



MEETING MINUTES

Date: June 6, 2007 - 9:00 AM
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study
Steering Committee Meeting No. 7

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Meeting Handouts: Meeting Agenda, PowerPoint Presentation slides, Draft of Project Connectivity Statement, Area Specific Wildlife Crossings Objectives, Proposed Wildlife Crossing Alternatives Graphics

Alex Hull, with Inwood Consulting Engineers, gave some welcoming and introductory statements to the group.

Next, Alex gave an overview of the agenda.

He gave an explanation of the build segment alternatives. He explained that Segment 1 appears to be a rural typical section with a trail. In Segment 2, it appears that the preferred alternative is a rural typical section with a south alignment with or without the trail option. In Segment 3, it appears that the preferred alternative is a rural typical section with a south alignment without the trail option and rural typical section with a north alignment with the trail option. or without the trail option and segments two and three appear to be rural pavement savings with widening to the south side of the road. He stated that no decisions have been finalized and public input is needed from the upcoming public workshop.

Next Alex discussed the cost of the trails and explained that they need to look at whether or not the trail is needed. Alex mentioned that it ranges from 9 to 12 million additional dollars to build the trail.

Greg Slay, with Marion County TPO, commented that he didn't see much need for a trail past the boat basin at Wayside Park.

Rick Lint, with United States Forest Service (USFS), asked if sidewalks are included in the residential areas. Alex stated that at this time there are not any sidewalks planned. Greg commented that they may want to reconsider sidewalks in the Forest Corners area.

Guy Marwick, with Smart Growth Coalition, asked why it would cost more to widen on the north side without the trail and less to widen on the north side with the trail. Alex explained that the trail requires additional right-of-way and that the south side widening would impact additional wetlands and other properties that it would not impact without the trail.

Guy asked why the trail is 10 feet. Alex explained that the trail is designed to meet the standard guidelines for a multi-use trail. It will be a multi-use bi-directional trail with bicyclists, walkers, joggers traveling a differing speeds and a wider trail is need to avoid conflicts.

Guy commented that a trail in segment one would be good but he doesn't anticipate that it would be used much.

Alex explained that trail funding options are being explored.

Next Alex discussed the Pond Analysis. He explained that a series of meetings will be held to coordinate with the agencies involved. He mentioned that they have already met with USFS and that a meeting with SJRWMD is scheduled for June 19th.

Guy mentioned that, in the first segment, a retention pond on the north side is geologically unstable and that the south side is worse. This was relative to the "monster pipe" project.

Alex discussed the status of the Ocklawaha River Bridge. He explained that they are finding that using the existing bridge is not a viable alternative. He explained the difference between the high and low profile alternatives. He gave an overview of the bridge alternatives. He explained that they are using an alternative, which was recommended at the last PAG, where the pedestrian path is on the ground and then ramps up over the water and ramps back down to the ground.

Next Alex led a group discussion on the bridge length. He pointed out alternative 2Rb where the bridge is shortened from its existing length. He explained that in order to shorten the bridge, there were four issues that would need to be addressed. These are: 1) a consensus was reached in the SR 40 Task Force to keep the bridge at its current length; 2) any shortened bridge would still need to meet the wildlife objectives; 3) floodplain impacts would need to be compensated for; and 4) and a no rise certification would be required to demonstrate that upstream flooding would not result from shortening the bridge. Alex indicated that they need to look at and evaluate the many complexities to shortening the bridge.

Alex gave an overview of the bridge alternatives cost matrix and alternatives cost analysis.

Alex next discussed the issue of wildlife crossings. He explained the methodology, history, wildlife committee, meeting schedule and wildlife crossings approach.

Next Alex asked the group to look at the draft of the project connectivity statement and give input.

Guy commented that in the line that mentions reducing wildlife mortality, it would be good to add the reduction of automobile accidents. Alex suggested that the statement say reduce wildlife mortality and reduce vehicle collisions.

Steve Tonjes, with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), asked if they should add where feasible improve existing features. Alex stated that it doesn't need to be in the project connectivity statement however it would be good to put that statement in the commitments.

Rick asked where the project connectivity statement would go. Alex explained that the statements will go in the wildlife crossings report, environmental assessment and the preliminary engineering report.

Alex then gave an overview of the individual crossing objectives. Jim suggested that visual aesthetics need to be mentioned in the specific objectives.

Alex asked the group to take the statements home with them and bring back detailed comments.

Next, Alex explained the status of the wildlife crossing alternatives. He stated that they are now in the process of taking the alternatives and evaluating how they meet the objectives. Alex explained that the Wildlife Crossings Committee thinks that more than just bear crossings is needed. He stated that they will next go through the alternatives and screen out the ones that do not work and are not cost effective.

Alex explained that at the last Wildlife Crossings Committee meeting, there was discussion on which alternatives they liked the best. He mentioned that no decisions have been made and that they still have to go through the process and methodology. Alex stated that he added some additional alternatives since the last meeting.

Next, Alex walked through the proposed wildlife crossing alternatives graphics. He stated that in area A the committee was in favor of alternatives five and eight. He mentioned that in area A1 there are no public lands and limitations on fencing. He explained that they are primarily identifying the location for future funding. Alex directed the group's attention to area C. He explained that they are looking into the possibility of shortening the bridge to reduce cost but still meet the objectives. Next he discussed area E. He mentioned that Sam Howard owns land to the south and expressed interest in a conservation easement.

Guy stated that the area to the south is known as a bear denning area. Alex mentioned that Walt McCown, with Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC), expressed concern because of the mobile homes and poachers. Guy commented that a study showed that the bears in that area were killed by automobiles.

Alex mentioned the fencing issues with the piece of private land with billboards in that area. Guy asked about eminent domain. Bill Walsh, with FDOT, stated that he would look into it. Mickey Thomason, with Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Greenways and Trails, mentioned the possibility of raising the billboards so that they are viewable above the fence. Alex mentioned that there are access issues as well.

Next, the group discussed area F. Alex stated that options three, four, five and twelve were of interest to the committee. He added that option nine is also of interest but needs to be modified to include smaller culverts.

Alex explained that the crossings outside of the build area are going to be identified and cleared through the NEPA process and then will need to be funded as dollars become available through outside sources and enhancement funds.

Cathy Lowenstein, with Florida Department of Forestry (FDOF), asked where the enhancement funds come from and what they cover. Bill explained that they can come from the federal, state and local level. He stated that enhancement funds are used for something other than roads such as sidewalks, trails, landscaping and wildlife crossings.

Cathy asked about the cumulative, indirect impacts on the area outside of the build section. Alex explained that the issue was discussed in a meeting with Federal Highway Administration and FDOT. He explained that the outcome was that the impacts to the build project are in the build area.

Rick stated that it would be good to find out more about other funding sources and how things are prioritized. This led to a group discussion on identifying additional funding sources.

Next, Alex gave the group an update on Fire and Fuel Management. Alex stated that a draft of the MOU has been prepared. He explained that once they have FDOT's approval of the draft, it will be distributed to the agencies. Jim Thorsen, a consultant to USFS, read off the agencies involved in the MOU.

Cathy mentioned that the Lake Woodruff Refuge may want to be included. Alex asked who owns the refuge. Mickey explained that FWC owns it. Alex stated that they should be included. Jim agreed to call and talk to FWC about it.

Mickey gave a Monster Pipe update. He mentioned that a meeting needs to be scheduled to look at the lands inside of Silver Springs and work on research to find out where the main feeder conduits are.

Cathy gave a scenic byway update to the group. She explained that the deadline for the application has been moved to October and that they are hoping to submit a draft in July to FDOT.

Steve gave an overview on the status of the additional environmental research and studies. He mentioned that they are trying for additional funds.

Jim asked about the grant application for fencing by San Dimas Research. Both Alex and Rick were unsure of the status.

Alex went over the schedule of upcoming events. This included a tentative date of July 19th for the next public workshop.

Rick stated that he would like to get a small group together to talk about the recreational features and crossings. He stated that he would like his recreation representative and trails coordinator to attend. Bill added that FDOT traffic operations staff should attend to discuss safety issues. Alex stated that he would set a meeting up.

Alex thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting ended at 11:00 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.*