

Lutz-Lake Fern Road Overhaul Outlined

The \$56 million job will begin in January as workers break ground on a new school.

By ELIZABETH LEE BROWN
The Tampa Tribune

LUTZ — The first signs of an upcoming \$56 million overhaul of Lutz-Lake Fern Road will be visible as early as January with the construction of a new high school and a Suncoast Parkway interchange.

Once those two projects kick off, Hillsborough County will begin expanding the road from two to four lanes. Residents should expect to live in a construction zone for the next four years. Planners from the county,

the school district and the Florida Turnpike Enterprise gave an overview of the multifaceted roadway widening project Thursday to about 150 people at Martinez Middle School.

Project Manager Edd Arnold, of the county's public works department, said the Lutz-Lake Fern Road widening will be split into two phases.

Phase one expands the road to four lanes from 1,000 feet west of the Suncoast Parkway to the new school entrance. That driveway will have a traffic signal and serve three schools — McKirrick Elementary, Martinez Middle and the new 2,500-student high school.

The roadway widening and the ramps will be finished before the new school opens in August 2009.

The second phase, which will widen Lutz-Lake Fern Road from the school to North Dale Mabry Highway, will begin in mid-2009 and be finished by September 2012, Arnold said.

"We don't want it to take three years, but we've allowed ourselves some time," he said.

Alison Stettner, the turnpike's regional planning administrator, said the contract to design and build the ramps will be awarded by January and construction will begin in early 2008.

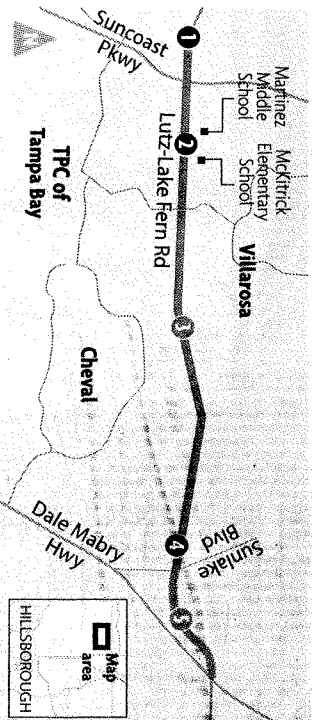
The interchange opening will be a no-toll facility with traffic signals at each ramp, she said.

Engineers have designed the loop ramps on the north side

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PROPOSED WIDENING OF LUTZ-LAKE FERN ROAD

Hillsborough County planners are designing a \$56 million project to widen Lutz-Lake Fern Road, from the Suncoast Parkway to North Dale Mabry Highway. According to 2006 traffic counts, Lutz-Lake Fern Road carries between 7,400 and 16,700 vehicles each day. Here is what is proposed for each of the main segments:



- 1 The project begins on the east side of the future Suncoast Parkway interchange. The widening will complement the turnpike's planned ramp openings.
- 2 The Hillsborough County school board will help pay for a new signalized school entrance to serve an existing middle and elementary school and a new high school set to open August 2009.
- 3 The segment between the Suncoast Parkway and Sunlake Boulevard will be a four-lane divided roadway.
- 4 The new road will swing to the south, and the existing road will turn into a frontage road for residents on the north side west of Sunlake Boulevard.
- 5 Traffic counts drop east of Sunlake Boulevard, so the section from Sunlake to North Dale Mabry Highway will be widened to three lanes by adding a center turn lane.

Tribune map; Source: Hillsborough County Department of Public Works



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