# 2024 State Legislative Priorities

## Manatee County, Florida

### Top Appropriation Requests

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<td>FUNDING REQUEST $10 million appropriation in State Fiscal Year 2024 for permitting, design, and construction of Fort Hamer Road from Manatee River to Moccasin Wallow Road.</td>
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<td>Fort Hamer Bridge</td>
<td>FUNDING REQUEST $10 million appropriation in State Fiscal Year 2024 for design, permitting, and construction of the Fort Hamer Bridge capacity improvements.</td>
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<td>44th Avenue East</td>
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### Top Policy Requests

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<td>Affordable Housing</td>
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<td>Community-Based Foster Care</td>
<td>Manatee County supports a state funding formula that does not rely on risk pool funds but adequately and equitably distributes state funding to support Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (CBC) providing child welfare services as intended by SB 1326, passed during the 2020 legislative Session.</td>
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Fort Hamer Road

The limits of this project are north of the Manatee River to Moccasin Wallow Road in Parrish. Combined with ongoing projects, Lakewood Ranch Boulevard, Upper Manatee River Road, and Fort Hamer Road this project will provide the longest continuous north/south route east of I-75 in Manatee County. It is part of a corridor that will span the entire County and provide an important regional connection between Manatee, Sarasota, and Hillsborough Counties.

Fort Hamer is a primary reliever for I-75 congestion and incident management. Add to this the continued growth east of I-75, and it is being overwhelmed. The Fort Hamer Road projects are intended to mitigate this situation in two parts. The first is Fort Hamer Road, from the Manatee River to U.S. 301; this project is reconstruction and widening 3.0 miles of existing two-lane road to four-lanes.

The second extends from U.S. 301 to Moccasin Wallow Road. This 2.0-mile section was constructed as a two-lane road but designed and prepared for four lanes. The second project is for the additional two lanes on this 2.0-mile section.

Manatee County is funding $10 million for design of this corridor and requests a dollar-for-dollar match from the State.

FUNDING REQUEST

- $10 million appropriation in State Fiscal Year 2024 for permitting, design, and construction of Fort Hamer Road from Manatee River to Moccasin Wallow Road.

Fort Hamer Bridge

Manatee County requests support in funding for design and permitting of the second Fort Hamer Bridge. The second bridge, which will be parallel to the existing bridge, will double the capacity of this essential North-South thoroughfare. It is a critical component of the Lakewood Ranch Boulevard, Upper Manatee River Road and Fort Hamer Road corridor that will span east Manatee County. This corridor plays an ever-increasing role as a parallel reliever for I-75 and provides regional connections between Manatee, Sarasota and Hillsborough Counties.

Manatee County is funding $10 million for design and construction of this bridge and requests a dollar-for-dollar match from the State.

FUNDING REQUEST

- $10 million appropriation in State Fiscal Year 2024 for design, permitting, and construction of the Fort Hamer Bridge capacity improvements.
This road section will complete a continuous route from Bradenton Beach on the gulf to the east edge of suburban Manatee County. This specific section is the final connecting piece over I-75 that will allow 44th Avenue to function as a four-lane, parallel reliever road for State Road 64 and State Road 70 in suburban east Manatee County. This section is a key component to sustained growth in south Manatee County as the parallel State Roads are effectively built-out and are becoming increasingly congested.

Manatee County has prior and programmed funds of about $35.4 million for this improvement but faces escalated costs exceeding $100 million due to inflation and global supply-chain pressures. Manatee County can meet much of this demand but requests $10 million (about 10 percent) of total project costs to help keep this vital capacity project on schedule.

**FUNDING REQUEST**

- **$10 million appropriation** in State Fiscal Year 2024 for partial construction of the 44th Avenue East connection.

Providing improved connecting roads is key to economic development and sustained growth. One of two interchanges in north Manatee County, and combined with other projects, the Moccasin Wallow Road East project will provide a continuous four-lane road from U.S. 41 through the I-75 interchange to U.S. 301 and direct connection to State Road 62 at a roundabout in Parrish.

The project received $8 million legislative appropriations in 2023 for Segment 3.

**FUNDING REQUEST**

- **$10 million appropriation** in State Fiscal Year 2024 for construction funding of Segment 5.
2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

51st Street from El Conquistador Parkway to 53rd Street West

The 51st Street West project is new construction of two lanes of a future four-lane thoroughfare between El Conquistador Parkway and 53rd Avenue West.

The road will improve connections to employment centers, educational opportunities, tourism destinations, sports performance venues, and beach resorts. This in turn supports economic development, revitalization, and economic prosperity for the County's Southwest District.

FUNDING REQUEST

- $10 million appropriation in State Fiscal Year 2024 for partial construction funding for the first two lanes of a future four lane road.

DeSoto Bridge Replacement

The DeSoto Bridge replacement is a top priority for multiple organizations since as project will facilitate improved North/South capacity on the U.S. 41 corridor. Manatee County supports the State's Bradenton-Palmetto Connector PD&E and requests consideration be given to all capacity alternatives identified in the Central Manatee Network Alternatives Analysis that will facilitate improved mobility over the Manatee River.

Key Bridges

Manatee County supports the expeditious replacement of the bridges leading to Anna Maria Island, via Cortez Road, Manatee Avenue and Longboat Pass.
Manatee County is actively participating in the multi-county Gulf Coast Recreation Trail. The trail will link to trails planned in Hillsborough County, to the segments of Legacy Trail in Sarasota County. Manatee County’s plans call for a multi-purpose recreational Gateway Greenway Trail extending from the Hillsborough County/Manatee County line, south, along trail alignments crossing public utility easements, county and State-owned lands and additional developer agreement routes to reach northern Sarasota County with linkages to the Legacy Trail and points south into Charlotte County. This multi-year and multi-phased project will use funding from Manatee County sources, Suncoast Trail grants; grants from the Florida Greenways and Trails Council, and Federal funds, as available. Twenty-five percent of the Gateway Greenway Trail has already been constructed through the development communities of Lakewood Ranch.
Affordable Housing

Manatee County continues to experience a major shortage of affordable-housing options. It is imperative that the State use the statutorily dedicated funds for actual housing needs and to increase the number of affordable housing units. Manatee County supports allocating the full amount of dedicated doc-stamp revenues to fund the State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) Trust Fund, as well as the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund and its distribution to local governments for affordable housing activities.

Community-Based Foster Care

Manatee County supports the Florida Department of Children & Families’ invaluable role in overseeing the care and placement of the estimated 23,000 children in Florida’s foster care system due to child abuse and or neglect. Manatee County, which ranked in the top-four counties in Florida for child removals in both 2018 and 2019, also supports immediate equitable funding for the child welfare system which has been insufficiently and inequitably funded by the State for many years. Specifically, Manatee County SUPPORTS a State-funding formula that does not rely on risk pool funds but adequately and equitably distributes state funding to support Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (CBC) providing child welfare services as intended by SB 1326, passed during the 2020 legislative Session.

Broadband

Manatee County supports measures that increase broadband accessibility, including encouraging private investment in the deployment of infrastructure in rural and underserved areas.

Recommendation

Amendment of the Live Local Act - to include a tax reduction or credit for landlords providing affordable housing opportunities.

Recommendation

Pay scale adjustment for attorneys working in the child welfare system, to include Guardian ad Litem and Children’s Legal Services.
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