


NORTH LAKE TRAIL PHASE 3 - CORRIDOR PLANNING STUDY

FPID # 441626-1

PROJECT VISIONING TEAM MEETING

 Thursday, September 6, 2018
1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

 Astor Community Center
24148 Ann Street, Astor, FL 32102

I. Introduction

- Judy Pizzo welcomed attendees to the second Project Visioning Team (PVT) meeting for the North Lake Trail Phase 3 Corridor Planning Study.
- Attendees introduced themselves and their organizations to the PVT members.
- Briefly discussed the limits of the study area for new attendees.
- Unveiled the project logo.
 - PVT suggested revising the project logo to place a silhouette of a pedestrian on the blue trail icon and change the red icon to equestrian use.
 - Revised logo is shown in the footer.

II. Overview of Previous Efforts

- Discussed the project schedule, including progress-to-date and upcoming efforts.
 - Progress-to-Date
 - The study began with data collection and a review of existing conditions earlier this year, the results of which were presented at the first PVT meeting in May 2018.
 - Defined the purpose and need for the study.
 - Began the development of alternatives and performed a preliminary evaluation of the alternatives.
 - Next steps for the study will include finalizing the alternatives and the alternatives evaluation, hosting a public meeting, and organizing several agency/stakeholder meetings to discuss the recommended alternative(s).


III. Purpose and Need

- Purpose: Provide a safe, comfortable, and accessible paved facility for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users of all ages and abilities between County Road (C.R.) 450 and State Road (S.R.) 40.

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- Needs
 - Gap in the regional trail network between North Lake Trail Phase 2 (Umatilla) and the S.R. 40 Black Bear Trail / Heart of Florida Loop
 - Lack of safe, comfortable, and accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities


IV. Alternatives Development and Evaluation

- The North Lake Trail Phase 3 contains three primary alternatives:
 - Alternative A
 - S.R. 19 from C.R. 450 to S.R. 40
 - Alternative B
 - S.R. 19 from C.R. 450 to Railroad Grade Road
 - Railroad Grade Road from S.R. 19 to C.R. 445
 - C.R. 445 from Railroad Grade Road to C.R. 445A
 - C.R. 445A from C.R. 445 to S.R. 40
 - Alternative C
 - S.R. 19 from C.R. 450 to Railroad Grade Road
 - Railroad Grade Road from S.R. 19 to C.R. 445A
 - C.R. 445A from Railroad Grade Road to S.R. 40
- The PVT discussed another potential alternative for the trail to follow C.R. 450 east of Umatilla until reaching the local park. From there, the alternative would loop back to S.R. 19 near Pittman.
 - Lake County explained that a right of way (R/W) feasibility analysis was performed for a trail along C.R. 450, and it identified that an eight foot (8') sidewalk would be the maximum pedestrian facility that could be accommodated up to the sports complex.
 - Lake County also indicated that a trail on C.R. 42 is identified within the Lake County Trails Master Plan.
 - Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) stated that they are working with property owners in this area to acquire an easement for sidewalks.
 - The sports complex/park is listed as a trailhead in the Lake County Trails Master Plan.

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- PVT members discussed the potential to design future trailheads to accommodate equestrian trailers. Lake County indicated that the planned Lake Butler Trailhead is planned for boat trailers, but not equestrian trailers. The Wildcat Lake parking area may be retrofitted to accommodate equestrian use.
 - Two potential trailheads along S.R. 19 may be designed to accommodate equestrian use: Northlake Regional Park (Umatilla) and the Pittman Ranger Station.
 - Lake County is currently designing an equestrian trail on S.R. 46.
- The majority of land within the study area is publicly owned, and the R/W width varies along S.R. 19. S.R. 19 has similar easement rights/restrictions as S.R. 40.
- Four example typical sections were discussed, which represent the four general R/W scenarios anticipated within the study area. A map identifying the potential application areas for each typical section was also discussed.
 - Example Typical Section 1 (trail within existing R/W) and Example Typical Section 2 (trail within additional easement area adjacent to existing R/W) highlight the potential of locating the trail within the existing R/W or placing the trail in a new easement immediately adjacent to the existing R/W.
 - Example Typical Section 3 showcased the potential approach to locating the trail in constrained R/W areas.
 - Drainage and/or utility poles may be impacted if using this approach.
 - Example Typical Section 4 showcased the potential approach to locating the trail in very constrained R/W areas.
 - Drainage and/or utility poles may be impacted if using this approach.
 - This typical section is better applied to areas with lower travel speeds (less than 40 MPH)
 - The Ocala National Forest requested that FDOT assist their efforts to digitize their land ownership, easement, and maintenance data.
 - Lake County stated that they have developed additional constrained area typical sections within their master plan. These typical sections are compliant with Lake County's current trail standards.
- An overview of all alternatives was discussed, following each of the trail alternatives from C.R. 450 (Umatilla) to S.R. 40 (south to north).

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- All three alternatives begin at C.R. 450 and follow the abandoned railroad corridor to Altoona.
 - Lake~Sumter MPO stated that there is a proposed trailhead location one block north of the project start in Umatilla.
 - One midblock crossing would be included near Beach Street, which would allow the trail alternative to follow the abandoned railroad corridor from the east side of S.R. 19 to the west side of S.R. 19.
 - SECO (Sumter Electric Company) owns the transmission poles located near the abandoned railroad corridor.
- North of Pittman, the trail alternatives become distinctly different.
 - PVT members asked if the trail will include boardwalk areas within the Pittman Swamp. This has not yet been determined at this phase of the study. Wooden boardwalks also require additional maintenance.
 - Lake County indicated that they have used Permatrack (concrete boardwalks) in wetland areas.
- PVT members discussed the area between Altoona and Pittman. R/W is fairly constrained in this area, and typical section 4 (very constrained) is under consideration for this location.
- PVT members discussed the Railroad Grade Road to C.R. 445A alternative (Alternative B).
 - The Ocala National Forest, US Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA Forest Service), indicated that ATVs are used heavily in this area. Lake County indicated that some of their trails experience ATV use as well.
 - The Ocala National Forest implemented OHV (off-highway vehicle) trails, however more people appear to ride off of the trails. Residents have been observed riding out of their backyards.
 - The Ocala National Forest also indicated that the orange B-C line may have considerable conflicts during hunting seasons and controlled burns.
 - This alternative also includes a small segment within Marion County.
- Alternative C follows Railroad Grade Road to C.R. 445A. The PVT raised similar concerns as to Alternative B in regards to OHV misuse of the trail and conflicts during hunting seasons and controlled burns
 - Additional conflicts may arise due to the perceptions of placing a paved trail adjacent to an unpaved dirt road.

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- Alternative B follows the entirety of C.R. 445.
 - There is a known bald eagle nesting site and a known red cockaded woodpecker nesting area near Alexander Springs.
 - The PVT members discussed the Alexander Springs Bridge.
 - The bridge is in good operating condition and there are no restoration projects scheduled within the near future.
 - PVT members discussed the potential to cantilever sidewalks on one or both sides of the bridge. A separate pedestrian bridge (pylons on either side of Alexander Springs Creek with a free-span bridge over the water) was also discussed.
 - The Ocala National Forest indicated that they plan to update the existing boat ramp at this location to be environmentally sustainable.
 - It was noted that heritage (cultural, historic, and archaeological) data is concentrated in/around Alexander Springs, and that a built-up environment would be recommended for any construction projects within the area.
- PVT members discussed that the R/W is constrained within Astor Park.
- The draft evaluation of the trail alternatives was discussed, including metrics for trail experience, natural impacts, physical impacts, cultural impacts, social & economic impacts, and traffic & safety impacts.
 - The habitat fragmentation risk is currently a qualitative analysis. Risk is identified based on a trail alongside or within the existing R/W, rather than developing/clearing a new path through the forest. The low risk categorization is based upon the lessened impacts of extending an existing barrier (increasing existing R/W width and cleared area) rather than creating a new barrier (creating a new cleared area separate from the existing R/W).
 - Wetland/floodplain impacts are tabulated based upon the potential impacts of the trail. Calculations are based on the maximum potential impact (20 ft of new impervious area). The trail is planned to have a width of 12 ft throughout the majority of the study area, and decreasing in width in constrained areas.
 - Cultural and historic sites are quantified based upon known and publicly available information within 500 ft of the trail alternatives.
 - Archaeological areas were qualitatively analyzed based upon publicly available information. Most archaeological data is confidential.

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- A draft evaluation matrix summary was discussed, which identified the primary differences between the trail alternatives.
- The PVT engaged in open discussion following the presentation. The following is a summary of the discussion topics.
 - New trail setback laws have been implemented for locations near natural springs. PVT members recommended reviewing the updated setback requirements.
 - Ocala National Forest and Lake George State Forest (Florida Forest Service) permit logging on property. The forests may incur additional liability and/or expenses to ensure safe logging operations for the logging teams and trail users.
 - Lake George State Forest uses permanent clay roads to access paved haul routes at permanent junctions.
 - Ocala National Forest conducts logging directly adjacent to State and County paved roads and build temporary clay roads to connect to the paved roads; which may occur at any location along S.R. 40, C.R. 445, C.R. 445A, and S.R. 19 as long as the selected road provides safe ingress and egress.
 - Logging operations within the Ocala National Forest are anticipated to necessitate trail crossings, and USDA Forest Service noted that the trucks are loaded up to 90,000 lbs.
 - Potential conflicts may arise between logging operations and trail users. Trail guards and/or law enforcement would be needed to prevent these conflicts, which can last up to two weeks at a time.
 - Trail users may create disruptions to the commercial logging operations (i.e. vandalism of logging equipment).
 - Logging contractors have additional liability, as they are held liable for any potential injuries of visitors within the work area (visitors would include trail users).
 - There are currently nine (9) logging purchasers who work with the Ocala National Forest. The USDA Forest Service recommended including representatives from each of these companies as project stakeholders.
 - Paisley Woods area is not logged.
 - The Paisley Woods Bicycle Trail is experiencing environmental degradation due to increased levels of tourism. Ocala National Forest is considering placing capacity limits on trail and spring usage to preserve the environment.

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- PVT members discussed the potential heritage impacts (cultural, historical, and archaeological impacts) to the study area. The Ocala National Forest indicated that several resources of historic and cultural significance are present within the area.
 - Tribal consultation is typically performed with the PD&E phase after the Corridor Planning Study has been completed.
- The Ocala National Forest is concerned about heritage impacts, fire management, and hunting areas within the study area, and wish to discuss this further with the study team.
 - USDA Forest Service indicated that fire along the trail corridor would create a maximum heat exposure of 3,000 BTU (British Thermal Unit) per square foot.
 - Fire from controlled burns may run up to the trail edge. Lake County recommended placing concrete curbs on the edges of the asphalt to protect the asphalt from melting.
 - Dog hunting (casting and catching from the easement area) is permitted within the Ocala Wildlife Management Area, and occurs along the entirety of S.R. 40, S.R. 19, C.R. 445A, C.R. 445, C.R. 42, and all roads within the Pipeline Unit of the Ocala Wildlife Management Area.
- PVT members discussed trail maintenance, including public facilities locations
 - Lake County installs signs along the trail to inform bicyclists and pedestrians where facilities are located and the distances between locations (i.e. Next rest area in ___ miles).
- Lake County recommended adding Fred Schneider and Seth Lynch from Lake County Public Works to the project mailing list for future discussions, particularly for trail design discussions.
- PVT members do not support any trail alternatives that utilize Railroad Grade Road, nor does the PVT support the potential segment of Alternative A that connects S.R. 19 to S.R. 40.
- PVT members prefer a hybrid alternative:
 - S.R. 19 from C.R. 450 to C.R. 445
 - C.R. 445 from S.R. 19 to C.R. 445A
 - C.R. 445A from C.R. 445 to S.R. 40

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V. Attachments

- Agenda
- Project Visioning Team Presentation
- Sign-In Sheet
- Comments Submitted