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**Sustainability, Planning and  
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May 23, 2012

Mr. Eric Swanson  
South Florida Regional Planning Council  
3440 Hollywood Boulevard, Suite 140  
Hollywood, FL 33021

Re: Advance Notification Review: Florida International University's UniversityCity Prosperity Project  
U.S. Department of Transportation FY 2012 TIGER Discretionary Grants  
SAI Number: FL201203206164C  
Miami-Dade County, Florida

Dear Mr. Swanson:

In accordance with this Department's responsibility for review, evaluation and coordination of proposals that implement local plans, staff of Miami-Dade County has reviewed the above referenced Advance Notification (AN) for the Florida International University's UniversityCity Prosperity Project and offers the following comments:

The above referenced project is the subject of a grant application submitted by Florida International University to the US Department of Transportation for FY 2012 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant Program. The AN review initiates the process through the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) as part of the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Programming screening phase. The State Clearinghouse, through your office is requesting that permitting and permit review agencies review the project for consistency, to the maximum extent feasible, with adopted plans. The Planning Project is for FY 2012 TIGER Discretionary Grant for Florida International University's UniversityCity Prosperity Project (Advanced Transit Oriented Development). The project, according to the applicant, will create a best practice mode for shifting trips away from the private vehicles, by weaving together vibrant and mixed-use, pedestrian pathways, pedestrian bridges, multi-modal transit station environments, shared local feeder vehicles, bike paths, private development projects and express bus service. The project also intends to help reduce congestion, accidents and travel costs, and create extensive mode shifts to transit/biking/walking, create more affordable living opportunities, improve pedestrian safety and comfort, and further reduce congestion, pollution and energy use.

As noted in the AN package, the study area encompasses the following described areas: Areas located and adjacent to SW 109 Avenue between University Drive (located on FIU Modesto A. Maidique Campus (FIU Campus) and SW 5 Street (located within City of Sweetwater), including a 2,000-space parking garage on the FIU campus, a new Sweetwater City Hall Plaza and Garage, a pedestrian bridge over SW 8 Street (US 41), and complete street improvements on SW 107 Avenue between US 41 (FIU Campus) and W. Flagler Street (Engineering Center Campus).

Existing Land Uses

Existing land uses within and adjacent to the study area are summarized as follows: starting from the south terminus of the project, south of SW 8 Street (US 41) is the FIU Modesto A. Maidique Campus, an institutional use located in unincorporated Miami-Dade County. The central area of the project is SW 8 Street (US 41), a State Principal Arterial consisting of a six-lane divide facility, this roadway is noted in the Traffic Circulation Subelement of the Miami-Dade County's Comprehensive Development Master Plan as an Existing Multi-Use Lane (Off-Road Paths) facility and as a Designated Evacuation Route, also located in unincorporated Miami-Dade County. Sweetwater's Linear Park/Greenway is located along the north bank of the Tamiami Canal between the Homestead Extension of the Florida's Turnpike (HEFT) and SW 109 Avenue. The north terminus of the project, north of SW 8 Street and adjacent to SW 109 Avenue, is within the City of Sweetwater. Current uses in this area vary from a mix of retail/commercial uses, single family homes, and low rise multi-family residential units. The properties adjacent to and in both sides of SW 107 Avenue from SW 8 Street to Flagler Street are located within the City of Sweetwater. Current uses adjacent to this roadway include a public elementary school, a fire station, retail commercial centers, professional offices and low rise multifamily residential uses. The Engineering Center Campus of FIU is located at the northeast corner of 107 Avenue and Flagler Street and is within the unincorporated area of the County. The area located at the northwest corner of 107 Avenue and Flagler Street is also located within the unincorporated area of the County and contains retail commercial uses. The University City Project is listed in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Draft 2013 Transportation Improvement Program for funding in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 for preliminary engineering.

#### Future Land Uses

The County's Adopted 2015-2025 Land Use Plan (LUP) Map designates the FIU Campus and the FIU Engineering Center as "Institutions, Utilities and Communication"; the adjacent areas are designated as "Transportation", "Low-Medium Density Residential (6-13 du/ac)", "Business and Office", "Medium Density Residential (13-25 du/ac)", "Low Density Residential (2.5-6 du/ac)", "Low-Medium Density Residential (6-13 du/ac)", "Parks and Recreation" and "Medium-High Density Residential (25-60 du/ac)." The "Institutions, Utilities and Communications" land use category shows the location of major institutional uses of metropolitan significance, such as major hospitals, medical complexes, colleges and universities, major government offices, etc. The 2015 and 2025 LUP map includes a summarized portrayal of the major components of Miami-Dade County's existing and future transportation network. The LUP map shows the general location of the future east-west rapid transit corridor along SR 836/Dolphin Expressway and on the east side of the HEFT south of SR 836 to SW 88 Street. However, different alignments for the east-west transit corridors are currently being analyzed. The "Transportation" land use category includes roadways, rapid transit corridors, railways, major switching yards, and major terminals such as airports and the seaport. The transportation network depicted is a year 2025 network that will be developed incrementally as funding becomes available. The areas designated Residential Communities permit housing types ranging from detached single-family to attached multi-family buildings, as well as different construction systems. Also permitted in residential communities are neighborhood and community services including schools, parks, houses of worship, day care centers, group housing facilities, and utility facilities only when consistent with other goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) and are compatible with the neighborhood. The "Business and Office" land use category accommodates the full range of sales and service activities, including retail, wholesale, personal and professional services, and commercial and professional offices. Residential uses, and mixing of residential use with commercial, office and hotels are also permitted provided that the scale and intensity is not out of character with that of

adjacent or adjoining development and zoning. The "Park and Recreation" land use category specifically illustrates parks and recreation areas of metropolitan significance.

The LUP map also depicts with a circle the planned Community Urban Centers. There is a designated Metropolitan Urban Center located at NW 12 Street and NW 107 Avenue, and this location is also designated as a Regional Activity Center and depicted in the CDMP Land Use Element in Figure 3.1 NW 107 Avenue and NW 12 Street Chapter 380 Regional Activity Center. Urban centers are areas designated to become hubs for future urban development in the County with more compact and efficient urban structures (CDMP pages I-46 through I-49).

#### Consistency with CDMP

The FIU campus and Engineering Building are located in close proximity to the HEFT and SW 8 Street. The CDMP Traffic Circulation Subelement Figure 1, Planned Year 2025 Roadway Network, depicts the HEFT between SW 88 Street/North Kendall Drive and the County line as an eight-lane facility, and SW 8 Street between SW 147 Avenue and SW 107 Avenue as a six-lane facility and between SW 107 Avenue and SR 826 as a eight-lane facility; Figure 2, Roadway Functional Classification-2004, and Figure 3, Roadway Functional Classification-2025, both depict the HEFT and SW 8 Street as a State Principal arterial; Figure 4, Limited Access Roadway Facilities-2025, shows the HEFT as a limited access roadway with an interchange at SW 8 Street; Figure 6, Planned Non-Motorized Network 2025, depicts SW 8 Street from SW 107 Avenue west as an Existing Multi-Use Lane (off-path roads), SW 117 Avenue between SW 8 Street and SW 24 Street/Coral Way as a proposed bicycle facility, and the segment between SW 24 Street/Coral Way and Miller Drive as an existing multi-use facility; and Figure 7, Designated Evacuation Routes – 2025, shows both the HEFT and SW 8 Street as major evacuation routes. Mass Transit Subelement Figure 1, Future Mass Transit System 2015-2025, and Figure 2, Future Mass Transit System 2025, portray the HEFT between SW 88 Street and SR 836 as a Proposed Rapid Transit Corridor with a transit center at the intersection of the HEFT and SW 8 Street.

The CDMP Traffic Circulation Subelement Objective TC-3 and Policies TC-3A and TC-3B require the County to emphasize safe and efficient management of traffic flow, and assure provision of an adequate, properly designed and safe transportation system that will alleviate hazardous conditions. Policy TC-4C requires that priority be given for the construction, maintenance and reconstruction of roadways, and the allocation of financial resources to first serve the area within the Urban Development Boundary (UDB). The subject property is located within the UDB. Transportation Element Policy TE-6E encourages the County to support programs such as express buses which will help improve air quality and conserve energy. Mass Transit Subelement Policy MT-8E requires that highway improvements shall be designed to include provisions for the location of bus turnout bays, bus shelters, HOV lanes, and other associated facilities to accommodate mass transit services.

Land Use Element Policy LU-6A requires the County to identify, seek appropriate designation, and protect properties of historic, architectural and archeological significance. The Department's Office of Historic and Archaeological Resources (OHAR) has indicated that FIU should conduct a Cultural Resource Assessment Survey as stated in the Advance Notification package and present the results to OHAR staff for comments.

**Based on relevant CDMP and Land Use Plan map provisions and the information provided for this project, this Department finds the UniversityCity Prosperity Project as proposed in the Advance Notification is generally consistent with the Goals, Objectives and Policies of the CMDP.**

However, the Department requests that FIU implement the provisions of the following CDMP policies:

- Transportation Element Objective TE-2 and Policies TE-2A, TE-2B, and TE-2G. These objective and policies require the County to enhance its transportation plans to accommodate the safe and convenient movement of pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles; promote and assist in the creation of a countywide system of interconnected bicycle ways; implement the Miami-Dade County Bicycle Facilities Plan; and provide a countywide greenways network.
- Transportation Element Policy TE-2E requires the accommodation of bicycle travel and pedestrian facilities needs in the plans for future arterial and collector road construction, widening or reconstruction projects where designated by the Bicycle Facilities Plan, wherever feasible.
- Community Health and Design Element Objective CHD-1 requires the County to apply design standards to the public domain to encourage physical activity. Policy CHD-1A requires the provision of a network of sidewalks, trails, accessible, parks and recreation facilities that establishes a pedestrian-friendly environment which encourages physical activity and links destinations. Policy CHD-1E requires designating locations for carpooling and bus stops that encourage residents to maintain a daily level of walking as part of their commute, and Policy CHD-1G requires coordination between jurisdictions in the planning and implementation of bicycle, trail, transit, pedestrian and other alternative transportation modes to establish continuous networks that support healthy communities. And Policy CHD-2A calls for community design principles that encourage physical activity through the promotion of strategies such as utilization of non-motorized transportation modes and location of public facilities accessible by multiple transportation modes.

### **Consistency with Florida International University Campus Master Plan Update 2005-2015**

A review of the Florida International University Campus Master Plan Update 2005-2015 (FIU CMP) reveals that many of the proposals in the UniversityCity Prosperity Project are consistent with the FIU CMP. The Urban Design Element discusses that the campuses should emphasize the creation of model public spaces developed upon best practices. The UniversityCity Prosperity Project (Project) proposes to include pedestrian-oriented and multimodal access improvement for FIU and the adjoining city of Sweetwater. The Project proposes to improve designated open spaces, pedestrian corridors and view corridors. Internal vehicular circulation is also proposed for improvement to guide FIU students, faculty, employees and visitors to parking garages that have available or reserved parking spaces for use and therefore reduce miles traveled within the campus looking for parking and freeing up existing campus street capacity. In the Future Land Use Element, a stated goal is to move toward a more compact, efficient urban scale of development. The Project is consistent with this goal, as it identifies the location for new housing and locating parking, thereby reducing vehicular and pedestrian conflicts and creating a safer environment for users through the pedestrian-oriented corridor improvements between the FIU campus and the city of Sweetwater. The goal of the Transportation Element of the FIU CMP is to increase multimodal access. The Project is proposing to create a best practice mode for shifting trips away from private vehicles by weaving together vibrant and mixed-use pedestrian bridges, quality multi-modal transit station environments, shared local feeder vehicles, bike paths, and express bus service, shifting 30% of trips from private vehicles to transit or other modes. The Project intends to reduce congestion, accidents and travel costs, create mode shifts to transit/biking/ walking.

Comments from Other County Agencies

As indicated above, this Department is responsible for coordinating the County's review of transportation projects and has, therefore, provided the AN information on the proposed project to the Miami-Dade County permitting and permit review agencies and requested their comments. The agency comments, which are enclosed for your review and consideration, are summarized below:

The Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) indicated that if the FIU UniversityCity Prosperity Project was awarded discretionary funding, the MPO could accept an amendment request to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator stated that the FIU application should be revised to reflect how the elements proposed to be funded through the grant relate to the FIU Campus Master Plan, the City of Sweetwater Comprehensive Plan, projected costs and funding sources. The MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator expressed concern regard to the unnecessary duplication in the FIU plan of both a pedestrian and at-grade pedestrian improvements at the SW 8 Street/SW 109 Street intersection.

The Miami-Dade Public Works and Waste Management Department (PWWM) indicates they do not have any proposed roadway project adjacent to the subject project. As the project proceeds, PWWM seeks to insure that increasing the ease and safety of pedestrian and bicycle travel between FIU and the City of Sweetwater is accomplished, while maintaining the capacity of the critical SW 8 Street corridor. PWWM cites concerns about the bridge design, roundabouts, length of deceleration lanes, bus access, and the lack of bicycle integration into the plan. Please consult PWWM for information about these issues. Regarding solid waste, PWWM determined that the proposed project will not impact their system of operations.

Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) indicated that while they provided a Letter of Support on March 16, 2012 for FIU's UniversityCity Prosperity TIGER IV Grant Application, MDT is not a co-applicant on FIU's application. Instead, MDT submitted a separate TIGER IV Grant Application for the SR 836 Express Enhanced Bus Service Project, intended to provide express transit service along SW 8 Street and SR 836 east-west corridor to the Miami Intermodal Center (MIC), with limited stops including one at FIU. Phase I of this project is due to begin in November 2012. MDT is advancing a new route, the Flagler Enhanced Bus service which will run along SW 8 Street from the proposed West Miami-Dade/SW 8 Street Park-and-Ride Transit Terminal Facility to the Government Center Metrorail Station in downtown Miami and includes a stop at FIU. MDT's TIGER application includes an Advanced Transit and Multimodal Station (ATMS) located adjacent to SW 8 Street west of the SW 107 Avenue. Due to this, MDT requests that FIU continue to collaborate with MDT to allow its buses access to the proposed ATMS in order to provide a consolidated transit access point for transit patrons. As a result, the existing FIU Bus Terminal currently located west of SW 107 Avenue at SW 17 Street should be relocated to the proposed ATMS. MDT also requests that the proposed bus lanes, bus bays and turning radii be designed to accommodate MDT's new 60-foot articulated hybrid buses which will be utilized on both the SR 836 Express and the Flagler Enhanced Bus Services. MDT currently operates four bus routes which serve the existing FIU Bus Terminal and two routes which service the northern portion of the project area near Sweetwater's City Hall. Of these routes, six routes have planned improvements listed in MDT's Draft 2012 Transit Development Plan. MDT has no objections to this project, but recommends that adequate provisions be made to accommodate temporary traffic deviations—including buses—along the roads adjacent to the project area for the duration of the project. These accommodations are necessary and should be closely coordinated with

MDT. Any removal or replacement of transit amenities or need for route realignments must be closely coordinated with MDT's Service Planning Division.

The Permitting, Environment and Regulatory Affairs Department (PERA) indicates that the proposed project may be located within jurisdictional wetlands and advises that any impacts be minimized and avoided to the greatest extent possible. PERA stresses that roads and vacant lots in the proposed off-campus student housing and parking areas and its surroundings are flood-prone and inundated for a five-year rainstorm and recommends modifications in the design using adequate flood management techniques. The proposed project area may contain federally endangered species such as the Florida manatee, please refer to PERA's memorandum for more guidance and regulations about this important issue. PERA notes that some properties abutting the project corridor show records of contamination assessment/remediation; and asserts that the enhancement of pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities is consistent with the County's GreenPrint initiatives and sustainability efforts. PERA further states that FIU must comply with all applicable Miami-Dade County Code requirements and environmental permits, and other regional agencies' permits and requirements.

The Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department (MDWASD) has distribution water main and sewer force main lines within the project subject area. MDWASD also has several proposed projects within the project subject area and recommends coordination between its Engineering and Design Division and FIU for future development of the project. MDWASD points out that FDOT has two roadway improvements programmed along SW 107 Avenue within the subject project area.

The Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department (PROS) notes that within the vicinity of the proposed project, in addition to the Sweetwater liner park, there is also the County's Tamiami Park located south of the FIU campus. PROS reiterates that FIU conduct an assessment of potential impacts to recreation areas during the project development process, but states that the proposed project is consistent with the Recreation and Open Space element of the CMDP.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department (MDFR) operates several fire stations within close proximity to the FIU campus and observes numerous traffic safety issues and cites delays, inadequate vehicular queuing, and moving traffic violations along SW 107 Avenue, SW 8 Street and in surrounding area. MDFR generally supports the FIU project and the implementation of mixed-use pedestrian pathways and bridges, and believes the proposed improvements will primarily reduce emergency response time, reduce the use of private vehicles, reduce commuter travel time, and increase the use of mass transit, walking and biking.

The Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) has informed this office that pursuant to Section 1012.97, Florida Statutes each university is empowered and directed to provide for police officers for its university. The lands subject to this Advanced Notification are located within the boundaries of the University and/or City of Sweetwater, therefore, the MDPD has limited jurisdictional authority on these lands. However, Miami-Dade County Police does provide mutual aid to the University and is in the process of updating its Mutual Aid Agreement with the University.

The County's Office of Emergency Management requests that the project cannot result in decrease in net roadway capacity reduction during project construction; any temporary loss in capacity must be immediately restored if roadway is needed for evacuation. The Miami-Dade

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Aviation Department (MDAD) indicated that the proposed project is compatible with their system of airports.

Should you or any member of your staff have any questions or need assistance regarding this information, please feel free to call me or Napoleon Somoza, Long-Range Planning Section Supervisor, Metropolitan Planning Section, at (305) 375-2835. For questions regarding specific agency comments, please contact the appropriate agencies directly.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Woerner, AICP  
Assistant Director for Planning

MRW:NVS:HB:nms

Enclosures

Cc: without attachments:

Jack Osterholt, Deputy Mayor, Miami-Dade County  
Jose Abreu, Director, Miami-Dade Aviation Department  
Jose Ramos, Interim Division Director, Aviation Planning Division, MDAD  
William W. Bryson, Director, Miami-Dade Fire and Rescue Department  
Carlos Heredia, Section Supervisor, Planning Section, MDFRD  
Irma San Roman, Interim Director, Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Carlos Roa, Transportation System Analysis, Metropolitan Planning Organization  
David Henderson, Bicycle/Pedestrian Program Coordinator, MPO  
Kathleen Kauffman, Chief, Office of Historic Preservation and Archeological Resources,  
Sustainability, Planning and Economic Enhancement Department  
Jeff Ransom, Historic Preservation Specialist, Office of Historic Preservation and  
Archeological Resources, SPEED  
Albert Hernandez, Deputy Director, Miami-Dade Transit  
Monica Cejas, Senior Professional Engineer, MDT  
Nilia Cartaya, Principal Planner, MDT  
John W. Renfrow, Director, Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department  
Bertha Goldenberg, Assistant Director, Regulatory Compliance and Planning, WASD  
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Maria Nardi, Chief, Planning and Research Division, PROS  
John Bowers, Special Project Administrator, PROS  
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