



**Chapter 6**  
**Economy/Tourism**



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## Supporting Documents

- Measuring Performance: Freight and Economic Development Report
- Port Manatee Master Plan
- Airport Master Plan Update Working Plan #1





## 6.0 Economy/Tourism

Keeping freight moving is essential to the local economy.

Improve accessibility and multi modal connectivity by promoting proximity to jobs and efficient movement of freight and goods.

Economy and Tourism within the LRTP can be easily concentrated into the following three categories:

1. Job Access – Getting people to their jobs.
2. Freight – Getting goods to people.
3. Tourism – Serving the transportation needs of visitors.

Regional jobs are primarily served by air, sea, truck, and rail through Sarasota-Bradenton Airport and Port Manatee. I-75, US 301, US 41, and the CSX and Seminole-Gulf Railways are the primary surface transportation routes used to transport goods to and through the region.

The most crucial documentation to help achieve these three categories include:

- Measuring Performance: Freight and Economic Development Report
- Port Manatee Master Plan (2016)
- Airport Master Plan Update Working Paper #1 (2020)

Florida’s economy has diversified significantly in the past decade and the state’s growing population consumes a wide range of goods and services. Freight transportation will continue to be supported and enhanced by a reliable transportation network, protecting an essential building block of the state’s economy.

Although the economy has diversified significantly, the tourism sector still makes up the largest share of employment in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Naturally, tourism is also one of the largest generators of freight

### Economy/Tourism

#### Objectives

*Projects shall...*

-  **Stimulate** economy in enterprise or economic development zones and opportunity zones
-  **Maintain** the regional freight network
-  **Improve** access to major tourist destinations

#### Prioritization Factors

*Does the project...*

- Address a need** in a targeted enterprise or economic development zone?
- Make improvements** to the adopted freight network?
- Provide** new or improved access to a high freight activity center?
- Improve** a route with high truck volume?
- Improve** a route to a major tourist destination?

#### Vision Statements

- Attract high-tech businesses and employees
- Focus on port centers as economic engines
- Brand and plan for the higher education/cultural corridor on US-41
- Prepare transportation infrastructure for new technology.



demand, concentrating the movement of goods and services towards the region's barrier islands and urban centers. Maintaining access to these areas is crucial to continually enhancing this sector.

### 6.1 *Measuring Performance: Freight and Economic Development Report*

The Freight and Economic Development Report, produced in support of the 2045 LRTP, serves as an exhaustive overview of how the economies of Sarasota and Manatee Counties are driven by freight. The report was drafted with the essential goal of meeting the broad Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) requirement that MPOs improve the transportation network to make freight movement more efficient.

To best understand freight and the economy, the plan reviewed the six largest job categories and freight generators for the region, their respective impact to the economy, and the primary networks (land, air/sea, and rail) that collectively serve each generator. This information is displayed by Figure 6-1.

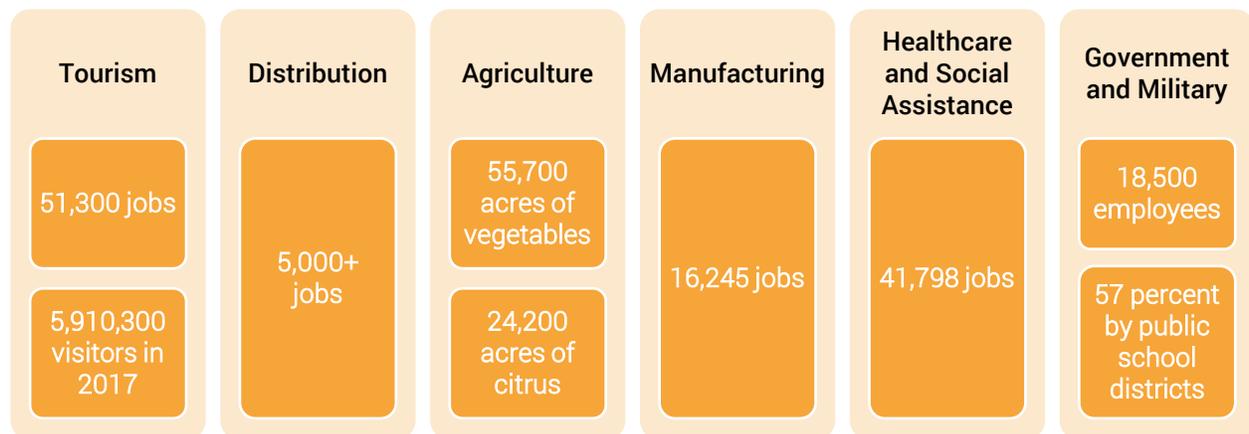


Figure 6-1: Major Regional Freight Generators

**Roads**- I-75 serves as the primary freight corridor for the region, ultimately connecting Sarasota and Manatee Counties to Fort Myers, Naples, and Miami to the south and Tampa, Atlanta, Chicago, and beyond to the north. Segments of US 41, US 301, SR 64, SR 72, and SR 780/Fruitville Road also have a high share of truck volume.

**Bridges**- Bridges are an especially important aspect of the regional transportation system, because the largest freight generator, tourism, is largely tied to the barrier islands. Quality bridges are paramount to keeping the tourism industry thriving. Although the region is home to nearly 500 bridges, **Table 6-1** illustrates the top five that are vital to the freight in the region.



Table 6-1: Bridges 2015 AADT and Truck Volume Share

Facility	Location	AADT	Truck Percentage
SR 684	Cortez Road Bridge	15,700	4 percent
SR 758	Siesta Drive Bridge	16,200	4 percent
SR 64	Manatee Avenue Bridge	16,400	4 percent
SR 72	Stickney Point Road Bridge	25,000	3 percent
SR 789	Ringling Causeway	35,000	4 percent

Source: FDOT Online Traffic Data (2015)

**Air and Sea** - Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (SRQ) and Port Manatee both serve as important components of the freight system. According to the 2020 SRQ Airport Master Plan Update Working Paper #1, the airport handled nearly 1 million passenger enplanements in 2019<sup>1</sup>, a 44 percent increase over the previous year. Of similarly sized peer ports across Florida, Port Manatee had the highest import tonnage and the third highest export tonnage in 2015. Both facilities are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this chapter.

**Rail** - The CSX and Seminole-Gulf railways serve the region. The Seminole-Gulf Railway is a short-line service, moving goods between distribution centers for land transport. This facility runs from SR 70 to SR 780/Fruitville Road via two spurs that parallel US 301. The CSX Transportation Palmetto Subdivision serves a variety of customers, including Port Manatee and inland mining and agricultural operations. This facility runs from Oneco north to Tampa, with an east-west spur in Palmetto and connects the region to the national rail freight network.

Of key importance to the region is the tourism industry. According to the report, the tourism industry brought approximately 8.9 million visitors to the region, employed 51,300 workers, and resulted in an economic impact of \$3.3 billion. The industry is expected to grow at a rate of 2 to 4 percent between now and 2035, continuing to increase demand for additional transportation improvements and services. One major transportation concern is facilitating the safe and convenient crossing of the Manatee River, improving connections between the region and Tampa Bay. The river is currently served locally by two bridges (DeSoto Bridge and Green Bridge) and I-75. A new bridge connection is being studied in the Project Development & Environment (PD&E) phase. Additional improvements should be sought to enhance the general circulation of visitors. Such improvements include the expansion and improvement of roadways, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, parking, transit and circulators, and related infrastructure.

<sup>1</sup> Sarasota Bradenton International Airport Master Plan Update, Working Paper 1, January 2020.



Ultimately, the plan recommended that the Sarasota/Manatee MPO proceed with the development of specific freight goals and objectives for the region. These goals should align with the goals and performance measures set by FDOT District 1, MAP-21, and the FAST Act. Any goals developed should reflect the nature of freight movement within the region to support the six major economic bases described above.

***Other Economic Drivers*** - A scenario planning and vision process was identified and undertaken to understand how the public preferred to see the region continue to grow. One component of this vision was to promote economic diversity. To help achieve economic diversity, the economic engines of baseball, beaches, and education were identified.

The first, Major League Baseball (MLB) spring training, includes the Pittsburgh Pirates in Manatee County and the Baltimore Orioles and the Atlanta Braves in Sarasota County. Spring training is an important component of diversifying tourism in the region. Significant investment has already been made in this area through the construction of state-of-the-art stadium and spring training camp facilities to house each team. Continued investment in transportation infrastructure to ensure the vitality of and support for this industry should be pursued.

The next major economic engine, beaches, focuses on the barrier islands from Anna Maria Island south to Manasota Key Beach. Maintaining and creating convenient access to these locations for tourists and locals alike is crucial to the economic vitality of the region. For this reason, the condition of bridges must be maintained while promoting mobility alternatives to these areas such as enhanced transit and shuttle service or improved bicycle and pedestrian networks.

The third major economic engine identified was education. Although the vision aims to promote education at all levels – from elementary through high school, its focus is on postsecondary education. This engine will be fueled by enhancing access to USF and New College campuses. By doing so, high paying, high technology job providers will be attracted to the region.

### **6.2 Port Manatee Master Plan**

Port Manatee is an 1,100 acre seaport that includes a large ship basin, a 40' deep, 2.9-mile-long access channel, ten 40 foot berths, over 1,000,000 square feet of warehouse space, underground petroleum pipelines, and a containerized cargo area. The Port Manatee Master Plan, last updated in 2016, provides a framework for the port's maintenance and expansion program through the next decade and beyond. The plan builds on previous efforts to help diversify operations, and generate local, regional, and statewide economic benefits. These economic benefits are significant: in 2018 the port contributed more than \$2.3 billion in local economic impact, supported more than 24,000 jobs, and moved over 8 million tons of cargo, including petroleum, agricultural products, and



building materials<sup>2</sup>. Total tonnage, shown in **Figure 6-2**, is expected to increase steadily through 2025. This additional freight volume will increase the burden on the nearby transportation network.

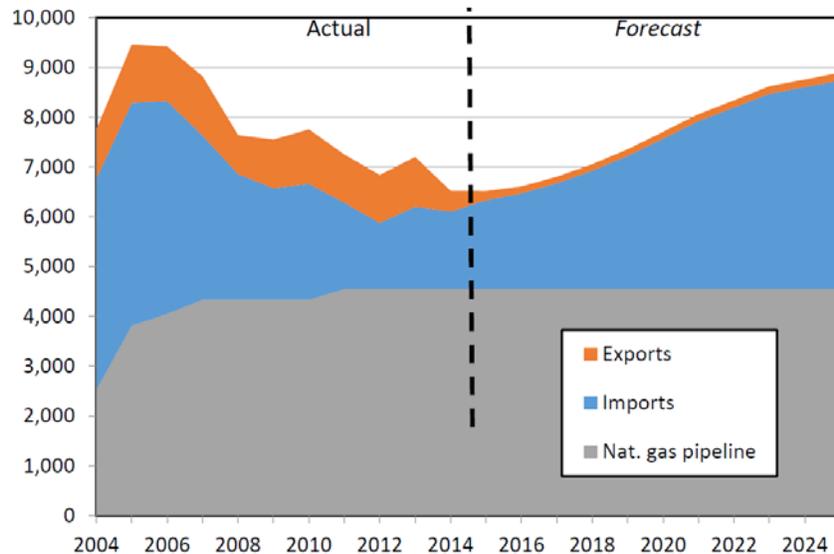


Figure 6-2: Port Manatee Tonnage (in 000 short tons)

As a designated Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facility, access from the port to the rest of the state system is crucial. To facilitate this connection, the port has a landside transportation network that includes several internal roadways, and the Port Manatee Railroad, a seven-mile short-line system. Both networks connect to US 41, the CSX Railroad, and other SIS facilities. Upgrades and expansions of these and other port facilities such as expanded berths, storage and container facilities, and access gates will have the potential to impact the roadway network adjoining the facility. Special care should be taken to ensure the adjoining roadways do not experience a reduction in level of service, potentially limiting the ability of goods to move in and out of this major economic driver.



<sup>2</sup> Port Manatee 2018 Business Directory, accessed at: [https://www.portmanatee.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PMD\\_2018\\_web.pdf](https://www.portmanatee.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PMD_2018_web.pdf)



Perhaps the master plan's most significant land-based improvement is the I-75 Port Connector Project which would provide a direct highway connection from I-75 to the port. Additional attention should be paid to activity levels at the port as volumes may increase to justify this project. Another significant roadway improvement, the US 41 Encouragement Zone (EZ) Crossing, is to provide a truck-only connection across US 41. When complete, the overpass will provide easier access for heavy freight vehicles serving the Port Manatee Encouragement Zone, which is an adjacent district with land use policies intended to enhance employment opportunities.

Table 6-2 shows planned road and port improvements identified by the Port Master Plan Update.

**Table 6-2 - Planned Road and Port Improvements**

Project Name	Description	Limits
Moccasin Wallow Road	New 4-lane roadway with multi modal improvements	US 41 to Gatewood Drive
Moccasin Wallow Road	Reconstruction WB approach to provide dedicated turn and through lanes	At US 41
US 41 Encouragement Zone Crossing	Grade separated crossing	At US 41
Cold Storage Warehouse	Capacity Improvement	Port
Intermodal Container and Cargo Transfer Yard	Phase I	Port
Rail to Dockside Capital Improvements	Intersection Improvement	Port
North Dock Street and Piney Point Road	Intersection Improvement	At US 41
I-75 Connector	PD&E	US 41 to I-75
Berth 9 Rehab and Construction	Port Improvement	Port



### 6.3 Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport Master Plan

Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (SRQ) is a public airport with two runways, a commercial service terminal, three fixed base operators (FBOs), and hosts tenants including restaurants and support services for commercial airlines and passengers. FDOT estimates that SRQ contributes over \$1.3 billion to the state economy each year through on-airport spending and visitor spending<sup>3</sup>.

Existing and projected enplanements were estimated as part of the Airport Master Plan Update. As shown in **Figure 6-3**, steady growth at a rate of 1.7 percent is forecasted through 2039. This growth will help to continue to drive the tourism industry in the region.

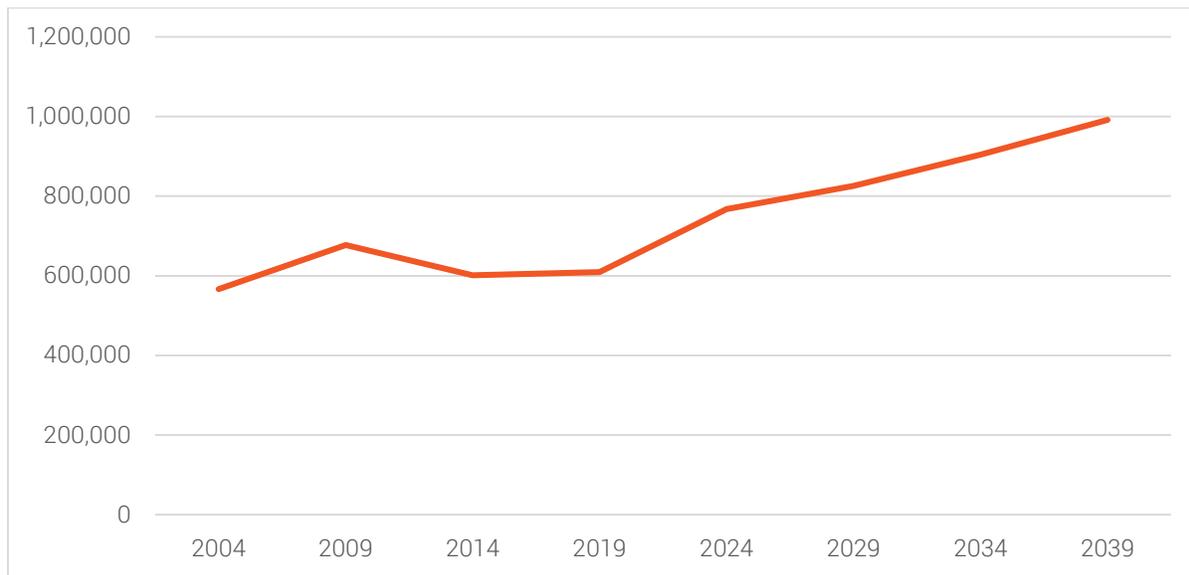


Figure 6-3: Market Share of Enplanements Forecast

SRQ does not currently accommodate any scheduled cargo carriers, though approximately 200,000 pounds of cargo moves through the airport as “belly freight” (onboard passenger aircraft) on an annual basis. According to the Forecasts of Aviation Activity master plan document, state-wide growth of air cargo is expected to be approximately 2.5 percent annually. However, because SRQ does not currently accommodate scheduled cargo carriers and does not plan to in the near-term, a 1.5 percent annual increase is expected instead.

Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport is an important component of the largest employment industry in the region. Accordingly, the LRTP process should promote safe and convenient connections to and from the airport for visitors to and residents of the region.

<sup>3</sup> March 2019 Florida Statewide Economic Impact Study, SRQ Summary Report. Accessed at: <https://www.fdot.gov/aviation/economicimpact.shtm>