



MEETING MINUTES

Date: February 7, 2007 - 1:00 PM
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study
Steering Committee Meeting No. 5

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Meeting Handouts: Meeting Agenda, Powerpoint Presentation slides, Draft Wildlife Crossings graphics, Fire and Fuels Management Meeting No. 1 Minutes

Bill Walsh gave some opening statements and then the attendees introduced themselves. Bill also explained that FDOT, at the District level, has agreed to participate in the Monster Pipe project in the amount of \$500,000, but that the final approval has not been received from FDOT in Tallahassee.

Alex then began a Powerpoint presentation regarding the SR 40 PD&E Study. He began with a discussion on the Class of Action and stated that it will either be an EA or and EIS, but FHWA will make that decision. Jose Pena indicated that a formal meeting will need to be set up for this decision. Alex indicated that FDOT is not at that decision point yet and Rick Lint added that the analysis will decide the document.

Next, Alex explained that the design for the segment of SR 40 from Silver Springs to CR 314A has been moved back from FY 2010 to FY 2012. No other phases (RW acquisition or construction) are funded.

Alex then gave an overview of the study limits from Silver Springs to US 17 and a description of the recommended build limits from Silver Springs to SR 183rd Avenue (Levy Hammock Road). He also described the potential safety improvements (vibriline striping), the SR 19 and US 17 intersection improvements and the potential three-lane widening in the Astor and Volusia area (St. Johns River to Emporia Road).

The rural and suburban typical sections were presented as being viable alternatives. The Study Team is also evaluating the possibility of pavement savings options that would re-use the existing roadway to serve as either the eastbound or westbound lanes. Alex presented a first draft of the evaluation matrix with most of the costs included for each alternative just to get an idea of the overall project cost. The preliminary numbers, that don't include pond or floodplain compensation right-of-way costs are approximately \$175 million.

Next, Alex explained that several options are being considered for the Ocklawaha River Bridge that include maintaining the existing bridge, widening the existing bridge at its current height and widening the existing bridge at a lower height combined with a new parallel bridge at a high or lower elevation. The costs and impacts of these various bridge improvement alternatives are being refined and further analysis is being conducted.

Alex then gave an overview of the wildlife crossings analysis and the initial concept plan for wildlife crossings that was recommended by the wildlife crossings committee biologists. He

also included a description of the location and length of each potential wildlife crossing from the draft plan. There was discussion regarding input from the State Division of Forestry for the addition of an additional connectivity structure at location K. The decision made by the wildlife committee was to include a connectivity structure at location K. Alex stressed that the wildlife crossings plan has not been accepted or adopted by anyone and that it is not a complete mitigation plan. Land acquisition will also need to be considered.

Alex explained that Sandy Jacobson, a national wildlife crossings expert with the US Forest Service, attended the latest wildlife crossings meeting and suggested that the group consider alternative structures that are more cost effective in dealing with habitat connectivity and specific species.

Next, the status of the Monster Pipe pond was discussed. Alex explained that the State Park and others have reservations about creating a pond in this karst topography which could lead to formation of a sinkhole. This could have devastating impacts on Silver Springs. There is ongoing analysis of the soils at this potential pond.

In order to discuss the issue of fire/prescribed burns and fuels management, a working group has been formed. This group includes representatives of the managed lands along the SR 40 corridor. FDOT will serve as a facilitator between the land managers and law enforcement and will work on the development of an MOU to outline how the different agencies will coordinate during prescribed burns and smoke/road closure issues.

The SR 40 PD&E Study team is also coordinating with the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway group on aesthetic issues.

Following the presentation, several questions were asked during the Q&A session.

There was a question on the current thinking regarding the use of chain link fence at the wildlife crossings. Alex stated that the US Forest Service is opposed to chain link fence, like what was used at the SR 46 wildlife crossings and that alternative fencing is being looked into. Some of the issues with chain link fence are aesthetics and accessibility to the forest for both users and land managers (fires, logging, etc.). Sandy Jacobson indicated that the fencing issue is not limited to this project and is a major issue across the country. She indicated that the USFS has a technology center that is involved in development and testing of new technologies and indicated that a proposal could be put together, with SR 40 as a test area, to develop new fencing types.

Cathy Lowenstein asked whether the technology center could also study the idea of letting stormwater runoff sheet flow into the forest instead of constructing retention ponds. Sandy indicated that the technology center could look at this but she would need help with specific wording that would be needed for the proposal.

Alex described two possible scenarios for the F area. The wildlife committee is recommending construction of a 1000 ft. long bridge and two 100 ft. long structures within this area. There was input received at the most recent Project Advisory Group meeting that two 1000 ft long structures is desired. There was discussion on the comparison to the Wekiva Parkway project and the sections of elevated roadway on that project.

Brian Stanger asked who is doing research on fencing. Steve Tonjes indicated that no specific research for the SR 40 project is being done. The USFS Technology Center could be a great resource because there is currently no fencing system that does everything that the SR 40 project needs. Sandy indicated that it would probably take at least a year to

develop and 2 to 3 years to monitor/test any new fencing. She also indicated that research has shown that fencing does enhance the effectiveness of wildlife crossings.

There was general discussion on different types of methods to control animal access such as the berm and dropoff method that is used at Animal Kingdom and the raised roadway/wall that is used through Paynes Prairie.

There was more discussion on the fencing and whether fencing can be placed away from the road so that it cannot be seen. This creates habitat within the roadway and reduces the habitat by that amount that the fencing encroaches.

Another question was raised regarding whether a median helps or hurts animal crossings. Sandy indicated that a median helps some and hurts others. Some animals don't like open spaces and a wide median would discourage use by these animals.

Cathy Lowenstein indicated that it would be good to recommend research as part of this project, specifically related to letting stormwater runoff sheet flow onto public lands. Steve Tonjes stated that this can be looked into, but the approval would need to come from SJRWMD. There was more discussion on whether pollution from runoff would be an issue and the indication from the discussion is that it would not be an issue.

The meeting ended at 3:00 pm.

*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.*