

## MEETING SUMMARY



Date: March 7, 2007 - 9:00 AM  
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study  
Project Advisory Group Meeting No. 4

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Bill Walsh, the FDOT Project Manager, opened the meeting with some welcoming and introductory statements. He gave a brief overview of the project schedule and stated that by the next PAG meeting there should be right of way cost estimates

The meeting was turned over to Alex Hull, the consultant Project Manager. Alex gave a snapshot of where the project stands to date. He explained that the wildlife crossings are still in the evaluation process. Alex mentioned that there are two main issues that need additional evaluation. These issues involve where and how to widen as well as how to mitigate.

Next, Alex discussed the FDOT 5 Year Work Program. He explained that the funding for design in the first segment has been moved from 2010 to 2012. He mentioned that nothing else is funded, which includes the design of segments 2 and 3, right of way acquisition and construction. Alex added that although nothing is funded now, as things progress, funding might become available. He also discussed the status of the Class of Action. Alex explained that they are moving forward with the Environmental Assessment and that the Florida Highway Administration and the United States Forest Service will make a determination on whether the project is a FONSI or an EIS.

Alex then gave a build segment description. He stated that the official limits of the build section are from Silver Springs to SE 183<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. In addition, he went over the proposed safety improvements. These improvements include auditory and vibratory pavement markings from 183<sup>rd</sup> Ave to US 17. He also mentioned that there are proposed intersection improvements at SR 19 and US 17 as well as 3 lane improvements in Astor in Volusia County.

Next, the group discussed the proposed widening alternatives. Alex gave an explanation of each of the proposed typical sections. He stated that the rural roadway and the suburban roadway are the typical sections that will be used on the project. He explained the difference between the two alternatives. Alex also explained the pavement savings options that will result in a significant cost savings if used.

Alex discussed the alignment alternatives. Alex mentioned that in segments 2 and 3 it seems as though the south side of right of way will be used. He added that they would be looking at optimized alternatives as the next step. He stated that there is currently construction being done on the SR 19 intersection. Moreover, he discussed the SR 19 and SR 15 intersection. Alex explained that they might go back to the existing alignment on US 17 at the SR 40 intersection.

Monso Tatum, with the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway and the Pioneer Settlement in Barberville, asked if there are any improvements planned west of CR 3. Alex stated that he does not anticipate that there will be any improvements in that area.

Alex next directed the group's focus on the display boards that feature the proposed pond sites. He went over each of the proposed locations and explained that there are 3 alternatives per basin. He mentioned that coordination with landowners and FDOT on the ponds would be the key to nailing down the size, shape and locations. Alex asked Tony Miller with the SJRWMD about obtaining a permit to allow for sheet flow into the forest in order to eliminate some of the ponds. Tony confirmed that if an easement is granted by USFS a permit can be given to allow sheet flow. He further explained that sheet flow would only work if the land is upland type A soils. Alex stated that he would set up a meeting with Tony and other representatives from SJRWMD in order to talk more about the possibility of using sheet flow in portions of the project.

Keith Schue of the Nature Conservancy asked if there would be ponds in the areas outside of the proposed build section. Alex stated that they are still in the evaluation process and unsure if there will be a 3-lane widening in the Astor area and are unsure as to whether or not there will be ponds in those areas. He added that for the wildlife crossings they would probably use linear swales.

Next, Alex discussed the Ocklawaha Bridge alternatives. Monso asked where the trail would go. Alex pointed out the south side of the bridge on the graphic in the presentation. He further explained that the trail is not definite and that they need to evaluate it further. Keith asked if it was possible to build something less extensive for the trail such as hanging the trail to the side. Monso asked if the trail could go under the bridge instead of next to it. Paul Heeg with RS&H, the consultant who is working on the bridge, stated that he would talk to the structural engineer, Ben Lehr to see if either of the ideas are possibilities. Alex gave an overview of the Alternatives Cost Matrix for the bridge alternatives and mentioned that they are continuing to refine and move forward with a final recommendation. Keith asked if the additional structure would be on the north or south side of the current bridge. Alex stated south.

The project's environmental impacts and issues were the next topics of discussion. Alex explained the wildlife crossings analysis process. He stated that a group of biologists was formed from several state and federal regulatory agencies in order to evaluate potential locations. He mentioned that Sandy Jacobson, a national expert in wildlife crossings, has been hired by USFS to provide knowledge and new ideas to the project. Alex stated that the next Wildlife Crossings meeting is on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and will be posted on the SR 40 PD&E Study project website.

Alex then gave an overview of the first draft of proposed wildlife crossings. He stated that there is an issue that has been discussed amongst the Wildlife Crossings Committee that involves deciding what is being mitigated for and does the widening on the west affect the east end. He explained that some Wildlife Crossings Committee members argue that due to indirect cumulative impacts, mitigation is justified on the east end of the project. He added that other members do not agree that widening on the west justifies mitigation past the area of action. Keith stated that a strong case could be made for connectivity in the east end because it will need to be widened in the future. He added that most of the energy should be focused on the areas that are being widened. He mentioned that unless fencing will be consistent throughout the project limits, wildlife crossing features in the middle of the forest will not work. He stated that the focus should be on long-term connectivity and getting the most bang for the buck. He pointed out area F on the map as the location that should receive the most attention.

Next, the group discussed the wildlife crossing issues and locations. Sam a local property owner asked about the hydrological connection on each side at Church Lake. Keith mentioned that he thinks location E should still be considered because it could provide a good connection. He stated that location D might not be a good location because there is only a small piece of a public land on the south side of that area.

Alex mentioned that different types of structures that are species specific to the target species are being considered as well. Keith stated that more recent examples of transportation projects that are innovative, such as Wekiva Parkway and Everglades Skyway, should be considered and looked at.

Tony asked if the structures outside of the widening area are due to safety. Alex explained that they are for safety as well as secondary cumulative impacts. Tony asked what was being done for the high amount of bear kills in the SR 19 area. Alex pointed out that the number of kills has been collected over a long period of time and that the kills are not impacting the bear population. Jim Thorsen, consultant to USFS asked the same question as Tony. He mentioned that traffic slowing at the signal is one reason for the amount of bear kills and that it is a main crossing for bears due to the Juniper Springs Wildlife area. He stated that a crossing in that area should be considered. Keith stated that it is important to address the overall ecosystem connectivity and not just the road kill hot spots.

Alex stated to the group that not everyone is going to be happy with the final wildlife crossing recommendations; however they are doing their best to not rush through the process and gain as much information and input as possible in order to make a decision that everyone can live with.

Next Alex discussed the research that is being funded by the FDOT and the USFS to look at alternative and innovative fencing options. Keith raised concern that whatever is implemented in the beginning will not have an opportunity to be changed if needed. Brett Paben with WildLaw stated that crossings in the middle of the forest might be beneficial because they could provide relief for the bears in other areas. Keith mentioned that without proper fencing, the crossings in the middle of the forest would be unsuccessful. Bob Gleason of the FDOT stated that there are constraints and that they have to use the best science available at the time to make a recommendation. Keith stated that the same constraints exist on other projects. Patti Griffiths, a local resident, stated that she is for the trail. She added that it is important to keep an open mind on fencing due to the rapid change and advancement in technology.

Tony asked about the bear movement throughout the project limits. Jim stated that the bears cross at concentrated points due to habitat. Steve Tonjes, Environmental Scientist with the FDOT, mentioned that the FDOT has been granted funding for 3 years to do some preliminary research to supplement the PD&E Study. He further mentioned that the research is an evolving process and that it will be looked at and reevaluated again before the design phase of the project.

Mickey Thomason with the FDEP gave an update on the Monster Pipe. He explained that USGS expressed concern due to potential impacts to Silver Springs and DEP has asked Marion County to look at alternative sites.

Next, Alex gave an update on Fire/Fuel Management. He stated that there is a committee of land managers and they have come to an agreement to develop an MOU that would outline the actions and responsibilities for coordination between agencies.

Glenn Burns of Burns Consulting gave an update on the Scenic Byway designation. He mentioned that they are still in the process of applying for designation. Moreover, he stated that there are loop and spur roads off of SR 40 that will be included in the designation.

Alex briefly discussed the status of Access Management and the plan for media openings. He mentioned that Access Management will primarily concern the property owners.

Brett asked what the wildlife crossings cost includes. David Dangel with Inwood Consulting Engineers, Inc. explained that the cost includes the structure plus the fill. He added that the costs are not all inclusive, do not include maintenance of traffic and may be low.

Monso requested renderings of the crossings from a bear's eye view.

Alex thanked the group for attending the meeting. He mentioned that the next PAG meeting will be on May 2, 2007 and that everyone on the mailing list will be notified of the meeting by e-mail and that it will also be posted on the project website.

Brett stated that Guy Marwick needs a hard copy of the notification because he does not use e-mail. Alex confirmed that a hard copy will be mailed to him.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 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.*