



## MEETING SUMMARY

Date: June 13, 2007 - 9:00 AM  
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study  
Project Advisory Group - Subcommittee Meeting No. 3

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Meeting Handouts: Meeting Agenda, PowerPoint Presentation slides, Draft of Project Connectivity Statement, Area Specific Wildlife Crossings Objectives

Bill Walsh, the Project Manager with FDOT, began the meeting with some welcoming and introductory statements. He indicated that they are close to having the final cost estimates on the wildlife crossings. He stated that they would e-mail the cost estimates out by the end of the week. In addition, Bill mentioned that the PAG that is scheduled for July 4, 2007 has been canceled.

Next, David Dangel, the consultant Assistant Project Manager, gave an overview of the agenda. The group went around the room and introduced themselves.

David gave an explanation of the roadway alternatives that looked to be the best options at this point in the analysis in the three build segments. He explained that options that look to save the existing roadway pavement looks promising in segments two and three. He stated that cost estimates have been done both with and without a trail to show the cost differential. David explained that they are working to weed out the alternatives before the Alternatives Public Meeting. He indicated that the issue of roadway access management will be presented at the upcoming public workshop and will likely receive comments from the public.

Keith Schue, with the Nature Conservancy, asked why they do not use the middle of the existing road and split the additional right of way on both sides. David explained that the cost of right of way would be higher with doubling the number of parcels and legal fees when compared to widening to one side or the other.

Keith asked if FDOT has committed to building the trail. David stated that the trail is not committed to at this time. Bill mentioned that at the last Steering Committee meeting, Greg Slay, with Marion/Ocala TPO, indicated that the trail makes the most sense in the first segment of the build section. Keith commented that a trail in segment one makes sense, but they may want to consider the area around neighborhoods.

Bill mentioned that the FDOT recently kicked off the Sharpes Ferry Bridge Study. He indicated that they will be looking for a way to reuse the old bridge and that they may be able to use it for the trail around the Ocklawaha Bridge.

Patti Griffiths, a local resident, mentioned that the area on the east side of the bridge may be good for a trail because it could provide a connection to the Florida Trail. She commented that they may be able to use enhancement funds to help pay for the trail. Bill stated that the Marion/Ocala TPO would need to apply for the enhancement funds. David added that enhancement funds cannot be used to fund any part of a capacity improvement project.

Keith commented that there may be different types of users. He stated that commuters may want a trail in the rural areas. Dennis Chesser, with the Marion County Sheriff's Department, indicated that there is very little foot traffic in the rural areas. Bill mentioned that Greg suggested a 5 foot sidewalk in the residential areas.

Keith asked how the trail would interface with the wildlife crossing structures. Bill stated that he was unsure and that a detailed analysis has not been done yet. He indicated that they would keep the trail within the right of way and that the trails would go over top of the crossings.

Next David discussed the Pond Analysis. He explained that they have already met with USFS and that a meeting with SJRWMD is scheduled for June 19<sup>th</sup>. David mentioned that they will talk with SJRWMD about the possibility of using sheet flow where possible in order to reduce the amount of ponds.

Kathy Cantwell, with Sierra Club, expressed concern for the possibility of putting pollutants in the land by using sheet flow. She suggested that they look at the history of the hydrology before developing a plan. Keith commented that they need to look at the open vegetation that is there now in order to avoid a die off of vegetation. David stated that they first are working to see if the concept is feasible and after that will develop a plan.

Ben Lehr, with RS&H, next discussed the status of the Ocklawaha River Bridge. He explained the existing condition assessment and indicated that they are finding that using the existing bridge is not a viable alternative. He explained the difference between the high and low profile alternatives. Ben gave a brief overview of the bridge alternatives. He explained that they are also looking at the possibility of shortening the bridge.

Next Ben discussed the alternatives cost matrix. He stated that there is a 3 million dollar difference in putting the trail on the ground on a separate crossing structure versus having it as part of the proposed bridge. He explained that a trail on the ground would impede wildlife connectivity.

Keith asked about the wetland impacts associated with the trail. Ben stated that they would need to investigate it further. Paul Heeg, with RS&H stated that there would be wetland and flood plain impacts that would need mitigation for the added fill in the floodplain.

Keith suggested that the road that accesses Ray Wayside Park near the bridge be used as part of the trail.

Kathy suggested that the existing bridge be used for a trail.

Keith stated that alternative 3b would take more habitat. He suggested that they integrate a trail with the road that is already there.

Next the group discussed the fill associated with the bridge. Keith asked about the possibility of removing the fill in the floodplain on the east end of the Ocklawaha Bridge in order to open the corridor for wildlife. Mickey Thomason, with FDEP Greenways and Trails, commented that the new bridge may be able to be built on piles in the floodplain. Ben stated that it would be more expensive, but they would investigate the idea further.

Kathy requested a field trip to the bridge and wildlife crossing sites in order to get a better idea of what the group is discussing. It was mentioned that there have been field trips in the past to look at the various wildlife crossing sites. Bill stated that they will look into setting a field visit if there is enough interest from the PAG.

Keith asked if the footprint of the bridge (wetland and floodplain impacts) could be reduced if the trail was not part of the bridge and the substructure needs could be reduced. Ben indicated that this reduction in bridge deck would not significantly reduce the substructure needs because wind loading would play a bigger role in the substructure needs. Paul added that the structure would need to be strong enough to support an inspection vehicle. Mickey added that the structure may need to be used in an emergency situation.

Tony Miller, with SJRWMD, mentioned the pedestrian bridges in Seminole County, along I-4. He stated that they do not appear strong enough to hold emergency vehicles and asked why the trail on SR 40 would be different. Frank Van Pelt, with Marion County Public Works, stated that the bridges in Seminole County can support emergency vehicles if needed.

Keith asked if alternative 2Rb is the only one where the shortening of the bridge is being considered. He asked what the differential in length is. Ben stated that the bridge would be reduced 548 feet. He explained that the shorter bridge concept goes along with wildlife crossing structures. David mentioned that the shorter bridge concept would involve construction in the floodplain and would require no rise certification and further mitigation for the floodplain and wetland impacts.

Keith stated that there is a need for a good distribution of crossings in order to achieve overall permeability and that the Nature Conservancy would support the idea of using the shorter bridge concept with additional crossings.

Tony asked how far the vegetation extends around the bridge. Ben stated that the vegetation is 40 feet from the existing piers. He stated that a fully supported trail on the bridge seems like the best option. He expressed concern for the embankment on the wetlands area.

Tony commented that it would be good to make recommendations on the types of structures to be used during the PD&E process because to ensure that environmental impacts are determined.

Keith stated that they need to design something with less pilings to minimize wetland impacts.

Tony asked for a cost comparison with the Heathrow trail. Frank indicated that the bridge was a cable suspension, hybrid bridge and was 33% more expensive than a standard structure.

Ben stated that they will take another look at the alternative and refine it based on the input.

Ben discussed top-down construction which is used to minimize construction impacts and stated that it can be done however it is a long and expensive process.

Frank commented that the impact of construction is often not considered. Ben added that if the trail is built as part of the bridge, this extra width can be used during construction for maintenance of traffic.

Next, David discussed the issue of wildlife crossings. He explained the methodology, history, wildlife committee and meeting schedule. He stated that they are looking to hold another Wildlife Crossings Committee meeting on July 16, 2007.

David gave an overview of the wildlife crossings approach. He explained that they have identified objectives and the alternatives to meet the objectives. He referred the group to the handout of the draft of the project connectivity statement and the draft of the area specific wildlife crossing objectives. David asked the group to take a look and make comments.

Tony commented that there could be a provision that if the lands to the west of CR 315 are acquired a crossing will be considered. David stated that they are looking at that idea.

Keith asked if the general cost of a modest underpass is around \$850,000 and a small culvert is \$160,000. David stated that the cost estimates are still being revised, but that those numbers are generally in the ballpark.

Keith suggested that they add four additional crossings in area A. He suggested that the crossings be a combination of larger structures and smaller culverts.

David indicated that the group can go to the SR 40 PD&E Study website to view all of the alternatives. He stated that the alternatives are in draft form and are subject to change.

Tony commented that the list of crossings should be prioritized with a list of potential crossings that could be implemented later on if other funding becomes available. He stated that he doesn't want the work that has been done on culverts to be thrown away.

There was a group discussion on the fertilizer used on the side of the road and the deer's attraction to it. Keith asked if the fertilizer is needed as often or as much as it is used now. Frank commented that the FDOT's funds are limited and that they are not doing more than they need to. Keith asked if there is any other native vegetation that could be used to achieve the same thing. George Borchik, with FDOT, stated that grass is the standard that is used. Kathy asked what type of fertilizer is used. George stated that he was unsure, but that it is the standard that is used across the state.

David mentioned Rick Lint's comment at the last Steering Committee meeting suggesting that it would be good to identify the outside funding sources potentially available for crossings outside of the build area.

Keith asked about the status of the fencing research proposed by Sandy Jacobson.

Tony commented that they need to assess the hydrologic connections. He mentioned that the Virginia FDOT found a typical section that worked well with wetlands. He suggested that they acquire information on it.

Next, David led a group discussion on the other issues on the agenda. He gave the group an update on Fire and Fuel Management. David stated that a second draft of the MOU has been prepared. He explained that they will hold an agency meeting once the MOU is approved.

Glenn Burns, consultant for Scenic Byway designation, gave an update. He stated that the application for state designation will go out in October and then after that they will go for national designation.

Vicki Sharpe gave an update on additional environmental research and studies. She explained that they received additional funding for another year to study and monitor ten wildlife crossings in the study. She stated that she is unsure of the status on the San Dimas fence research. David stated that they will get more information.

Next, Mickey gave a Monster Pipe update. He mentioned that an internal meeting needs to be scheduled with FDEP in Tallahassee.

David went over the schedule of upcoming events. This included the date of July 16<sup>th</sup> for the next Wildlife Crossings Committee meeting.

Keith asked if area K, around the Lake George State Forest, is still being considered. He expressed concern for the utility of bear crossings outside the build area in the two lane portion of the middle of the forest. Mickey stated that bears cross everywhere and that they are looking at areas where bears are being hit by cars. Keith indicated that area K should have a higher priority than the crossings in the middle of the forest. Ben stated that they are working to reduce bear mortality and human mortality. Keith commented that he does not understand why the crossings are necessary in the middle of the forest.

Tony stated that at the end of the PD&E Study it would be good to have a list of potential crossings for future funding. He suggested that it would be good to see the small culvert recommendations on the list. David indicated that they are planning on doing that. Bill added that the Preliminary Engineering Report will have a list of recommended crossings and that the final Engineering Report will show the preferred crossings.

Tony stated that it would be good to reference the wildlife crossing locations by mile markers and/or latitude and longitude.

David thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11:55 pm.

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