

## **Mixing Trucks with Cars, Bikes & Walkers on Brandon Blvd.**

Most people know Brandon Boulevard, also called State Road 60, as a heavily-traveled commercial road going through the heart of Brandon. But it also connects the Port of Tampa with phosphate mines, manufacturers and citrus growers in Polk County. In Winter Haven, for example, CSX is building an Integrated Logistics Center (ILC) just north of SR 60. It includes an Intermodal Rail Terminal to serve its growing business in Orlando, Tampa and South Florida. The 318-acre terminal is adjacent to 930 acres for which CSX is planning for the development of distribution centers, warehousing and manufacturing facilities. Together, the two properties will form the ILC and generate hundreds more truck trips every day on SR 60.

In part to handle potential increases in truck traffic due to the ILC, FDOT also has a Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) study underway to widen Brandon Boulevard (SR 60) between Valrico Road and Polk County. There are no plans to add through lanes to the segment of SR 60 between Valrico Road and I-75.

These factors triggered the need for the MPO to study the compatibility of heavy truck traffic with surrounding land uses, congestion and safety. This study addresses potential conflicts between truck movements and pedestrian, bicycle, and automobiles on SR 60 from I-75 to Valrico Road. The study has already identified issues such as:

- A lack of crosswalks along the corridor in particular at the high crash intersection of Brandon Town Center Drive
- Long gaps between traffic signals that make it difficult and dangerous for pedestrians to cross SR 60
- Heavy traffic, high speeds and gaps in bike lanes that discourage cyclists from traveling on SR 60
- A lack of parallel local streets that could relieve traffic on SR 60
- Long queues of traffic exiting the mall
- A lack of pedestrian and bicycle connections making it dangerous for walkers and cyclists to get from one side of I-75 to the other
- Locations where trucks have difficulty making deliveries, such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot at Mount Carmel Rd.

MPO planners have begun to work with representatives of major freight movers, residents, county and FDOT engineers and community members to develop solutions. The MPO will hold a public workshop in August to get feedback before making final recommendations later this year.