

MEETING SUMMARY



Date: September 12, 2007 - 9:00 AM
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study
Project Advisory Group Meeting No. 6

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Bill Walsh, the FDOT Project Manager, opened the meeting with some welcoming and introductory statements. He introduced Leslie McCarthy, a representative from the Federal Highway Administration. Next, Bill gave an explanation of the value engineering process. He stated that the week long engineering evaluation of the project will be from October 22nd to October 26th.

Guy Marwick, with the Smart Growth Coalition, asked if the value engineering process will derail the work that has already been done. Bill explained that the people who are involved in the value engineering process have no decision making authority. He stated that they will be looking at the project from an engineering perspective to see where dollars can be saved. He stated that FDOT representatives who have been involved in the project will be available to interface with the group and answer any questions that they may have.

Leslie stated that she would like to send someone from Florida Highway Administration. She added that the process involves the group looking at ways to save money from an engineering perspective and that FDOT does not have to do what is suggested.

Guy expressed concern that the group in the value engineering will not know all of the justifications for why things are being done.

Patti Griffiths, a local resident, asked if the value engineering meetings are open to the public. Bill said they will not be open to the public because no decisions are being made in the meetings. He added that the final report will be made available to the public.

Keith Schue, with the Nature Conservancy, concurred with Guy's concern with the value engineering impacting and changing the work that has already been done.

The meeting was turned over to Alex Hull, the consultant Project Manager. Alex gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

Next, Alex discussed the alignment alternatives for each segment. The multi-use trail was discussed in Segment 1. He asked Frank Van Pelt, with Marion County, on the status of the County's involvement in putting a trail in. Frank stated that they would like to be involved but do not have the funding to support it. Greg Slay, with the Ocala/Marion TPO stated that the City of Ocala may have some interest in giving money to support the trail. Mickey Thomason, with Greenways and Trails, stated that the Ocala Electric Authority may also have interest in the trail. Alex stated that in Segment 2 the least cost alternative

appears to be the optimized rural typical section. In addition, he indicated that the rural/urban optimized typical section seems to be the least cost alternative in Segment 3.

Next, Alex discussed the pond alternatives. He explained that a letter has been sent to St. John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD) to get confirmation that water can be discharged into the uplands.

The group discussed the Ocklawaha River Bridge. Alex gave an overview of the alternatives. He indicated that the bridge alternatives have been screened down to two alternatives. There was a group discussion on the possibility of keeping the old bridge. Ben Lehr, a structural engineer with RS&H, stated that building two new spans seems to be the best alternative. Mickey mentioned that two new spans are being used in another project because the cost savings in keeping the old bridge does not offset the life of the old bridge.

Patti asked if the 10 ft shoulders on the new bridge will be large enough to accommodate trail walkers. Alex stated that the shoulders will provide enough room for pedestrians.

Keith asked if the area that is walled off at the east end of the bridge is the same as the current bridge. Alex stated that the span underneath the bridge is the same as the current bridge.

Mickey requested information on the cost savings of discharging water into the uplands versus using ponds.

Alex gave an overview of the Ocklawaha River Bridge alternatives cost matrix.

Patti asked if the curve coming on and off of the bridge will be the same on the new bridge. Ben stated that the dip will be reduced and will increase safety.

Keith asked if there will be a change in the width of the road on the bridge. Alex stated the alignment will be the same.

Guy mentioned that the Colby Woods campground is expanding and will need a turn lane for access and safety. Alex stated that there will be a turn lane with a full median opening. Patti mentioned that the name of the Colby Woods RV Park has been changed to Wilderness RV Park Estates.

Tony asked about the realignment of Wayside Park. Ben stated that it will be safer.

Keith asked about the bicycle/pedestrian path along the Ocklawaha River Bridge. Alex explained that the trail will end at Wayside Park. Mickey asked for the amount of cost savings involved in not putting a trail in east of the park. Alex indicated that it would be approximately 10 million dollars to build the trail. Keith asked if there is financial support for the trail west of the park. Alex stated that there was support previously expressed by Ocala. He will follow up with the City to confirm. Greg added that the trail is in the Ocala/Marion BPAC plan.

Next, Alex discussed the status of the wildlife crossings. He stated that there is nothing new to report since the Alternatives Public Workshop. He gave a brief overview of the approach. He stated that there haven't been any changes to the connectivity statement or area objectives.

Alex stated that he met with Sandy Jacobson and Carrie Sekerak (check spelling), with USFS, and came out of the meeting with a suggestion to create a matrix of the key species and the alternatives to use as a tool to further screen down the band of alternatives for each area.

Alex stated that they have received a letter from the Nature Conservancy as well as a letter of concurrence from the Audubon Society on a specific recommendation for what should be done with the crossings. Alex stated that he would like to set up a meeting with the Nature Conservancy before the next Wildlife Crossings committee meeting in order to discuss the letter.

Keith asked about the schedule of the project and the timing of the phases of each of the three segments. Alex gave an overview of the process. He explained that ongoing research will be done before the first phase of design in segment 1. He stated that he anticipates that a formal reevaluation will need to be done before the design on all three segments. Steve suggested that they put in a commitment to have a public involvement effort in the reevaluation phase.

Guy mentioned that water from Ocklawaha River may be taken through a pipeline north of SR 40. Alex stated that a pipeline can be put below the swale and that it is not a big issue.

Alex showed the group the range of wildlife crossing costs for each of the areas. Bill mentioned that Area C is the Ocklawaha River Bridge.

Keith stated that the focus should be on the crossings in the build area. He stated that the only other areas that should be looked at are the ones that have clear constraints, such as outside of Mill Dam and the Astor and Astor Park Area. Alex stated that they can prioritize the crossings and put the information in the final report.

Keith commented that he does not see the reasoning or science behind the crossings in the middle of the forest. He stated that what is needed for a 4 lane configuration is different than a 2 lane roadway and that the value of the crossings in the two lane section will be diminished.

Alex explained that the crossings outside of the build area will not be funded by this project, but are there to be approved and ready for future funding. He stated that USFS has asked them to include two pedestrian and ATV crossings in the environmental document in order to have them approved and ready for future funding.

Next, the group discussed the Fire and Fuel Management meeting that is scheduled for October 17th. Alex stated that the third draft of the MOU has been prepared and will be discussed at the meeting. He explained that the MOU will provide signs for prescribed burns and smoke emergencies, a chain of command for smoke management, an agreement on FDOT to work with Florida Highway Patrol and detour maps.

Keith asked what happens if they find that there is a significant impact. Alex explained that they will have to go to an EIS and extend the project.

Patti stated that she and Guy are interested in talking to Marion County about funding the trail west of the Ocklawaha River Bridge.

Leslie stated that she will talk with the environmental specialist with the Federal Highway Administration to find out additional information on how to handle the crossings outside of the build area.

Keith stated that he questions the effectiveness of crossing enhancements in the no build section.

Lastly, Alex gave an overview of the schedule of upcoming events. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

*Note: The above reflects the writer understands 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.*