



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0916

September 11, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I am writing in support of Manatee County's application to the Bridge Investment Program for the Fort Hamer Bridge Project. This project is of critical importance to residents, businesses and emergency responders in Florida's 16th Congressional District.

The Fort Hamer Bridge is one of only four crossings over the Manatee River, and since opening in 2017, it has already reached capacity due to rapid population growth east of I-75. Traffic volumes are expected to continue to grow in the coming decades, making expansion essential to avoid gridlock, improve safety, and maintain reliable connections across our community.

The proposed project will expand the bridge from two lanes to four, add safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities and improve access for freight and emergency vehicles. These improvements will reduce crashes, cut travel delays and provide essential relief for I-75, an especially critical need during hurricane evacuations. During Hurricane Milton in 2024, the Fort Hamer Bridge served as a lifeline for thousands of families under evacuation orders.

Beyond safety, the project will support the region's strong economic growth. The bridge connects residents to jobs, schools, healthcare, including two planned hospitals in Parrish, as well as providing an alternate route that relieves congestion on I-75, a major freight corridor. By improving mobility and access, the project will strengthen supply chains and support continued prosperity in Manatee County.

Manatee County has committed local matching funds and has a proven record of successfully delivering federally funded projects. Federal partnership through the Bridge Investment Program will ensure this vital project is delivered in time to meet the needs of our fast-growing community.

I respectfully ask you to give this application your full consideration. Thank you for your leadership as Secretary in advancing transportation investments that improve safety, strengthen supply chains and support America's growing communities.

Sincerely,

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress