

## S.R. 40 Black Bear Trail - Corridor Planning Study

FPID # 436360-1

### PROJECT VISIONING TEAM MEETING



Thursday, September 6, 2018  
10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.



Astor Community Center  
24148 Ann Street, Astor, FL 32102

### I. Introduction

- Julia Holtzhausen welcomed attendees to the second Project Visioning Team (PVT) meeting for the S.R. 40 Black Bear Trail 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 final project logo.

### 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 PAG 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 Levy Hammock Road and U.S. 17.



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- Needs
  - Gap in the regional trail network (Heart of Florida Loop)
  - Lack of safe, comfortable, and accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities

#### IV. Alternatives Development and Evaluation

- The State Road (S.R.) 40 Black Bear Trail contains two primary alternatives with the potential for a third “hybrid” alternative:
  - Alternative A: North side of S.R. 40 from Levy Hammock Road to U.S. 17
  - Alternative B: South side of S.R. 40 from Levy Hammock Road to U.S. 17
  - Hybrid
    - North side of S.R. 40 from Levy Hammock Road to S.R. 19
    - South side of S.R. 40 from S.R. 19 to U.S. 17
- The majority of land within the study area is publicly owned, and the right of way (R/W) width varies along S.R. 40. S.R. 40 has similar easement rights/restrictions as S.R. 19.
- 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 45 MPH)



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- A previous Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study was performed on S.R. 40, which included the limits of the S.R. 40 Black Bear Trail Corridor Planning Study. The previous study identified that roadway widening may be needed in the future, but ultimately recommended that the section between Levy Hammock Road and U.S. 17 not be improved (no build scenario). The other segments of S.R. 40, however, were recommended for improvements, and included a trail alongside the road.
  - The trail is designed through C.R. 314 and programmed for construction in 2020. The next segment of the trail from C.R. 314 to C.R. 314A is under design. The final segment from C.R. 314A to Levy Hammock is scheduled for design, but is not yet funded.
    - These trails are either on the south side of S.R. 40 or are planned/anticipated to be located on the south side of S.R. 40.
- An overview of both alternatives was discussed, following each of the trail alternatives from Levy Hammock Road to U.S. 17 (west to east).
  - Power lines switch sides of the road (north and south) within the Marion County section.
  - The Centennial Trailhead is located on the south side of S.R. 40.
  - Juniper Springs is located on the north side of S.R. 40.
  - Wildcat Lake parking lot is located on the south side of S.R. 40.
  - Alternatives were shown to be flexible to mitigate property impacts, with varying paths and typical sections.
  - The North Lake Trail Phase 3 could tie-in to the Black Bear Trail on the south side of S.R. 40 either at S.R. 19 or C.R. 445A.
  - The very constrained typical section (Typical Section 4) would be needed to accommodate limited R/W within Astor.
    - The existing roadway in this area is three lanes.
  - The St Johns River Bridge on the Lake/Volusia County line has an existing sidewalk on the south side of the bridge.
    - Improvements would be needed for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Currently, pedestrians access the sidewalk via stairs from Front Street or they use the roadway shoulder. Bicycles either use the roadway shoulder or the travel lane.
    - The sidewalk is on the south side of the bridge.



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- This is a movable bridge that is in good operating conditions. There are no bridge restoration projects scheduled within the near future.
  - Alternative A (north side) would require two midblock crossing locations with refuge islands in order to utilize the existing sidewalk.
  - The bridge would need to be evaluated by a structural engineer to determine if the barrier walls can be shifted to accommodate a wider path on the bridge.
  - The bridge deck/sidewalk access may require changes to provide access for wheelchairs and bicycles.
- There are plans for a trail to be implemented on S.R. 40 east of U.S. 17 outside of the study area. The trail is planned for the south side of S.R. 40.
  - 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.
  - 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.
    - 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,



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C.R. 445, C.R. 42, and all roads within the Pipeline Unit of the Ocala Wildlife Management Area.

- PVT members encouraged engaging the North Central Florida Dog Hunters Association as a project stakeholder.
- 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 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 (Florida Forest Service) uses permanent clay roads to access paved haul routes at permanent junctions.
  - Ocala National Forest, US Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA Forest Service), conducts logging directly adjacent to State and County paved roads and builds 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.
- Discussed the potential midblock crossing locations in more detail. These locations would include pedestrian crossing signs and a crosswalk at a minimum. They are not anticipated to be signalized.



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- This Corridor Planning Study is not scoped to plan trailhead locations along the recommended trail alternative.
  - Lake County has planned trailheads at Astor Lions Community Park and the Butler Street Boat Ramp.
  - Lake County trail standards have changed recently. Trails now have a minimum width of 12 ft, with a recommended width of 14 ft. Horizontal clearance is required to be 5 ft within Lake County.
  - The S.R. 40 Black Bear Trail is currently planned as a 12 ft trail, except within constrained areas. FDOT horizontal clearance standards are 4 ft on either side of the trail.
- Equestrians are present within the study area, and there is a potential that they will use the trail.
  - The study has researched existing equestrian trails within the area.
  - PVT members indicated that equestrians are active within the Volusia County segment of the study area, and that they prefer forested paths. There is a potential gap in equestrian facilities between the Volusia County Segment (Lake George State Forest) and the Ocala National Forest across the St Johns River.
  - The PVT clarified that the St Johns River Bridge should not be designed to accommodate equestrian use. Vehicle traffic may spook the horses and cause safety concerns.
  - 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.
- 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.



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- PVT members discussed potential easements and maintenance agreements for the trail.
  - Maintenance of the trail would require each County to have a maintenance agreement with the USDA Forest Service. An annual maintenance plan would need to be submitted to the USDA Forest Service to ensure the proper maintenance of the trail facility.
  - The USDA Forest Service has separate easements for FDOT and utilities. Additional research would be needed in future phases to identify priority order of FDOT and utility easement rights.
  - Trail users would be required to pay the admission fees, where present, to destinations along the trail.
- PVT members discussed the potential use of impervious surfaces for the trail.
  - The trail is planned to be constructed of asphalt.
  - Trails are exempt from the water management district treatment standards, however the study will evaluate the effects to stormwater to reduce impacts to water flow due to the additional impervious surface.
  - Drainage would be fully evaluated during the design phase.
  - The Ocala National Forest prefers to use existing scrub/native plants to treat stormwater rather than constructing water treatment areas. This would reduce environmental impacts.
- PVT members discussed the preference to place the trail in an existing environmentally disturbed area (i.e. cleared area), rather than clearing/disturbing a new area. The potential to plant new landscaping to act as natural barriers separating the trail from the roadway was also discussed.
  - The Ocala National Forest indicated that they have performed research on this topic.
  - Lake County does not permit Bahia grass nets. Wildflower areas are permitted.
  - PVT members agreed that clear zone areas should be landscaped to be more aesthetically appealing with natural, local vegetation (no Bahia grass).
  - The Ocala National Forest indicated there are several local plants that may accommodate this preference.
- The Lake George State Forest indicated that there are several wetlands within their lands.
  - Water flows from north to south, across S.R. 40. S.R. 40 acts as a dam that prevents water flow.



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- Existing culverts impacted by the trail would be extended to accommodate the additional impervious area. Future phases may determine a need for additional culverts.
- Existing flooding may indicate that cross drains and/or ditches may not be large enough to prevent roadway flooding.
- The trail design would be similar to that of a roadway, in that the trail would be elevated above the seasonal high water table.
- After this corridor planning study is complete, a PD&E is currently scheduled for 2020.
  - 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 (ribbon curb) on the edges of the asphalt to protect the asphalt from melting.
  - The study is working to balance the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians with environmental concerns.
- PVT members discussed how the Black Bear Trail could connect to the planned trail on the east side of U.S. 17.
  - A crosswalk could be added on the southern leg of the intersection of S.R. 40 and U.S. 17 to accommodate pedestrians if both trails are constructed.
- The Black Bear Trail design is flexible to accommodate a connection to the Barberville Pioneer Settlement.

## V. Attachments

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

