



State Legislative Agenda 2025



Lee County
Southwest Florida

Lee Board of County Commissioners
2115 Second Street | Fort Myers, FL 33901



2025 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA INTRODUCTION

This document represents the 2025 Florida Legislative Session Agenda of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners. While these priorities guide the County's advocacy efforts in Tallahassee, they are not exhaustive and new issues may arise or evolve that will require Board attention.

Issues are not ranked in order of priority. Commissioners, staff, and contract lobbyists will pursue all legislative policies approved by the Board and place appropriate priority on the issues according to opportunities that arise during the legislative process. As usual, Lee County Commissioners emphasize maintaining home rule authority and opposing cost shifts or unfunded mandates.

The state legislative session will begin March 4, 2025, and conclude May 2, 2025.

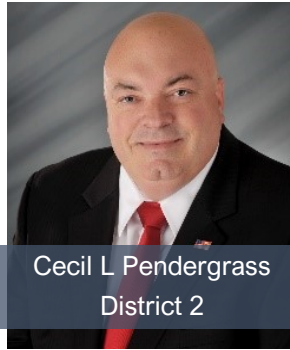
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Lee Board of County Commissioners



Kevin Ruane
District 1



Cecil L. Pendergrass
District 2



David Mulicka
District 3



Brian Hamman
District 4



Mike Greenwell
District 5



2025 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

PRIORITIES

1) Hurricane Recovery and Resilience –

- a. **SUPPORT** continuing State financial assistance to help Lee County recover from multiple hurricanes in recent years. While still rebuilding from the catastrophic devastation wreaked by Hurricane Ian, the County has suffered impacts from hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton. Lee County appreciates its vital partnership with the State of Florida and seeks to further strengthen joint hurricane response and recovery efforts.
- b. **SUPPORT** appropriating \$2.5 million for the Lee County Utilities Fort Myers Beach Water Reclamation Facility restoration and capacity enhancement project. These funds will be used to help rehabilitate the facility’s aging infrastructure in conjunction with repairing damages sustained during Hurricane Ian.
- c. **SUPPORT** appropriating \$5 million to design and construct hardened traffic signal poles that were damaged by Hurricane Ian but not funded by Federal Highway Administration.
- d. **SUPPORT** appropriating \$5.75 million to further harden the primary mass shelter and interagency staging area for emergency response resources in Lee County. Hertz Arena has been activated for ten disasters since 2004 and provides easy access to residents throughout Southwest Florida and beyond.

2) SUPPORT Appropriations for Lee County Local Support Projects –

- a. **Sunshine Boulevard from 75th Street to State Road 80 - \$5 million**
Conduct alignment study and Project Development and Environment Study for the Sunshine Boulevard extension from 75th Street to SR 80 in Lehigh Acres.
- b. **Alico Road Extension - \$5 million**
Construct Phase 1 from Airport Haul Road to Alico Road/Green Meadows Road intersection. Entire project is estimated to cost \$290 million.
- c. **Medical Examiner and Natural Resources Laboratory - \$3.5 million**
Design and permit expansion of the District 21 Medical Examiner Office facilities which serve Lee, Hendry and Glades counties. The rapidly expanding caseloads for both routine and emergency services exceed the capacity of the current facility. (Glades and Hendry are “fiscally constrained” counties).
- d. **Ten Mile Canal at Page Field – \$1.3 million**
Replace the decades-old cement gabion weir with a concrete structure featuring operable gates as outlined in the Flood Mitigation Plan.

2025 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Lee County Board of Commissioners advocates for the preservation of local home rule and opposes any legislation, policies or regulations that would impose unfunded responsibilities upon the County.

SUPPORT ISSUES

911 Systems – **SUPPORT** maintaining oversight of 911 systems and networks at the County level, including approval of expenditures. **SUPPORT** legislation and funding to further regionalize Next Generation 911 systems to improve redundancy and resiliency in the face of disasters.

Affordable Housing SHIP Flexibility – **SUPPORT** reducing the Very Low Income (VIL) set-aside percentages, remove the 75% construction set-aside requirement, and to increase or eliminate the caps on rental and manufactured housing to allow for flexibility in administering the SHIP program.

Alum Treatments on Sovereign Submerged Lands – **SUPPORT** action by the Legislature and Florida Department of Environmental Protection to allow sediment inactivation, such as Alum treatments, as a safe and effective method of reducing phosphorus loading in Florida water bodies, including Sovereignty Submerged Lands.

Beach Nourishment – **SUPPORT** full funding of the program for annual ranking of beach projects for state cost-sharing and continued use of the current ranking criteria.

Biosolids – **SUPPORT** exploratory state programs for funding new state-of-the-art wastewater technologies while maintaining ability to use properly treated biosolids as a fertilizer supplement or soil amendment, subject to regulatory requirements that have been established to protect public health and the environment. Lee County has invested more than \$15 million to create Class AA infrastructure—the state’s highest quality specifications—to better manage human wastewater.

Building Inspection Funds Carryforward – **SUPPORT** legislation amending Section 553.80(7)(a), Florida Statutes, regarding building inspection funds in order to ensure a local government’s ability to carry forward enough funds to cover pending inspections.

Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Protection – **SUPPORT** continued, dedicated state funding.

Code Enforcement Anonymous Complaints – **SUPPORT** amending Florida law relating to county and municipal code enforcement to restore the authority allowing a code inspector to act on a complaint submitted anonymously as was the law before the passage of Chapter 2021-167, Laws of Florida.

Continuing Contract Thresholds – **SUPPORT** modifications to the Competitive Consultant’s Negotiation Act (CCNA) by reducing the restrictions and expanding continuing contract study cap thresholds.

Emergency Briefings Public Meeting Exemption – **SUPPORT** legislation granting an exemption for county elected officials to be able to participate in emergency-related briefings during a declared state of emergency.

Emergency Management – **SUPPORT** additional funding for statewide emergency management systems and initiatives, including emergency notification systems, coordination platforms, and communications infrastructure.

EMS Balance Billing – **OPPOSE** limitations on the ability of county EMS providers to seek reimbursement for out-of-network transports. **SUPPORT** requirements for private insurers to pay local governments for

the actual cost of emergency service delivery based on audits of expenditures by the Agency for Health Care Administration.

EMS Regulation – **SUPPORT** maintaining a countywide regulatory system for EMS transport through the current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) process.

Financial Accountability of PACE Providers – **SUPPORT** amending s. 163.08, F.S., relating to the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program, to provide full financial disclosure of PACE providers to aid local governments in the selection process and limit excessive expenditures.

Harmful Algal Blooms – **SUPPORT** state initiatives that address the proliferation of harmful algal blooms such as blue-green algae and red tide.

PFAS Testing – **SUPPORT** dedicated funding for PFAS testing to empower local governments to identify contamination hotspots, protect public health, and develop targeted remediation plans.

Regional Planning Councils – **SUPPORT** legislation to allow counties to opt out of mandatory membership.

Resiliency/Flood Mitigation – **SUPPORT** state and federal resiliency efforts to identify and address vulnerabilities to public infrastructure and public safety through continued funding of planning and capital improvements.

Shade Meeting Expanded Staff Participation – **SUPPORT** legislation amending s. 286.011(8), F.S., to allow senior staff to participate in closed sessions (“shade meetings”) as subject matter experts to provide board members with the technical knowledge necessary to make informed decisions.

Short-Term Rental Tax Collection – **SUPPORT** legislation that codifies full collection and remittance of the Tourist Development Taxes by short-term rentals and requires a Department of Revenue number, or similar unique property identification number, be included in the short-term rental advertisements.

Small Wireless Facilities (5G) Appeal – **REPEAL** state law preemption of local government regulation of small wireless facilities, also referred to as a 5G equipment, and restore local authority to regulate 5G towers.

State Aid to Public Libraries Grant – **SUPPORT** adequately funding State Aid for public libraries through the Division of Library and Information Services in the Florida Department of State.

Upskilling and Workforce Diploma Special Project (Libraries) – **SUPPORT** funding this program that provides educational access (at no charge) to adult students seeking to improve their quality of life and job opportunities through completing their accredited private high school education at their local branch library.

VISIT FLORIDA – **SUPPORT** continued funding for Visit Florida to strengthen Florida’s tourism industry, which plays a crucial role in job creation, economic growth and maintaining a low tax base for residents, while also generating sales tax revenue.

Waste-to-Energy Program – **SUPPORT** funding the Municipal Solid Waste-to-Energy Program to provide financial assistance grants and incentive grants to counties that operate municipal solid waste-to-energy facilities. Created in 2022, the \$100 million/year program has not yet been funded.

Water Management Basin Boundaries – **SUPPORT** updating boundaries of water basin districts according to hydrological conditions to ensure that taxpayers are contributing to the sub-district that best serves them and that water management districts are providing equitable service to all basins. **SUPPORT**

implementing the study commissioned by the legislature to scientifically determine the boundaries of Big Cypress Basin.

Water Resources & Planning – **SUPPORT** creating of recurring five-year water-related work plan and statewide strategic plan. **SUPPORT** increased funding for local water infrastructure projects with direction for coordination of the various state/regional entities funding water issues toward local priorities.

Water Wells and Septic-to-Sewer Conversion – **SUPPORT** recurring funding for conversion programs designed to move private wells to potable drinking water and private septic tanks to public wastewater collection systems. **SUPPORT** greater flexibility for programs that address the costs incurred by residents connecting to sewer and the proper abandonment of septic systems.



Lee County Utilities Fort Myers Beach (FMB) Water Reclamation Facility (WRF)

Background

The Fort Myers Beach Water Reclamation Facility is a crucial component in Lee County’s water quality and environmental health. Prior to Hurricane Ian, Lee County completed a master plan to outline a schedule of recommended plant improvements to increase treatment capacity to handle the anticipated future flow conditions through the year 2050. However, the facility sustained damage in September 2022 due to flooding during the hurricane, causing saltwater intrusion and submersion to many of the facility’s buildings.

Proposal

The purpose of this project is to rehabilitate the FMB WRF due to loss of treatment capacity, aging infrastructure and damages sustained during Hurricane Ian. The funding requested will support the installation of anaerobic trains, which remove pollutants from wastewater without using oxygen. Key components of the anaerobic trains include foundations, concrete structures, grating, valves, piping, and fittings. This investment will initiate the project’s broader objectives, including hazard mitigation and flood-proofing measures, to establish a climate-stable facility capable of uninterrupted domestic wastewater treatment.

Benefits

The proposed renovation will accommodate anticipated future population growth, implement advanced technology used for wastewater treatment, and ensure that it can support the region well into the future.

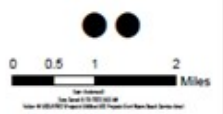
Funding

State funding requested:	\$2.5 million for FY 2025-2026
Lee County match:	Balance of project costs
Future requests:	None anticipated
Total project cost:	\$209 million

[see map on following page]



FORT MYERS BEACH WRF SERVICE AREA
LEE COUNTY UTILITIES





Hertz Arena Shelter Hardening

Background

Lee County proposes to further harden Hertz Arena to enhance its role as the primary mass shelter and interagency staging area for emergency response resources in the area. Hertz Arena has been activated for ten disasters since 2004 and provides easy access to residents throughout Southwest Florida and beyond. While Hertz Arena already serves as a general population shelter during disasters, some of its infrastructure was not built to withstand severe weather conditions.

Proposal

Strengthen the facility and enhance its ability to serve as a reliable shelter. Some proposed structural hardening includes:

- Provide and install roll-down shutter system to protect hardened portion of building from unprotected portions of the building;
- Replace lower flat roof surrounding arena domed area;
- Strengthen roof structure under existing roof-mounted equipment to counteract design uplift loads;
- Remove and replace all seals and expansion joints throughout the main hardened building to provide watertight structure; and
- Replace storefront windows and entry systems with systems meeting current code requirements.

Benefits

Increases the level of safety for the residents who need County-provided shelter during an emergency event. Specific anticipated outcomes include:

- Provide safe shelter for up to 5,000 persons evacuated from Lee County as well as other counties in Southwest, South and Southeast Florida during declared emergencies;
- Increase the availability of this safe shelter for another 20 years; and
- Ensure the availability of this shelter location for staging critical inventory – including food, water and medical supplies – or housing first-responders.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$5.75 million
Future requests:	None
Total project cost for Phase I:	Up to \$6 million



Sunshine Boulevard from 75th Street to State Road 80

Background

The Sunshine Boulevard extension project, planned from 75th Street to State Road 80 (SR 80) in Lehigh Acres, addresses the rapid growth and development within Lee County. This area has experienced significant residential and commercial development, leading to increased traffic congestion. This project will support this area's fast-paced growth by improving transportation infrastructure.

Proposal

Lee County seeks funding to conduct an alignment study and a Project Development and Environment study. These studies are essential steps in identifying feasible routes and evaluating potential effects on the community and environment.

Benefits

This project will improve connectivity in Lehigh Acres by connecting major routes and surrounding areas, reducing traffic congestion and supporting the area's rapid growth.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$5 million for FY 2025-2026
Future requests:	Not yet determined
Total project cost:	To be determined

[location map forthcoming]



Alico Road Extension

Background

Lee County is improving Alico Road to accommodate population growth, connect Lehigh Acres with the County's primary employment center, and ease congestion on existing east-west corridors like Daniels Parkway. This new roadway will connect with existing Alico Road at the current Green Meadow Intersection and extend east and north to connect with State Road 82 opposite of its existing intersection with Sunshine Boulevard.

This new connection will provide additional roadway capacity as well as improve the level of service for the Interstate 75/Daniels Parkway and I-75/Colonial Boulevard intersections. Drivers will see improved level of mobility and reduced congestion in eastern Lee County.

Proposal

This project requests \$5 million in funding to support the construction of Phase I of the Alico Road Extension project, which will include widening the existing two-lane undivided Alico Road to a four-lane divided roadway from Airport Haul Road to the Alico Road and Green Meadows Road intersection.

Benefits

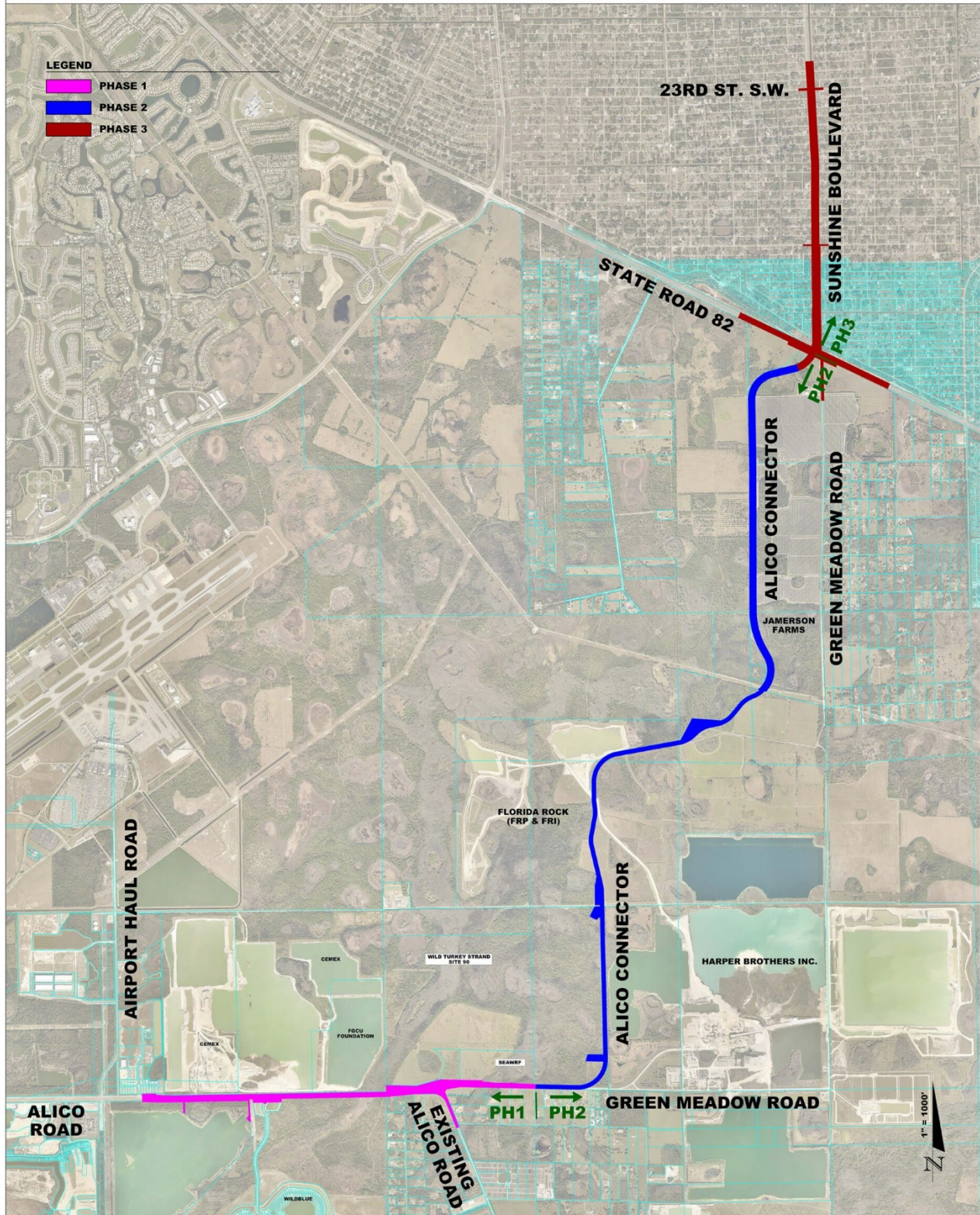
The Alico Road Extension project will connect the fast-growing area of Lehigh Acres to the major employment center of Lee County. Phase I of this project will lay the groundwork for the rest of the project while delivering immediate improvements to traffic flow.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$5 million for FY 2025-2026
Future requests:	Not yet determined
Total project cost for Phase I:	\$54 million
Total cost for all phases:	Estimated \$290 million

[see map on following page]

ALIGNMENT





Medical Examiner and Natural Resources Laboratory

Background

The Lee County Medical Examiner’s Office (MEO) provides essential forensic services, including conducting autopsies, death investigations, and issuing death certificates for the county. Due to the county’s population growth, the office is facing increased demand and must improve its facility to adequately support operations. To address this, the MEO will gain access to laboratory space currently occupied by the Natural Resources Environmental Laboratory on Danley Drive once the lab relocates to its new location.

The Natural Resources Environmental Laboratory plays a key role in environmental testing, waterbody monitoring, assessment and information services to benefit both residents and the natural environment. The Lab also provides water analysis services for Lee County residents and Lee County Utilities. Its current facility on Danley Drive has become insufficient for the increasing environmental and public utility testing needs. To meet these demands, the laboratory is relocating to a larger, more modern, and efficiently designed facility at 5248 Red Cedar Drive in Fort Myers.

Proposal

Lee County seeks \$3.5 million for the design funding for both the MEO and Natural Resources Laboratory. The funding will cover the design of two critical expansions:

1. MEO Expansion: The design will focus on expanding the current facility and additional office space provided by the relocation of the Natural Resources Laboratory. This expansion will improve workflow efficiency and allow the office to handle an increased number of cases.
2. Natural Resources Laboratory Renovation: The funding will also support the design of the new Natural Resources Environmental Laboratory space at the Red Cedar Drive location. This will ensure the lab is equipped to meet the county’s environmental monitoring needs.

Benefits

These facilities are essential to Lee, Hendry and Glades counties. This expansion will allow the facilities to support a higher volume of cases, improve emergency response, and enhance public safety. Because Hendry and Glades counties are fiscally constrained, they are unable to adequately fund these upgrades. State funding is crucial to ensure that the facilities can continue to provide vital services to these communities.

Funding

State funding requested:	\$3.5 million
Future requests:	Not yet determined
Total project cost:	Estimated \$39 million

Ten Mile Canal



Background

Ten Mile Canal was constructed by the now defunct Iona Drainage District (IDD) in the 1920s to provide drainage and flood protection for areas west of the canal. The drainage district was dissolved in 1953 and all improvements given to Lee County. Ten Mile Canal conveys runoff from an area of approximately 68 square miles in both the City of Fort Myers and Unincorporated Lee County. The existing weir is a fixed weir that does not allow operational capability to respond to known storm events. Replacing the weir will allow for operations to decrease the risk of flooding in both the City of Fort Myers and Unincorporated Lee County.

Proposal

Lee County is requesting \$1.3 million to replace the outdated cement form weir with a new concrete structure with operable gates. This upgraded design will ensure that the canal can better handle both routine water flow and extreme weather conditions and will align with the goals of the Southern Lee County Flood Mitigation Plan.

Benefits

By replacing the outdated infrastructure, the canal's flood management will greatly improve, allowing better control over water levels during heavy rain. This will reduce the risk of flooding in nearby residential and commercial properties. The new system will also support long-term infrastructure sustainability, ensuring the canal remains functional and reduces the need for frequent maintenance.

Funding

State funding requested: \$1.3 million for FY 2025-2026

Future requests: None

Total project cost: >\$3 million [see map on following page]

