

FOR SALE

Land O'Lakes, FL

Vacant Land for Commercial Development

SR 52 & LAND O'LAKES BLVD., LAND O'LAKES, FL 34639



View of SR 52 Traffic westbound, west of US 41



Looking East at westbound SR 52 traffic



South view of northbound traffic on US 41 turning west onto SR 52




North view of northbound traffic on US 41 turning west onto SR 52



Westbound on SR 52 in front of site



Westbound on SR 52 in front of site

 URL: <http://tampatribune.com/pasco-county/planned-highway-work-to-transform-southeast-pasco-20131129/>

Planned highway work to transform southeast Pasco

By [Laura Kinsler](#)



Tribune file photo

Millions of dollars have been earmarked for highways in Pasco County, and a lot of credit is given to the county's legislative delegation.

WESLEY CHAPEL — Being home to the current and future speakers of the Florida House is proving beneficial for Pasco County, which is slated to receive hundreds of millions of dollars in new highway funding during the next five years.

House Speaker Will Weatherford last week announced he had secured funding in the Florida Department of Transportation five-year budget to [extend State Road 56](#) all the way to U.S. 301.

Weatherford, entering his final year as speaker, said the 6.7-mile road has “been on my list for a while.”

The tentative DOT work program includes \$39 million in construction money in 2017. Department spokeswoman Kris Carson said the project is a public-private partnership — property owners will donate the right of way and pay for the design of the four-lane road.

“I’m very grateful to the state DOT and Secretary (Ananth) Presad for his help to get this project expedited,” Weatherford said. “It opens up a whole new corridor for Pasco County, and it helps link Wesley Chapel and Zephyrhills.”

For the past several years, Pasco officials have been lobbying the DOT on the need to improve the county's east-west corridors. In addition to the State Road 56 extension, the department's budget includes nearly \$100 million for improvements to State Road 54 and **\$125 million for improvements to State Road 52.**

More than \$100 million would be allocated to widen State Road 52 between the Suncoast Parkway and U.S. 41 from two lanes to six lanes and to rebuild the intersection at U.S. 41. Construction would begin in 2018.

The same segment on State Road 54 (between the Suncoast and U.S. 41) will be expanded from four lanes to six lanes next year. The next phase of the [State Road 54 widening project](#) between Wesley Chapel and Zephyrhills would be funded for construction in 2015. It includes adding two lanes plus two auxiliary lanes and rebuilding the intersection at Morris Bridge Road.

Pasco Commissioner Ted Schrader pressed fellow commissioners and legislators to move up the State Road 52 project on their list of priorities. He said he is encouraged by the decision to include funding in the next work program, though he is disappointed the project won't continue from U.S. 41 to Old Pasco Road. "I'm encouraged by their focus on State Road 52, but we've still got a lot of work to do," he said. **"Going from two lanes to six lanes with sidewalks and bike lanes will be a huge improvement.** Our delegation is effectively working on our behalf, and we're starting to reap the rewards."

But it's the State Road 56 extension that could transform southeast Pasco County. "It's going to make it much easier to get to Zephyrhills, and it's a great economic development opportunity," Weatherford said.

It also makes good business sense to build the road now, he said. "It's significantly cheaper to build a new four-lane road than it is just for the right of way to expand State Road 54," he said. "If you can find a new corridor, it's always a better solution."

More than half of the new road will bisect the 3,500-acre Two Rivers Ranch between Morris Bridge Road and U.S. 301. Five years ago ranch owner Robert Thomas teamed with Tampa-based Sierra Properties [to develop the ranch](#). The county amended its comprehensive plan to allow up to 6,400 homes, 2.7 million square feet of office and light industrial uses, and 630,000 square feet of commercial space.

But Thomas said they never followed through with a rezoning application, and Sierra dropped out of the project years ago. “When the market crashed in ’08-’09, everybody sort of rolled up their plans and filed them away,” he said. “But now things are moving again in Pasco County. The road is a game-changer.”

Richard Gehring, the county’s growth management administrator, said he expects the new road to lure the same type of [high-quality development](#) seen in Wesley Chapel. “Look at what’s happened to Wesley Chapel since we built opened the State Road 56 interchange,” he said. “In 10 years, we have a new college, a hospital, two malls and a future Raymond James site that closes in April.”

The new road probably will accelerate construction in New Tampa’s K-Bar Ranch as well. “There is no east-west connectivity in existence for 12 miles to the south, so it will become a major regional asset,” Gehring said.

But first, Thomas will have to find a developer willing to design the road. He suspects that won’t be a problem. “Everybody wants to buy our land all the time; not a week goes by that I don’t get a call from someone. It’s just a question of what they’re willing to pay for it,” he said.

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