

TEAM FL Newsletter Article

Four years ago, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) celebrated our centennial birthday. This year, we are celebrating our 50th birthday.

So what's the deal?

Have we discovered the mystical water source that Ponce de Leon searched for centuries ago but never found? Time travel or new math?

No, none of the above.

In 2013, FDOT celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the Florida State Road Department (SRD). In 1969, the Florida Legislature reorganized the SRD and named it the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

The original Turnpike Authority was disbanded, and a newly reorganized Florida's Turnpike operation was made a part of the FDOT. Under the new organization, the Turnpike work program and its operations and maintenance were managed by the individual FDOT Districts. It wasn't until 2002 when state law transformed the Florida Turnpike District into the Turnpike Enterprise that we have now.

And as Florida's transportation department has changed, so have Florida's residents, businesses and visitors. Florida now has more than 20 million residents and more than 120 million annual visitors. Younger people are buying fewer cars and relying on car sharing services. Our more seasoned residents are more tech savvy than ever, with increasing reliance on autonomous shuttles to get where they need to go.

FDOT's challenge is to build the infrastructure to safely transport people and goods to destinations efficiently amid changing demographics and leaps in technological advancement.

Future of Mobility

Today FDOT stands at a crossroads. We have challenges and opportunities ahead of us. We have a Governor and state Legislature that support strategic investments in transportation infrastructure. But they also expect fiscal responsibility and keep a close eye on the demands placed on taxpayers' wallets.

We have a public that rates our transportation infrastructure among the best in the nation but can be frustrated by the congestion on their commutes.

We are encouraged by cost savings of more fuel efficient and electric vehicle technology but see the challenge of lower gas tax revenues.

Recent Census figures show that from 2010 to 2017 Florida's population grew 11.6%. And the growth was widespread, with small and midsize cities in some cases catching up to the larger ones. There were new areas of growth like Fort Myers that grew 20% and St. Cloud that grew 46%. Large cities like Miami, Orlando and Tampa weren't far behind, also showing double-digit growth.

So where does that leave FDOT? As we look to the future of mobility, we recognize the need to not only maintain the levels of excellence Floridians and our visitors have come to depend on, but to improve and innovate.

We have three major areas of focus: 1) Safety, 2) Mobility and 3) Technology. Each of these components of our work embody what we do at FDOT.

- While we have a long way to go, we continue to see progress on the safety front. More robust policies focused on safety and context sensitive infrastructure has delivered results. Traffic fatalities, serious injuries, pedestrian fatalities and bicyclist traffic fatalities have all seen declines. In less than two years, we've implemented 60% of the strategies within our 5-year Florida Pedestrian and Bicycle Strategic Safety Plan.
- And while we've seen a dramatic increase in residents and visitors in recent years, congestion on our roads has decreased. In 2007, the State Highway System had more than 305 million vehicle miles traveled daily and by 2016, we saw an increase in miles traveled to more than 322 million miles. But as we saw an increase in miles driven, we saw a decrease in congestion. With more than 130,000 hours of delay at peak hours in 2007, peak hours of delay dropped to approximately 121,000 by 2016. More miles traveled but fewer delays.
- FDOT is exploring the use of technology to increase safety and mobility on our roadways. SunTrax, our new facility to incubate tolling innovation and autonomous vehicle will help Florida maintain its spot as the number one state in the country to test these new technologies.

Florida is at the forefront of developing innovative ways to move people and goods, and for good reason. Our people demand it, our growth requires it and FDOT is delivering.

Safety, mobility and innovation are the three legs of the stool that support the progress we are making. We welcome and appreciate the continued partnership of TEAMFL to continued future success.

