas without knocking down homes and buildings. Widening roads also does not counteract some of the issues we are dealing with on our existing roads.

Many of the county's major roads are already six-lanes wide and quickly move large volumes of traffic as they were designed to. However, crossing these roads, especially at intersections, is difficult for bicyclists and pedestrians, particularly those who are older or have a mobility issue. With the high speed of traffic, and frequent starting, stopping, and turning, the majority of crashes happen on these roads.

Six-lane roads can be stressful to drive on, are neither inviting or built at a human-scale, and tend to separate both people and communities as opposed to bringing them together.

A different way to help accommodate future traffic growth is to provide alternatives such as an efficient public transit system that allows people to quickly reach their destination, and an adequate network of safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Such systems would allow people to reach their destinations in a calmer manner while improving air quality and reducing congestion.

The MPO's Congestion Management Process (CMP) identifies strategies to address congestion both today and in the future which includes the projected growth in the county. These strategies can be divided into roadway operational improvements such as signal timing, safety improvements,

and adding capacity. Other improvements include enhancing mobility for bicycles, walking, or using public transit. You may comment directly to the MPO on congestion or any other transportation issue.

Blue Zones Project supports the MPO's congestion management strategies, particularly those that can also increase physical well-being (bicycling and walking) and social well-being through interactions while carpooling or using public transit.

For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.

Online Power Nine activity of the week

Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida wants to know how you are living the Power 9, a set of shared principles followed by the longest-lived people.

Each week, we will have a specific Power 9 activity for you to try and share with us.

This week's Power 9 activity is Right Tribe.

The world's longest-lived people chose—or were born into—social circles that support healthy behaviors. Okinawans created Moais®—small groups of friends that are committed to each other for life. Research from the Framingham Study shows that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness are contagious. The social networks of long-lived people have favorably influenced their health.

Most of us have probably celebrated a birthday, an anniversary or other special occasion during this pandemic. We'll all remember 2020, when instead of celebrating with our family/friends or “Right Tribe” in a larger group or gathering, we had to improvise. Most of us have heard of some creative ways to celebrate while physical distancing. Tell us about how you've celebrated that special occasion.

Share with us by commenting or by tagging us on Facebook @Blue Zones Project—Southwest Florida, or you can email us at bluezonesprojectswfl@sharecare.com to be entered in our prize drawing for a gift card from one of our Blue Zones Project Approved Restaurants.

Eric Ortman is policy and worksite lead for Blue Zones Project-Southwest Florida.