



Appendix E

Agency Corridor Workshop Meeting Minutes

Agency Workshop Meeting Summary

On March 29, 2006, an agency workshop was held from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the South Florida Water Management District, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, Florida, 33406. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update to the permitting agencies and interested groups on the progress of the SR 7 Extension corridor analysis, and to solicit their feedback and opinion of each proposed corridor, including the no-build option. Prior to the workshop, a copy of the Draft Corridor Report was distributed to each invitee for their review. Approximately 36 individuals representing federal, state, and local agencies, environmental interest groups, and local governments attended the workshop.

The workshop was divided into the following sessions:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Corridor Analysis Presentation
3. Question and Answer Session
4. Group Activity
5. Group Presentations
6. Meeting Conclusion and Discussion

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Beatriz Caicedo-Maddison, FDOT Project Manager, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and provided a brief overview of the project and meeting purpose. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison then asked everyone to introduce themselves to the group.

Corridor Analysis Presentation

Following introductions, Ms. Caicedo-Maddison began the corridor analysis presentation by describing the project purpose, location, history, and key milestones. Past project milestones that were highlighted included the following:

- FDOT Notice to Proceed – April 20, 2005;
- AN Package Distributed – June 16, 2005;
- Elected Officials/Agency Kickoff Meeting – July 26, 2005;
- Agency Responses Received – August 18, 2005; and
- Public Kickoff Meeting – September 27, 2005.

The FDOT previously examined the extension of SR 7 during the late 1990s until the project was placed on hold. Twenty-Five corridors were considered during the previous study and were reduced down to eight options following an interagency workshop on February 24, 1999. Following Ms. Caicedo-Maddison's discussion, Mr. Steve Moore, Edwards and Kelcey, then discussed the project need and influences within the study area. Specific mention was made of the proposed residential developments with the potential for an additional 24,000 residential units within the area, and capacity needs within the existing roadway network between Okeechobee Boulevard and Northlake Boulevard. Mr. Moore then introduced Dr. Scot Leftwich

to discuss specific traffic needs within Palm Beach County and the area-wide benefits of extending SR 7 to Northlake Boulevard. Dr. Leftwich highlighted the failing level of service along key roadways near the project area and the importance of extending SR 7.

After Dr. Leftwich's presentation, Mr. Moore presented the build alternatives currently under consideration. Corridor 1 follows Palm Beach County's alignment for its Persimmon Boulevard project and continues north to Northlake Boulevard along the west side of the Ibis Golf and Country Club. Corridor 2 follows the FDOT "rangeline" alignment to Section 1. At Section 1, Corridor 2 turns toward the northwest, across Section 1, and then toward the north along the west side of the Ibis Golf and Country Club. Mr. Moore explained that Corridor 2 has been eliminated due to impacts associated with the County's use of Section 1 for mitigation purposes. Corridor 3 follows the County alignment for Persimmon Boulevard, turns east along the M Canal, and then turns north along the east side of the Ibis Golf and Country Club. Corridor 4 follows the FDOT existing Right-of-Way up to Northlake Boulevard. Mr. Moore then presented the 4- and 6-lane typical sections considered during the corridor analysis. A 185-foot wide corridor was used to assess potential social and environmental impacts. Each corridor was evaluated with respect to the following:

- Wetlands;
- Wildlife and Habitat;
- Contamination;
- Floodplains;
- Water Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Section 4(f);
- Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocation Potential;
- Potential Noise Sensitive Receivers; and
- Area-Wide Network Relief.

Following Mr. Moore's presentation, Ms. Lauren Linares, Scheda Ecological Associates, addressed the potential environmental impacts associated with each corridor in relation to wetlands, threatened and endangered species, contamination, and Section 4(f). Ms. Linares also highlighted the Advance Notification (AN) responses received for the project, which include the following general comments:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): The SR 7 extension from Okeechobee Boulevard to Northlake Boulevard, including the Persimmon connection, should be proposed as a single project;
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC): Avoid project impacts by expanding and upgrading existing roads through urban areas instead of building a new extension;
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP): Current project concurrence depends on resolution of agency issues and concerns; and

- Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC): Analyze alternative corridors and conduct a complete evaluation of environmental impacts.

Ms. Linares highlighted other agency comments with regard to specific environmental concerns. With regard to wetland issues, the following comments were made:

- USFWS: Wetlands provided as mitigation should adequately replace wetland functions lost due to the corridor extension;
- FDEP: The project is directly adjacent to the City of West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area, which serves as the City's single source for potable water; and
- FWC: Project impacts could include direct loss, degradation, and fragmentation of wetland, transitional and upland habitats.

With regard to listed species, the following comments were made:

- USFWS: The project is located within the Core Foraging Area (CFA) of four wood stork colonies. The USFWS recommends any lost foraging habitat be replaced within the CFA of the affected nesting colony; and
- FWC: Numerous wading bird rookeries exist within a 10- to 20-mile radius of the project. Many listed species occur on publicly owned natural areas and the corridor extension would fragment existing wildlife habitat and preserves.

Finally, with regard to contamination, the following comments were made:

- USFWS: A Contamination Screening Evaluation should outline specific procedure in the event drums, wastes, tanks, or potentially contaminated soils are encountered during construction; and
- TCRPC: A new road adjacent to the west side of the Grassy Waters Preserve would increase the potential for contamination of the City of West Palm Beach water supply through fuel spills.

Mr. Moore then summarized the findings of the analysis with the matrix provided below:

Evaluation Factors ¹	Corridor Alternative ²				
	1	2	3	4	No-Build
Direct Wetland Impact (Acres)	12 - 19	53 - 81	39 - 59	73 - 110	0
Floodplain Encroachment (Acre-feet)	8 - 12	52 - 79	33 - 50	75 - 113	0
Length Adjacent to Water Catchment Area (Miles)	0.0	1.8	3.1	6.0	0
Wildlife and Habitat	Low	High	High	High	None
Cultural Resources	Low	Low	Low	Low	None
Potential Section 4(f) ³	3	3	3	3	None
Impacts to Section 1	Borders	Bisects	Borders	Borders	None
Contaminated Sites (within 0.5 miles)	3	4	5	6	0
Right-of-Way Acquisition (Acres) ⁴	160	107	108	2	0
Residential Relocation Potential (No. of Homes)	23 - 61	23 - 61	0	0	0
Noise Sensitive Receivers (within 500 feet of Centerline)	445	360	291	190	0
Area-Wide Network Relief	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative
Construction Cost (1 = lowest cost, 5 = highest cost)	2	4	3	5	1
Permitability					
Social Acceptance					

1. The analysis is based on a 185-ft. wide corridor. Impacts associated with the extension of Persimmon Boulevard have already been mitigated for and therefore not included with the results shown in the table.
2. Alternative 2 has been eliminated due to Palm Beach County's mitigation site on Section 1.
3. A Determination of Applicability will be prepared.
4. Additional Right-of-Way may be required for drainage purposes.

Ms. Caicedo-Maddison concluded the presentation by discussing the project schedule and highlighted key future activities planned during the next three months. These activities include the upcoming Public Workshop on May 24, 2006 and submission of the Class of Action Determination to FHWA during the fall of 2006.

Question and Answer Session

Following the presentation, Ms. Caicedo-Maddison opened the floor to any questions or comments.

Mr. Jay Foy, Indian Trail Improvement District, asked how the project would fit into the hurricane evacuation plan if the corridor stops at Northlake Boulevard. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison said the decision to terminate the project at Northlake Boulevard was made by the Palm Beach MPO. In addition, FDOT owns a strip of Right-of-Way between Northlake Boulevard and SR 710. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison emphasized there are no current plans to extend SR 7 beyond Northlake Boulevard until the MPO makes that decision.

Mr. Foy asked about secondary impacts, and whether they had been identified within the matrix shown during the presentation. Mr. Moore responded that the level of analysis performed for the corridor study did not include secondary impacts. As the corridors become better defined, secondary impacts will be identified.

Mr. Foy then asked if impacts associated with the County's Persimmon Boulevard project were taken into account when summarizing the data within the matrix. Mr. Foy also commented that if impacts associated with Persimmon Boulevard were not included, then the results shown within the matrix were biased toward Alternative 1 or 3. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison responded that since the County is expected to receive permits for the project and has identified a mitigation plan, it was not necessary to include those results within the matrix. If the permit is denied, then potential impacts related to Persimmon Boulevard would be reexamined.

Ms. Joanne Davis, representative of 1000 Friends of Florida, asked if the FDOT has the flexibility to move the alignment farther west if the County does not receive its permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison said the FDOT would have that flexibility under those circumstances.

Referring to the AN comments highlighted during the presentation, Ms. Davis commented that the County's effort to construct Persimmon Boulevard ahead of the FDOT project is a case of "permit fragmentation." She said she believed the extension of Persimmon Boulevard and SR 7 should be looked at together. Ms. Davis then asked if the FDOT was going to continue with an approach of "permit fragmentation" by then constructing up to SR 710 after the extension to Northlake Boulevard is complete. Mr. George Webb, Palm Beach County Engineer, responded by stating that the section between Northlake Boulevard and SR 710 has not been identified by the Palm Beach MPO.

Ms. Penny Riccio, Indian Trail Improvement District, asked if there are any federal dollars involved with the project. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison responded that only County funds are being used for the extension of Persimmon Boulevard, and that federal funds will be used for the extension of SR 7 by the FDOT.

Ms. Riccio then stated that US 441 currently turns west off SR 7 and onto SR 80 within Palm Beach County. She asked if the extension of SR 7 would be designated as an alternate to US 441 in order to receive federal dollars. Mr. Moore responded that the federal designation of SR 7 would not have any effect on the availability of federal funds.

Ms. Madelyn Martinez, National Marine Fisheries Services, asked why impacts associated with Persimmon Boulevard were not included within the matrix. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison commented that the proposed footprint of Persimmon Boulevard already has been mitigated for. If the County does not build Persimmon Boulevard, then the FDOT will have to reexamine impacts along the Persimmon Boulevard corridor.

Mr. Ron Miedema, US Environmental Protection Agency, asked if the corridor analysis included potential pond sites. Mr. Moore responded that the current analysis did not, but that pond sites will be considered as alternatives are further developed.

Group Activity

After the question and answer session, agency representatives were divided into five groups. Each group was instructed to discuss Alternatives 1, 3, 4, and the no-build option. To help facilitate the process, each group was given one large easel pad with each alternative and the no-build option listed on each pad. Each person was then given three dots and asked to place one, two, or all three dots next to the alternative of their choice. The option to place one dot on three different alternatives or three dots on one alternative was allowed. At the end of the session, the alternative with the highest number of dots was ranked number one for that group. Each group was also asked to write down any comments on the easel pad next to the corresponding alternative.

The groups consisted of the following individuals:

Group 1:

Ms. Rosa Durando – Audubon Society of the Everglades
Mr. Damon Meiers – South Florida Water Management District
Mr. Ray Liggins – Village of Royal Palm Beach
Mr. Jay Foy – Indian Trail Improvement District

Group 2:

Mr. Ken Rearden – City of West Palm Beach
Ms. Cathy Kendall – Federal Highway Administration
Ms. Makayah Royal – Federal Highway Administration
Ms. Barbara Conmy – South Florida Water Management District

Group 3:

Mr. Brian Yates – Florida State Historic Preservation Office
Ms. Alex Larson – Loxahatchee resident
Mr. Richard Walesky – Palm Beach County
Mr. Hugo Carter – South Florida Water Management District
Mr. John Wrublik – US Fish and Wildlife Service
Mr. Mike Voich – South Florida Water Management District

Group 4:

Ms. Penny Riccio – Indian Trail Improvement District
Mr. Ron Miedema – US Environmental Protection Agency
Ms. Anita Bain – South Florida Water Management District
Mr. Fred Rapach – South Florida Water Management District

Group 5:

Ms. Joanne Davis – 1000 Friends of Florida
Ms. Madelyn Martinez – National Marine Fisheries Service
Ms. Mary Beth Morrison – Solid Waste Authority
Mr. Brian Collins – City of West Palm Beach

Group Presentations

Each group nominated a spokesperson to present the results of their discussion. They were:

- Group 1: Mr. Damon Meiers – South Florida Water Management District
- Group 2: Ms. Cathy Kendall – Federal Highway Administration
- Group 3: Mr. Brian Yates – Florida State Historic Preservation Office
- Group 4: Ms. Anita Bain – South Florida Water Management District
- Group 5: Ms. Joanne Davis – 1000 Friends of Florida

Ms. Anita Bain made the first presentation on behalf of Group 4, and outlined the major issues of concern. Overall, the group felt that the analysis needed to be updated to reflect all impacts, including drainage, residential relocations, and secondary impacts. The group also was concerned with additional roadways if Alternative 4 is implemented. Persimmon Boulevard and/or 60th Street will need to be extended beyond 110th Avenue to connect to SR 7. The group could not agree on an overall ranking, or reach a consensus for a preferred corridor.

Ms. Cathy Kendall presented on behalf of Group 2, and, similar to Group 4, could not endorse an alternative. Alternative 1 was the most preferred alternative due to fewer environmental impacts, and Alternative 4 was the least preferred due to impacts associated with environmentally sensitive areas. The group recommended continuing the analysis, and including impacts beyond the project area (secondary impacts). FHWA representatives within Group 2 expressed concern about the purpose and need for the project, as well as adequate citizen input. Mention was made of an alternative proposed by Mr. Ken Rearden, City of West Palm Beach, to extend SR 7 up to the M Canal and turn west through the Acreage community.

Mr. Brian Yates presented on behalf of Group 3, and summarized the group's opinion of each corridor. The benefit to the no-build option is no permits, no impacts, and no residential displacements. Alternative 1 is best in terms of wetland impacts, requires minimal permitting, builds off of the existing alignment (Persimmon Boulevard), and could require the least amount of funding. The main disadvantage to Alternative 1 is the displacement of residents within the Acreage and Rustic Lakes community. Mr. Yates continued by saying that Alternative 3 and 4 would be more difficult to permit due to their proximity to the Water Catchment Area. The main advantage to Alternative 4 is the efficiency of the straight-line alignment. Group 3 did not endorse any alternative, and suggested that the project team present all corridor options to the public.

Mr. Damon Meiers presented on behalf of Group 1, and began by saying that people should learn to tolerate traffic. The project has the potential to impact bird travel, and put more traffic on Northlake Boulevard. Group 1 also did not reach a consensus, but summarized its findings by saying that Alternative 1 has the least impact on water resources; Alternative 3 balances all evaluation factors; and Alternative 4 eliminates impacts to the Acreage.

Ms. Joanne Davis presented on behalf of Group 5. Group 5 felt that Alternative 1 is the "lesser of evils," but there is concern for the displaced homeowners. This alternative could be

acceptable if the corridor footprint is reduced and a buffer is utilized. Alternative 3 results in fewer impacts to residents, but promotes extending SR 7 through the Loxahatchee Slough and up to SR 710. Ms. Davis stated that Group 5 could live with this alternative if the FDOT gives up the rangeline for mitigation purposes. Group 5 did not support Alternative 4 due to the resulting fragmentation of the natural areas. Alternative 4 could only be considered if the entire roadway were elevated. The FDOT needs to make it clear that there is a potential for two additional roads if Alternative 4 is constructed. This includes the extension of Persimmon Boulevard and 60th Street in order to tie into SR 7. The no-build option results in only negative impacts to existing roads and traffic.

After the group presentations, it was clear that although none of the agencies endorsed a corridor, Corridor 4 was the least favorable.

Meeting Conclusion and Discussion

Following the group presentations, Ms. Caicedo-Maddison made it clear that the FDOT will not consider releasing its Right-of-Way along the rangeline until the end of the process.

Ms. Durando asked how the FDOT is involved with DRI applications, and why maintaining an acceptable Level of Service is the agency's responsibility. Ms. Caicedo-Maddison responded by saying that the FDOT is involved with the DRI process as a commenting agency. Ms. Durando stated that the FDOT and the County is willing to sacrifice wildlife and the Everglades for the unattainable goal of flowing traffic.

Ms. Riccio commented that most County Commissioners live east of I-95, or just west of I-95. She said the Commissioners must respect residents in the communities that are affected. They need to help each other without politics involved.

Mr. Foy asked Mr. Webb if the County has the option to continue the extension north beyond Persimmon Boulevard if the FDOT selects the no-build option. Mr. Webb responded that the County could decide to continue with the project even if the FDOT selects the no-build option, as long as County funds are used.

Ms. Caicedo-Maddison thanked everyone for their participation and input and invited everyone to the Public Workshop on May 24, 2006.

The meeting adjourned at 12 p.m.