

MEETING SUMMARY



Date: July 16, 2008 - 9:00 AM
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study
Project Advisory Group Meeting No. 8

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Bill Walsh, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Project Manager, opened the meeting with some welcoming and introductory statements. He gave an overview of the project schedule. He explained that they reached consensus on the wildlife crossings and are working through 4F issues. He stated that they are working towards an October review date for the Environmental Assessment (EA).

The meeting was turned over to Alex Hull, the consultant Project Manager. The group went around the room and introduced themselves. Alex went over of the meeting agenda.

Next, Alex gave an overview of the project limits and three segments in the build section of the project.

In segment one; the preferred alternative is a rural roadway with or without a trail centered within the existing right-of-way. Alex explained that they are working with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and Marion County in order to negotiate a trail on the north side of the segment.

Next, Alex explained that the preferred alternative in segment two is a rural roadway with pavement savings and an optimized alignment.

In segment three, the preferred alternative is a rural roadway, pavement savings alternative through most of the project. However, in the vicinity of Forest Corners, an urban typical section within the existing right-of-way would be used. Alex explained that there will be sidewalks all the way through segment three.

There was a group discussion on sidewalks. Alex indicated that there will be sidewalks in segment two, along the C.R. 314 intersection to provide connectivity to the commercial and residential areas.

Next Alex showed the group the plans and profiles for each segment. In addition, he gave an overview and description of each of the wildlife crossings proposed in the build section of the project.

Charles Lee, with the Audubon Society, asked if fencing will be combined with the crossings. Alex stated that there will be fencing at the wildlife crossing areas.

Keith Schue, with the Nature Conservancy, asked where the trail fits in. Alex indicated that the trail will not be shown on the plans until negotiations are finalized with the FDEP. He indicated that if the trail is included in the project, it will be located on the north side of

the road. Moreover, the trail would be located on the roadside of the fence. FDEP has offered 10 feet of property to locate the trail.

There was a group discussion on the Ocklawaha River Bridge. Alex explained that proposed alternative includes two new bridges. He indicated that they will provide pedestrian access to the park underneath the bridge.

There was a group discussion on the location of the trails. Keith posed the idea of moving the trails further into the forest. There was a comment that one of the purposes of the trails is for cyclists and commuters and they may not use the trails if they are far into the woods. Alex mentioned that Carrie Sekerak, with USFS, has suggested that it is better to keep the human footprint close to the human footprint. Dennis David, with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), commented that putting the trail further into the forest could present some people management issues.

Charles commented that he is usually in favor of trails being located in the forest for recreational trail users; however, he anticipates that users along S.R. 40 will use the trails as a means to get around. He indicated that the increasing price of fuel will cause people to make lifestyle changes. He asked if anyone at FDOT is researching roadway designs to include a lane for multi-modal transportation. A representative with FDOT Planning stated that he is unsure of what level FDOT is working to study the concept and issues. He stated that it is a good suggestion and will bring it to table for further discussion.

Sam Howard, a local resident and landowner, discussed access to his home near Church Lake. He stated that he prefers to have N.E. 10th Street Road converted to a cul-de-sac. He expressed concern for the difficulty of entering and leaving S.R. 40 when pulling a boat or trailer.

Next, Alex gave an overview of the preferred stormwater pond sites.

There was a group discussion on the Silver River Pollution Control Project, formally known as the Monster Pipe.

Alex indicated that Marion County, FDEP and FDOT have been working together with the St. John's Water Management District (SJWMD) to improve water quality and water quantity control. Alex explained that through working with SJRWMD, they have been able to eliminate many of the ponds by allowing direct runoff to discharge to the surrounding public lands.

There was a group discussion on the pond located next to Ray Wayside Park. There was a question as to what would happen if the pond was eliminated and they allowed the stormwater to discharge into the soil. Alex explained that they cannot use discharge at this location because of the wetlands adjacent to the road.

Charles stated that he does not understand the concept of sacrificing wetlands to save wetlands. Alex indicated that they have explored the option and SJRWMD did not agree with allowing direct runoff in that area. Charles stated that FDOT should apply for a variance. He indicated that the Audubon Society would support it. Alex explained that the proximity of the roadway to the wetlands prohibits runoff. He also explained that SJRWMD has the issue of precedence. He indicated that if they allow runoff to happen in this case, they will have to grant other agencies and businesses the same opportunity. Alex stated that they need to look at the wetland maps and will look into the option further.

Keith asked if they could configure the pond to fit into some of the park land. Charles

asked how much of Wayside Park is used. There was a comment that the park is used to its maximum and the unused land was wetlands.

There was a discussion on the design of the pond. Mickey Thomason, with FDEP, commented that they should look at designing the pond to aesthetically blend in with the habitat. Charles agreed that the ponds should be designed to make them an aesthetic asset to the area.

There was a discussion on the straight pond close to Lake Waldena. Guy Marwick, with the Smart Growth Coalition, expressed concern for the pond affecting the lake. Alex explained that the pond is a floodplain compensation area rather than a water quality treatment pond. Guy stated that it is a poor location due to the sand hill. Alex stated that they will take another look at the area. Guy requested that the pond be aesthetically pleasing if it has to be there. Alex stated that they will take a second look at the pond location.

Steve Tonjes, with FDOT, suggested that they make a commitment in the documentation to design the ponds to be aesthetically pleasing.

There was a group discussion on the ponds. Sam expressed concern for Pond 9D3-1 taking water away from the lake. He indicated that the pond breaches the existing Church Lake creek that feeds into the prairie north of S.R. 40. He stated that it also feeds Lake Charles and possibly the Ocklawaha River. He asked if the pond could be moved to the east. Alex stated that they would look at it.

Alex wrapped up the discussion on the pond sites and mentioned that they will look at the areas that were commented on.

Next, Alex gave an overview of the overall project cost estimate. He indicated that the project is approximately \$200 million. He explained that the bridge cost does not include a pedestrian crossing.

Charles asked if they could leave the two-lane bridge in place and save money. Greg Slay, with the Marion/Ocala TPO, commented that the bridge will eventually need to be replaced due to some functional issues; therefore, the idea is to do it as part of the project rather than defer the issues.

Keith mentioned a concept he suggested at a previous meeting, which was to build one new bridge for two lanes of traffic and use the existing bridge for the other two lanes of traffic. Alex indicated that they approached the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with that concept and they said it would be viable as a short-term solution. The bridge will eventually need to be replaced.

Alex began a discussion on the crossings that are proposed in the no-build section. Alex mentioned that the crossings will not be funded by the project. He explained that the crossings are going into the NEPA document for approval and then the agencies can apply for funding from other sources.

Alex gave an overview of the crossings proposed in each section and the priority level.

There was a discussion on the research being conducted by Dan Smith, with the University of Central Florida. Alex stated that in areas H and I, Remote Animal Detection System (RADS) are being proposed as one of two alternatives in those locations. He explained that RADS is a device that senses movement close to the road and activates

lights to warn motorists. He indicated that RADS have proven to be effective in some areas in the country and have also proven to be ineffective in other area. He explained that Dan will be conducting research to see if they will work along S.R. 40. He mentioned that the second alternatives for H and I include conventional structures.

Keith raised concern for the structure lengths in location K. Alex explained that they went with 8'x20' box culvert structures to keep the cost down and therefore help with funding. He stated that they would include a second alternative in area K to include a 50 ft structure and the agency can decide which alternative they would like to move forward with.

There was discussion on the Juniper Springs trailhead parking.

Alex gave an overview of the status of the FDEP, USFWS and SHPO coordination.

Alex went over the schedule of upcoming events.

Keith requested a copy of the draft Environmental Assessment (EA). Alex stated that he would e-mail Keith a copy of the draft for his comments.

There was a discussion on the turn lanes in Barberville. Alex explained that it could be done as a safety improvement project. Mike Neidhart, with the Volusia County MPO, made a request for a list of the safety improvements.

Keith asked about safety improvements at the intersection of S.R. 40 and C.R. 445 A with the double crossing of roads and line of sight issues. Alex indicated that the area is outside of the project; however, they can identify the area in the report.

Alex thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

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