



## MEETING MINUTES

Date: April 4, 2007 - 1:00 PM  
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study  
Steering Committee Meeting No. 6

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Meeting Handouts: Meeting Agenda, PowerPoint Presentation slides

Brian Stanger, with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), gave some welcoming and introductory statements to the group.

Alex then began a presentation regarding the SR 40 PD&E Study. He began with an overview of the meeting agenda. In addition, he gave a breakdown of the project team and responsibilities.

Next Alex gave an explanation of the FDOT Five Year Work Program. Alex stated 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. He mentioned that the FDOT Five Year Work Program is subject to change.

Alex then gave an overview of the study build alternatives. He stated that the project limits are from Silver Springs to US 17 and gave a description of the recommended build limits, from Silver Springs to SR 183<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (Levy Hammock Road). He also described the potential safety improvements (vibrant 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).

A description of the proposed typical sections alternatives was presented to the group along with the design speeds. Alex stated that pavement savings options are being looked at that would re-use the existing roadway to serve as either the eastbound or westbound lanes. He mentioned that utilizing the pavement savings option could save the project considerable dollars. Alex told the group that his perception, on the alignment alternatives, is that the widening in the build area will generally happen on the south side. Moreover, he stated that the rural typical section seems to be the typical section alternative that works best. He stated that analysis on the alternatives is almost complete.

Next, Alex gave an overview of the status of the permitting and drainage on the project. He explained that they have identified alternative pond sites and have met with the FDOT and the United States Forest Service (USFS). He stated that a meeting will be held with St. John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD) to discuss permitting and the possibility of allowing sheet flow in areas with well drained soils.

Ben Lehr, with the consulting firm RS&H gave an update on the status of the Ocklawaha River Bridge analysis. He explained that several options have been developed and are being considered, including 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. Ben explained that there have been meetings with FDOT structural design engineers. He mentioned the feedback has been positive in regards to the proposed alternatives. He stated that the FDOT feedback indicated interest in using two separate structures rather than one wide structure. Ben explained that the costs and impacts of the various bridge improvement alternatives are being refined and final analysis should be complete in the next few weeks. Paul Heeg with the consulting firm RS&H added that he anticipates there will be two separate structures with the west bound lanes on the old alignment.

Glenn Burns, a consultant for the Black Bear Scenic Byway, asked if the new bridge will be at the same profile as the old one. Ben stated that the answer is undetermined at this point. Vivian Garfein with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) asked if there were any height issues associated with the bridge. Ben explained that the existing power line height of 25 ft is the minimum clearance.

Brian Stanger stated that the contingencies in the bridge cost should be changed from 15% to 25% due to rapidly rising construction costs.

Next, Alex gave the group an overview of the wildlife crossings analysis and the initial concept plan that was recommended by the wildlife crossings committee biologists. He explained that a committee was formed to take a "science based" approach to look at the wildlife and land issues in order to come up with a set of alternatives for a comprehensive mitigation plan. 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. He added that Sandy Jacobson, a nationally known expert on wildlife crossings, was invited by USFS to give her expertise and joined the committee in February.

Alex mentioned that the wildlife crossings meetings, as well as all other meetings, are open to the public and are posted on the SR 40 website. He added that the committee requested that any new attendees and the public be considered observers at the meeting.

Alex explained that in the last PAG meeting Keith Schue, with the Nature Conservancy, expressed concern and stated that the proposed crossings are insufficient. He commented that a large, wide span, similar to the Wekiva Parkway project, should be considered for location F. Alex stated that they are in the process of incorporating the suggestions in the alternatives analysis and will complete an engineering and scientific evaluation on them. He stated that the final recommendation will be based on the evaluation.

Greg Slay with the Marion County TPO asked when the report from the wildlife committee will be ready.

Next, Alex walked the group through the committee's approach to looking at the wildlife crossings. He explained that the first few meetings involved open discussion in order to figure out where to begin. He explained that the committee used the original SR 40 Task Force recommendations as a starting point. EMS, the environmental consulting firm for the project, then came up with recommendations based on research as well as the group's discussion. The committee reconvened and discussed the alternatives recommended by EMS.

Alex gave a description of the location and length of each potential wildlife crossing from the draft plan. He mentioned that Cathy Lowenstein with the State Forest asked for location K

to be reconsidered and presented logical reasons to the group. Location K was added back to the list of crossing locations.

Monso Tatum, with the Pioneer Settlement, asked if only crossings in the four lane section will be built. Alex stated that it is undetermined at this time. This question led Alex into a discussion on the issue of NEPA legal requirements versus the indirect cumulative impacts. He posed the question of whether or not mitigation outside of the build area will be justified.

Next, Alex gave an overview of what happened at the Wildlife Crossings Meetings on March 20<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup>. He explained that on the first day, the new alternatives, recommended by EMS, were discussed by the group. Moreover, Sandy gave the group background on national issues involving wildlife crossings. Alex explained that the second day was spent in the field looking at the locations and discussing each. On the third day, the group met and Sandy gave her thoughts on the project thus far. Sandy suggested that the group consider alternative structures that are more cost effective in dealing with habitat connectivity and specific species. Moreover, she urged the group to clearly identify the objectives of each location. Alex explained that it has become evident that the objective is different in everybody's minds. He stated that they need to identify whether the objective is to achieve a free flow of species or to provide genetic connectivity. He added that the objective could be different for each crossing.

Alex summarized the approach that the wildlife crossings committee is using. He added that once the evaluation process is complete, a report will be released with all documentation.

Jim Thorsen, consultant to USFS, asked about location H. Alex stated that location H was recommended by Sandy and will be looked at again. He added that the land bridge concept will be looked in that location to accommodate light and heat liking species. Cathy asked if the land bridge would accommodate humans as well. Alex explained that the land bridge will only be designed for wildlife.

Vivian stated that it is obvious that it is going to be a while before anything will be built on SR 40. She commented that, even though there isn't anything changing outside of the build area, crossings still need to be considered through the no-build area because the road will get busier with time.

Next Alex discussed the possibility of using other funding sources for crossing structures that are not necessarily related to the proposed roadway widening. He indicated that it is important to identify and prioritize the crossings so that they are in the plan and ready once funding becomes available. Brian emphasized the importance of identifying the need for each crossing.

Alex stated that although a plan for the wildlife crossings will be developed as part of this PD&E Study, the project will be re-evaluated as each phase of the project is started. He added that Steve Tonjes, environmental scientist with FDOT, will be working on research funded by FDOT for ongoing monitoring of the crossings. Alex also mentioned the San Dimas research proposal that involves a program for fencing research. Jim added that the SR 40 proposal has a good possibility of being chosen by San Dimas research and could even be funded in the current fiscal year.

Dave Herbster, with FDEP, commented that the group is doing well and is asking the right questions to the right people.

Next, Alex gave the group an update on Fire and Fuel Management. Alex stated that he contacted Jeff Castor to discuss access for wildfires, smoke problems and prescribed burns.

Alex indicated that the study team will continue to work towards development of a Memorandum of Understanding to outline how the land managers, law enforcement and local governments will work together and who will fund various needs when there are prescribed burns or wildfires.

Glenn gave a scenic byway update to the group. He explained that the group is going for designation in October. He added that, upon designation, he will need to form a corridor management entity that will consist of representatives from the counties, cities and agencies like USFS, DEP and Greenways and Trails and that he is looking for volunteers.

There was a group discussion on the schedule of upcoming events for the project. Alex mentioned that the next wildlife crossings meeting will need to be scheduled. He gave the tentative date of April 25, 2007. (It has now been scheduled for April 23, 2007.) Mickey Thomason, with the FDEP Office Greenways and Trails, offered their conference room for the meeting. Mandy Rankin, with Inwood Consulting Engineers, agreed to call and confirm the meeting location and send out invitations. Vivian, Dave and Greg asked to be placed on the meeting notification list.

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

Cathy asked if the draft documents will be available online. Alex stated that, as long as the reports are in the proper format for review, they will be posted. Mickey asked when the group can expect to get a draft of the reports. Alex said that he was unsure at this time.

Cathy asked if the project is current on schedule with what was proposed at the beginning of the project. Alex stated that the project is still on schedule.

The meeting ended at 2:45 pm.

*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.*