

10. Ridge Scenic Highway

In February of 2005, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) officially designated State Road 17 in eastern Polk County a State Scenic Highway. This highway, named the Ridge Scenic Highway, extends 38.7-miles along the Lake Wales Ridge, from its intersection with US 27 south of Frostproof to its intersection with US 17/92 in Haines City. The scenic highway corridor travels through the historic communities of Frostproof, Hillcrest Heights, Babson Park, the Village of Highland Park, Lake Wales, Lake of the Hills, Dundee, Lake Hamilton and Haines City.

This scenic corridor introduces travelers to historic communities and rural agricultural Central Florida. SR 17, or Scenic Highway as it is locally known, serves the historic centers of these communities and provides access to cultural facilities and historic sites that help promote and preserve the local culture. Winding along the Lake Wales Ridge, SR 17 provides scenic vistas and access to lakes, natural areas, citrus agricultural fields and unique Florida attractions.

The Corridor Management Entity (CME) is comprised of a group of interested citizens, local government appointees, elected officials and agency representatives. The CME is the caretaker and of the Ridge Scenic Highway and is responsible for the implementation of the corridor's Action Plan. This group prepared a Designation Application which contains the documentation that explains the significance of the corridor and outlines a plan for implementing the vision that was developed for the corridor.

In the text below are several excerpts from the Designation Application that was prepared by the CME in support of the corridor's designation.

10.1 Corridor Vision

The CME's vision for the Ridge Scenic Highway is stated below. This vision statement is phrased from a future perspective looking back at the CME's accomplishments.

The Ridge Scenic Highway contains a wide variety of natural, scenic, historical, cultural, and recreational resources of regional and national significance along the Lake Wales Ridge.

The corridor is rich in archaeological sites, cultural enclaves, tourist destinations, historic commercial and residential districts (some listed on the National Register), farming communities, national landmarks, conservation lands, migratory bird preserves, and green spaces. Its rolling hills and valleys, pristine waters, and high sandy ridge have promoted healthy living and scenic vistas for past generations.

The Ridge Scenic Highway Corridor Management Entity has worked with local, state, and federal governments, citizen groups, and non-profit organizations. These continuing efforts are intended to protect and maintain the unique geology, environmental lands, and habitats and ensure viable citrus and agricultural industries, therefore preserving a natural, scenic, historic, and recreational way of life.

Through preservation of resources, interpretive signage, and sufficient advertising, the Ridge Scenic Highway continues to educate residents and visitors about the unique Florida Story and promote preservation for future generations

10.2 Goals, Objectives and Strategies

To guide the CME's focus toward creating its vision for the Ridge Scenic Highway, the group created a set of goals, objectives and their supporting strategies. In the following text are the goals, objectives and strategies related to transportation and safety.

GOAL: INCREASE TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

Objective: Promote and reinforce safe vehicular travel speeds.

- **Strategy 7.1:** Promote the completion of a safety study along SR 17. A safety study should be conducted to evaluate and make recommendations at high accident locations, to determine the length and location of passing zones, as well as the appropriate posted speed for the road.
- **Strategy 7.2:** Implement the recommendations of the traffic study in accordance with the Corridor Vision.

- **Strategy 7.3:** Within incorporated and unincorporated communities, lower posted speed to promote safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and other users of the road.
- **Strategy 7.4** Urge local law enforcement agencies to implement the posted speed limit.

10.3 Action Plan

The Action Plan is a list of activities and tasks to be accomplished by the Ridge Scenic Highway CME within the next five years. These items are considered short-term action items. The items listed in the Action Plan are based on the Vision, Goals, Objectives and Strategies.

For the purposes of the TPO's 2030 Transportation Improvement Plan (TRIP) Update, staff has listed the Action Plan items related to transportation:

- Bartow to Lake Wales Multi-Use Trail;
- The addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities along State Road 17 to enhance safe multi-modal transportation and recreation;
- Construction of a Multi-Use Trail between Lake Wales and Haines City;
- Scenic Pull-Off Areas; and
- Install Gateway Markers on State 17 south of US 17/92, at Chalet Suzanne Road and north of US 27.

Long Term Action Plan items include:

- Intersection Improvements at State Road 17 and Main Street in Dundee;
- Safety Study along State Road 17 that addresses safe speeds for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users of the road; and
- Multi-Use Trails that connect to, or run parallel to, State Road 17 – Bartow to Lake Wales Trail, Crooked Lake Prairie to Tiger Creek Trail, and a trail between Lake Wales and Haines City.



Ridge Scenic Highway approaching Lake Wales.



Ridge Scenic Highway north of Lake Moody.



Aerial view of Ridge Scenic Highway in Polk County.

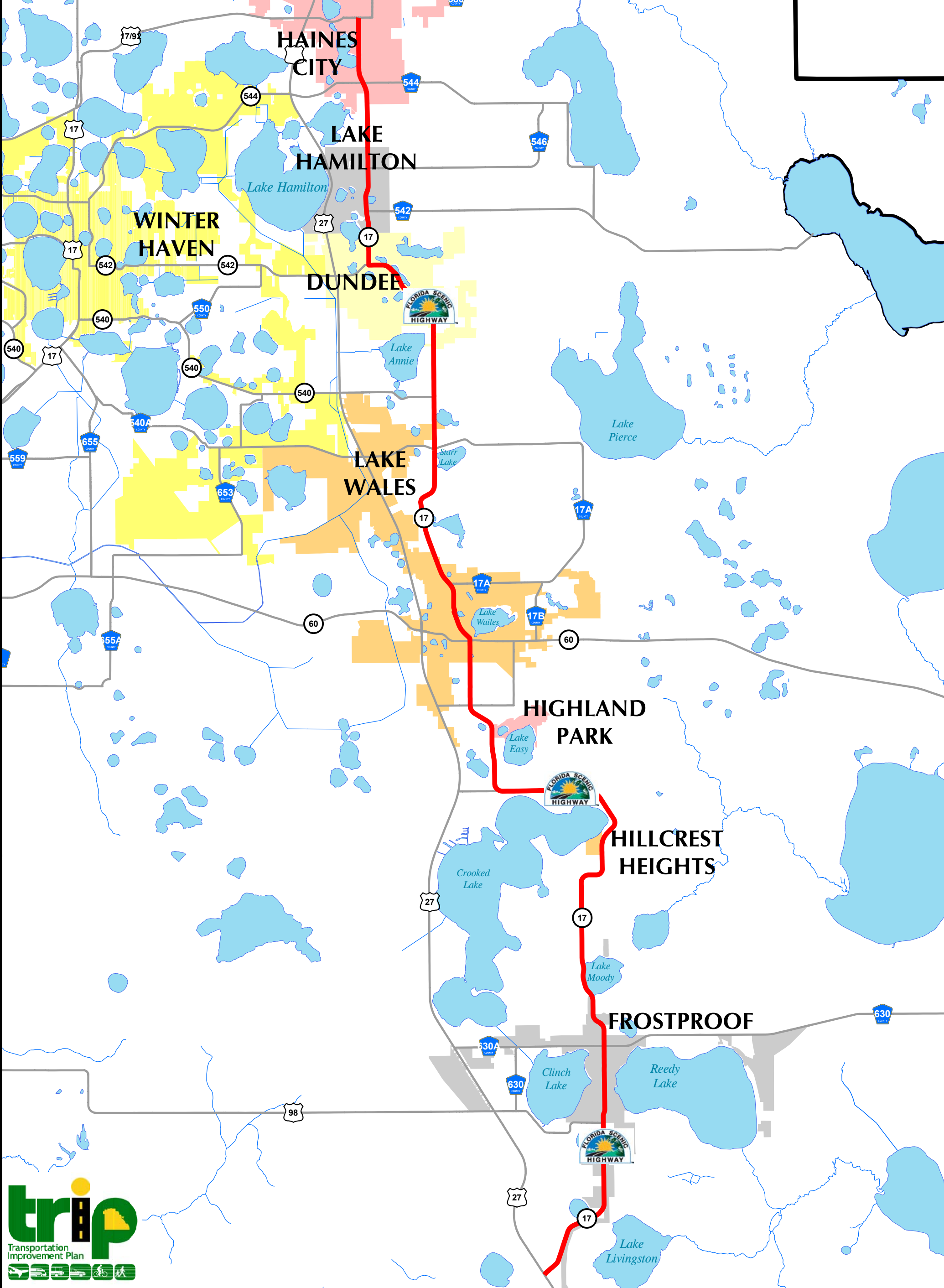


Ridge Scenic Highway south of Dundee.



Chapter 10 Maps

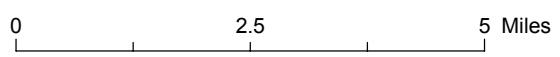
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The Ridge Scenic Highway

Legend

- SR 17 - Ridge Scenic Highway
- Major Roads/Highways
- Lakes





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