



## MEETING SUMMARY

Date: August 10, 2006 - 9:00 AM  
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study  
Project Advisory Group Meeting No. 2

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Bill Walsh, the FDOT Project Manager, began the meeting with some welcoming and introductory statements. He mentioned that the project traffic report has been submitted to FDOT which will enable the study team to finalize the safety study. In addition, alternative roadway widening typical sections and alignments have been developed and were presented at the recent Public Meetings. These graphics from the Public Workshops are on display at today's PAG meeting.

Next, Alex Hull, the consultant Project Manager, gave a presentation which included the information that was presented at the recent Public Workshops. During and following the presentation, there was open discussion.

The presentation included discussion of the current FDOT Work Program funding for SR 40, a discussion of the traffic projections and safety concerns, hurricane evacuation and the preliminary widening alternatives that were presented at the Public Workshops.

The results of the traffic analysis indicate that there is a need to widen SR 40 to four lanes from Silver Springs to 183<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. In addition, intersection improvements are needed at SR 19 and US 17. For analysis purposes, the section from Silver Springs to 183<sup>rd</sup> Avenue was divided into three segments. Segment 1 is from Silver Springs to the Ocklawaha River, Segment 2 is from the Ocklawaha River to the Lynne area and Segment 3 is from the Lynne area to 183<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Alex explained the alternative typical sections and alignments that have been developed for each segment and that these are initial alternatives and others will be considered.

### Segment 1

The existing RW through this segment is 200 feet wide. Suburban and rural typical sections with a multi-use and equestrian trail along the south side were presented.

The suburban typical section includes a mountable curb along the median and a question was raised as to whether the curb is required. The study team is investigating this issue.

Other issues discussed included the gas line along the north side of the road, the possibility of using roadside swales for retention and the possibility of burying the large power line that is being planned along the south side of SR 40 for aesthetic reasons. It was pointed out that burying a high-voltage transmission line like the one that is planned requires sophisticated technology and is cost prohibitive.

### Segments 2 and 3

The existing RW through Segments 2 and 3 varies between 100 feet and 132 feet in width. Urban, suburban and rural typical sections were considered in Segments 2 and 3. Input from the Office of Greenways and Trails included a request for a multi-use trail along any section of SR 40

that is improved. These new typical sections will be developed and the incremental impacts and costs for including the trail will be determined.

There was discussion on the speed limits along SR 40 and whether the road should support higher speeds, because that is what people do now, or whether lower speeds should be encouraged for the sake of safety and wildlife issues. Bill Walsh indicated that FDOT conducted a speed study and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds, which is what the posted speed limit is typically based on, is 68 mph west of SR 19 and 64 mph east of SR 19.

There was input suggesting the use of traffic calming features, such as traffic circles, to convey the sense that SR 40 is not a high-speed road.

A question was raised about what is being considered for the Florida Trail crossings. Alex indicated that the study team will be addressing this issue and that one of the trail crossing locations coincides with the potential location of a wildlife crossing structure.

There was more discussion on the alternative typical sections and Alex reiterated that the study team needs to consider all feasible alternatives as part of the alternatives evaluation process under NEPA.

Next, the bridge over the Ocklawaha River was discussed. Alex indicated that the substructure of the bridge is in good condition, but that the deck is substandard in width and the shoulders/traffic barrier railings don't meet current roadway design standards. There was discussion on whether the new bridge should maintain the same vertical clearance as the existing structure, whether the existing columns should be cut-down so that the new bridge is at a lower elevation or building a new parallel bridge at a lower elevation than the existing bridge. The desirability of maintaining the existing bridge opening was discussed due to its significance in providing wildlife habitat connectivity. There were several ideas for how a trail would cross the river including options to have the trail use the bridge and building a completely separate trail bridge. Alex indicated that the study team will be looking at numerous height, configuration and alignment alternatives for this bridge and trail crossing.

The presentation continued with a discussion of the studies that are currently being conducted. These include wetlands, species, air, noise, cultural resources, geotechnical, contamination screening and others.

Tom Roberts briefly described the ongoing specific species studies that have been and are being conducted which led to a discussion of wildlife crossings. A comment was made to consider fencing along SR 40 along the entire alignment to keep animals off of the road. Alex explained that there are forest management issues such as forest access and prescribed burns that make that alternative undesirable. Another comment was made to consider fencing in areas where publicly owned lands are located on both sides of the road because development will preclude the installation of fencing in other areas. Alex indicated that the study team is working with the environmental agencies and representatives of the State and national forest regarding wildlife crossings and fencing issues.

Alex concluded the presentation by stating that the study team will continue to evaluate alternatives and will have that information available at the next series of Public Workshops scheduled for the Spring of 2007. However, current information will be shared with the PAG at subsequent meetings, as it is developed. The total project schedule is 3 years in length, but it is anticipated that the project can be completed sooner.

Following the presentation, there was more open discussion.

The issue of burying the power lines in Segment 1 was again brought up. Alex indicated that the study team will ask the City of Ocala about the possibility of burying the power lines and also where the power lines go south of CR 314.

The issue of discouraging truck traffic from SR 40 was raised. Charles Lee indicated that many tractor-trailer trucks use I-95 to SR 40 to I-75 to avoid tolls on the Turnpike and to avoid the weigh station on I-75. He recommended that truck restrictions should be considered. Howard Newman, Project Manager for the SIS Reevaluation Study, indicated that a review of truck traffic on SR 40 will be part of the SIS Reevaluation Study and that the preliminary findings will be presented at the next PAG meeting scheduled for November 2006.

Senator Evelyn Lynn expressed her interest in the SR 40 improvements and stated that there needs to be a balance between safety and environmental concerns. It is important to protect the habitat and scenic nature of the corridor, while understanding that it is an evacuation route. Everyone must understand that the area will continue to develop and traffic will continue to increase.

Jim Stivender with Lake County, suggested that since it appears that no widening will be done on SR 40 east of 183<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, that the money that would have been used for that purpose be spent to improve intersections in other areas such as SR 19 and US 17. He supports a flyover at SR 19 and the proximity of the railroad tracks at the US 17 intersection is a safety concern. Bill Walsh indicated that intersection improvements are planned at SR 19 and that US 17 will be realigned at SR 40 to get more separation between the intersection and the railroad tracks as part of the US 17 widening project.

Keith Schue discussed the Wekiva Parkway project and how there will be an extended length (2-3 miles in length) of elevated structure so that habitat connectivity is maintained. The area of the Wekiva Springs State Park that is of concern is roughly the same size as the portion of the Ocala National Forest south of the Forest Corners area. He feels that similar lengths of elevated structures needs to be considered for the SR 40 project. Charles Lee agreed and noted that the use of elevated sections of roadway eliminates the need for fencing.

There was discussion of the funding for future phases for improving SR 40.

Glenn Burns gave a brief overview of the SR 40 Scenic Byway work and indicated that the application was approved at the State level. The second phase, designation, is beginning. This phase includes the development of the corridor management plan and input is being sought from all stakeholders. Meetings for the Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group are posted on the project's web site ([www.sr40.com](http://www.sr40.com)).

There was discussion regarding controlled burns in the forest and that there is the potential that four-laning SR 40 will affect how the burns can be done. Bob Lamonte with the Silver River State Park indicated that he has been responsible for burns in the Park for 20 years and the number of lanes on the roads has not factored in to how he does burns. The weather and winds are what he considers.

Alex then concluded the meeting by reviewing the upcoming PAG subcommittee meeting dates and times. The meeting concluded at 11:15 am.

*Note: The above reflects the writer understands of the contents of the meeting. If any misinterpretations or inaccuracies are included, please contact **David Dangel (407) 971-8850** as soon as possible for resolution and revisions if necessary.*