

MEETING MINUTES



Date: August 1, 2006 - 9:00 AM
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study
Steering Committee Meeting No. 2

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Alex Hull began the meeting by providing an overview of the agenda for the meeting. He stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to start focusing on the two major issues that the study team will be working on which are the wildlife crossing features and the impacts to property owners due to roadway widening right-of-way needs.

Alex then gave a brief presentation which was a condensed version of the presentation given at the two Public Kickoff/Scoping meetings held the previous week. The presentation included an overview of the FDOT work program phases and funding for SR 40, a discussion on the purpose and need for the project and a description of the No Build and Build alternatives that have been developed to date. There was discussion among the group during the presentation.

A question was asked regarding the kind of safety improvements that are being considered. Alex indicated that the safety analysis is not yet complete and the types of improvements will be based on the results of the safety analysis.

Another question was asked related to the type of information required to determine roadway improvements needed for hurricane evacuation. Alex indicated that the study team will be talking with the local and state emergency agencies to discuss this issue. One of the ideas that will be discussed is the addition of wider (10 foot) paved shoulders along SR 40 to serve emergency vehicles, vehicles involved in crashes, etc. during hurricane evacuation. Issues such as contra-flow will also be discussed and whether SR 40 needs to be widened to accommodate this.

A question was raised regarding the results of the SIS analysis for SR 40. Bill Walsh indicated that the SIS analysis is not yet complete. The results of whether SR 40 should remain on the SIS should be available in the next couple of months.

Alex continued with the presentation with an explanation of the potential improvements in Segment 1 (Silver Springs to the Ocklawaha River). The study team is working with the City of Ocala to improve water quality in Silver River related to the monster pipe and also for potential multi-use and equestrian trails along the south side of SR 40. Information from the Silver River State Park indicates that the park managers may be considering an equestrian trail within the park which could replace the need for an equestrian trail along SR 40. Both rural and suburban typical sections are being considered in Segment 1.

Next, Alex discussed the alternative typical sections (urban, suburban and rural) and alternative alignments (north side and south side widening) in Segments 2 and 3 (Ocklawaha River to the Lynne area and the Lynne area to 183rd Avenue). He explained

that the urban typical section has less right-of-way impacts than suburban or rural typical sections, but is more expensive to build. Also, smaller amphibian species that get into the roadway have trouble negotiating the curb and gutter along the outside of the urban typical sections.

Alex briefly discussed the history of the Ocklawaha Bridge and indicated that the existing bridge is structurally sound, but the deck does not meet current criteria. It is possible to “cut down” the height of the bridge, re-use the existing substructure/columns and build a new deck/roadway. The study team has received input to keep the bridge at its current height and also to lower the bridge. This is a point of discussion that the study team will be looking for input on.

Following the presentation, Alex explained that the next step for the study team will involve quantifying the impacts of the alternative alignments and determining costs.

The analysis to determine the location, type, length and costs of the wildlife crossing/connectivity structures will begin at a meeting to be held Thursday, August 3, 2006 at Inwood’s office. The team will be looking at wildlife crossings through the areas where widening is proposed, at the locations identified by the Task Force and at other locations.

A question was asked whether wildlife crossing structures will be considered through sections of SR 40 even if there is not widening proposed. Alex responded that wildlife connectivity is important through the forest and that some structures may be needed through areas that are not widened. The Task Force concept included possible structure locations along the entire corridor even though the concept considered four-laning up to CR 314A. It will be important to determine specifics for each crossing location and to consider the cost of the improvements.

It was mentioned by a member of the Task Force that it was an underlying thought by the Task Force that the structures on the east, where no widening was proposed, would still be considered even with no widening. Alex agreed with this statement and added that no costs were determined by the Task Force. That is what the SR 40 PD&E study team will be looking at. How wide are the crossings, how tall, fencing, how do we maintain connectivity to the forest, maintenance of traffic during construction and how much do they cost will be answered. The study team will need to work with the Forest Service to make sure the wildlife will use the crossings in order for them to work. The study team will need to determine costs/impacts and then talk it over with FDOT and environmental agencies to get consensus.

At this point, Alex asked the group for input. Several questions were asked and comments were made as described below:

A question was asked about the types of comments that were received from the public on the typical sections at the two recent Public Kickoff/Scoping meetings. Alex indicated that there was a wide variety of comments. Some residents want the higher design speed typical sections considered and others think that only the lower speed typical sections should be considered.

A question was asked about whether or not the Scenic Byway designation would affect the speed limit. Alex responded that the Scenic Byway designation does not affect the speed limits that are posted or the typical section of the roadway.

Alex explained that the selection of the recommended typical section will be based on the land uses in the area and the impacts/costs of each typical section. The study team will

quantify impacts by parcel. FDOT will estimate the acquisition costs of each parcel impact and give the study team the RW costs that include business damages, legal fees, etc. The study team will calculate construction costs and quantify the number of impacts (houses, businesses, etc.). All of this information will be put into an evaluation matrix. It is usually pretty clear what should be recommended. In addition to the north side and south side widening alternatives, the study team will also look at a “weaved”, or optimized, alignment that will attempt to minimize residential and business impacts.

There was a question regarding a new alignment that would flatten the curve west of Lynn. Would the existing road be removed? Alex responded that property access will need to be reviewed to determine whether the existing road needs to stay. There is a large parcel in this area, south of SR 40, which was identified by the Task Force as a potential right-of-way acquisition mitigation parcel. The acquisition of this parcel could also affect the need to keep or remove the existing road.

A question was asked if the rural typical section would require fewer ponds than suburban and urban because of treatment in the swales. Alex responded that the swales are typically designed for conveyance and not for stormwater treatment or detention. Therefore, the pond requirements would be similar for all alternatives

A statement was made by a member of the Steering Committee that the stormwater runoff from the existing SR 40 roadway is not currently being treated. Alex added that if SR 40 is reconstructed, the drainage system will have to treat the stormwater runoff from the existing and new widening.

A question was asked regarding the trade-offs between the suburban and rural typical sections. Alex mentioned that the suburban typical section requires a narrower right-of-way footprint (generally 150 ft vs. 190 feet for rural). Also, with the lower design speed of the suburban typical section, the horizontal roadway curves can be sharper which could also reduce right-of-way impacts. Sharper curves will also create a feel that the driver needs to slow down. If there is no land use to slow people down, they will drive what is comfortable even if it is too fast. People don't slow down due to speed limit signs, they have to feel that they need to slow down due to traffic, development, etc. However, you don't want to try to use the typical to slow people down.

A question was asked regarding the difference in safety between the rural and suburban typical sections and does the raised median of the suburban typical section make it safer or more dangerous. Alex indicated that the speeds on the rural roadway are typically higher and the potential for more severe crashes is greater. Also, the suburban typical section has a narrower median and the opposing travel lanes are closer together. The type of curb used in the median of a suburban typical section is mountable and will not prevent crossover type crashes. You don't want to create an unsafe condition by using the wrong type of typical for the development.

Dennis David with the FFWCC indicated that the locations that his staff had recommended for crossing areas as part of the Task Force effort were based on mortality and other species and are developing some specific recommendations to give to FDOT as part of the ETDM response. He stated that there needs to be more study of specific locations to determine the location and length of crossings. Additional data collection is needed to help determine this. It is not just bears and scrub jays that are affected. FFWCC does not have road kill data. We need to take a hard look at other improvements where we are not four-laning. There is a tripping point for some species with traffic volumes.

Dennis mentioned that Terry Gilbert is working on the ETDM response from FFWCC. Several members of the Steering Committee asked for a copy of their comments. Alex reminded everyone that it will be available on the ETDM web site.

Todd Mecklenborg mentioned that the UFWS has provided comments on ETDM and the Advance Notification package.

Questions were asked whether there is an atypical roadway cross section that can be considered; such as something with a lower design speed with no curb and gutter or inducing road curvature to help keep speeds down. Alex stated that we have to design to the current roadway standards. We also have to match the typical to the surrounding land use (safety issue) and design the road to the speed that motorists will drive. The typical sections presented are a starting point that we can then tweak.

Mickey Thomason with the Office of Greenways and Trails noted that the graphics for the segments east of the Ocklawaha don't include a trail. The Task Force included the OGT input for inclusion of a trail wherever improvements are made. Therefore, OGT is asking for consideration of a trail wherever road improvements are planned. Alex asked if the OGT would be able to commit to any funding and Mickey indicated that he could not make that commitment right now. He did indicate that since the road improvements are several years away from possibly happening, there is time to apply for enhancement funds.

A question was asked about a paved or grassed wider shoulder/rumble strips through the middle of SR 40. Alex stated that that has not been determined yet. As discussed earlier, the wider stabilized/paved shoulder could be used for emergency vehicle access, etc. and keep traffic flowing during hurricane evacuations. It is just thoughts right now. In the Volusia County section of the project, there is only 60-80 feet of right-of-way and additional right-of-way would be needed to accommodate the wider shoulders.

Dennis David stated that where there are state/conservation lands along both sides of SR 40 and that consideration carefully should be given to look at focus species impacts on one side vs. the other. That will require additional on-site study. Alex mentioned that EMS is conducting these studies.

Brian Stanger with FDOT thanked everyone for their input and agreed that wildlife connectivity in other areas, where the road may not be widened, should be considered. FDOT's upper management will have to make those final decisions after we have all the analysis done.

One of the members of the Steering Committee added that there is an economic advantage of including trails along roadway for local businesses.

Carl Petrick with the USFS stated that there is a whole science and research for locating connectivity structures and that USFS has some biologist that know more about this and should be kept in the loop. Alex told Carl that the firm EMS is doing literature research and has developed a tool for locating wildlife crossings. Alex also mentioned that there is a meeting scheduled for Thursday, August 3, 2006 at Inwood's office beginning at 3:00 pm to discuss the wildlife crossing issue. Inwood will invite FFWCC, USFS and USFWS.

Carl expressed concern that Steering Committed members are involved in this issue and that it may be more appropriate to include those with more knowledge, including NGO's. Alex stated that as the study team gets through the issues, the other groups can be brought into the loop to refine the analysis. Alex reminded the group that the meeting on Thursday

is not the only meeting that will be held on this issue and that the study team can meet with any of the agency experts that they are requested to meet with.

Dennis David stated that Walt McCown (with FFWCC) needs to sit down with EMS, and that their survey design staff should also be involved.

David Graeber mentioned that Rick Lint with USFS stated that USFS has some expertise out west with connectivity structures. The group discussed roads through forests in other states that should be looked at.

There was general discussion regarding some of the history along SR 40 and that amenities and historic information along SR 40 should be added, especially with the potential for designation as a Scenic Byway. A question was then asked if the Scenic Byway designation would prevent future widening and the answer was no.

A question was asked regarding how special legislation could potentially affect the project. There was not a clear answer to that question. Alex stated that all the groups need to work together to come up with a solution that benefits everyone.

Alex then mentioned that at the next Steering Committee meeting in October, there will be some mitigation/connectivity options to review and discuss.

There was discussion on the crash reports for the project and that it might be helpful to meet with the law enforcement agencies to go over the crash reports to make sure they are complete.

Bill Walsh indicated that he has a meeting this Thursday (August 3, 2006) with Volusia County emergency staff to talk about hurricane evacuation.

The meeting ended at 10:55 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.*