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Four teams win right to bid on major I-595 project

\$1.5 billion undertaking is on track to begin in 2009

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Four teams will compete for one of the most lucrative construction projects in Broward County history — rebuilding a major stretch of Interstate 595 with reversible express lanes.

The Florida Department of Transportation on Monday announced that four teams will be invited to bid on the \$1.5 billion project.

The four teams received the highest scores out of six that submitted qualifications. State officials initially talked about choosing the top three, but decided to include a fourth when less than a point separated the scores for the third- and fourth-ranked teams.

The teams include some of the largest road construction, financial and toll-road management companies in the world. They are Express Access Team; ACS Dragados–Macquarie Partnership; I-595 Development Partners; and Direct Connect Partners.

A full list of the teams and the firms heading up their design, construction, finance, operations and management divisions is available on www.i-595.com.

"All of the teams that submitted qualifications were exceptional and are known internationally," said Jim Wolfe, secretary of the DOT's District 4 office that covers Broward. "We're going to get some innovative proposals."

The department will open the bidding process Monday. Bids are due in May and a winning team could be chosen in July.

That puts construction on track to begin in early 2009 and be completed in 2014.

The winning team will be responsible for designing, building and financing the project as well as operating and maintaining I-595 for 35 years, starting in 2009 and running until 2044.

Plans call for reversible express lanes in I-595's median between State Road 7 and Interstate 75 that will charge variable tolls depending on congestion. The regular lanes will remain free of charge to drivers.

The state will collect the tolls and set the toll rates. In exchange for financing the project upfront, the state will pay the contractor a lump sum, and then annual payments over 35 years.

The project also calls for additional lanes to be built between exits, and entrance and exit ramps will be moved to new locations to eliminate the merging and weaving problems that currently exist. The turnpike interchange, with a history of high-profile wrecks, will be overhauled and the missing link of State Road 84 between Davie Road and State Road 7 will be built.

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