

BLACK BEAR TRAIL - CORRIDOR PLANNING STUDY

FPID # 436360-1

PROJECT VISIONING TEAM MEETING



Thursday, February 14, 2019
1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.



Astor Community Association
24148 Ann Street, Astor, FL 32102

I. Introduction

- Julia Holtzhausen welcomed attendees to the third Project Visioning Team (PVT) meeting for the State Road (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 and purpose of the project for new attendees.
- Julia discussed the project fact sheet in detail.
- Goal of today's meeting is to solicit comments on the study to prepare for Project Development & Environment (PD&E) phase beginning in FY 2020. This would include clarification of items that need to be addressed during the PD&E.

II. Outcomes from Previous Meetings

- Discussed the recent Public Meeting held on January 24, 2019, and provided an overview of the evaluation matrix.
 - Trail was well-received by the public.
 - Twelve (12) comments were received.
 - Two (2) were in support for Alternative B.
- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Units & Management Meetings
 - Trail alternatives were well-received by FDOT.

III. Alternatives Evaluation

- The defined characteristics of each trail alternative were provided to attendees on a project fact sheet.
- Alternative A – north side of S.R. 40
 - Juniper Springs is on the north side of the road.
 - Located within the Juniper Prairie Wilderness.



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- Wilderness areas are protected by additional legislation, both Federal and State, including the Federal Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Florida Wilderness Act of 1983 – Public law 98-430.
- Alternative B – south side of S.R. 40
 - The design for east of this study area includes a trail on the south side of the road.
 - Studies/preliminary design west of this study area is evaluating a trail on the south side of the road.
 - St. Johns River Bridge has an existing sidewalk on the south side of the bridge.
 - Connects to the planned North Lake Trail Phase 3.
 - Avoids any potential conflicts with the Wilderness Management Area (WMA) restrictions near Juniper Springs.
- The final placement of the trail will be determined during the PD&E.
 - Received comments to not have the trail run alongside the road the entire way.
 - Received comments to not disturb untouched forest and reduce habitat fragmentation.
- Right of Way
 - If completed by FDOT, current policies indicate that land will not be acquired using eminent domain, per SunTrail funding restrictions.
- Typical Sections
 - Discussed the four typical section strategies for the varying right of way throughout the corridor.
 - Discussed Typical 4 - Constrained Areas at length
- National Scenic Byway Kiosk is located on the south side of S.R. 40 at the intersection with Old C.R. 3.
- Lake County's potential trailheads are also located on the south side of S.R. 40.
 - Alternative A would create an additional midblock crossing to trailhead locations in this scenario.

IV. Open Discussion

- More detailed environment/cultural surveys will be completed during the PD&E phase for the preferred alternative(s).



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- Any impacts to the Ocala National Forest would trigger the need for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies, which would need to be scoped and developed in coordination with the Ocala National Forest Staff.
- Right of Way
 - Alternatives currently assume a right of way need of 20 feet. The trail right of way could be within or alongside the existing right of way depending on the application of the typical sections.
- Drainage and design would be further discussed in PD&E phase with design accommodated in a more distant phase.
 - Different curb options are available, depending on the speed limit of the adjacent road.
 - Piping would hold some stormwater and existing swales may be expanded to accommodate additional water.
 - Confirmation that ponds are not required will be evaluated during PD&E.
- Recommendation
 - More advantages are seen on the south side.
 - No advantages are seen on the north side other than eliminating a crossing of SR 40 for users desiring to go to Juniper Springs.
 - PD&E phase will continue to evaluate the viable alternative(s).
- National Scenic Trail is located parallel to S.R. 40 on the north side near Juniper Springs.
 - Designated a National Scenic Trail with the National Trails System Act.
 - Alternative A would run parallel to the road and the National Scenic Trail.
 - Alternative B would cross the National Scenic Trail.
- Ongoing project on U.S. 17 between S.R. 40 and Pierson, trail alternatives are shown on the east side of U.S. 17.
- Lake George State Forest
 - North side has least impact to existing State Forest lands and operations. Staff with the State Forest would prefer to minimize the impacts on existing uses and operations, including entrances as much as possible.
 - South side would provide connections without requiring users to cross S.R. 40.
 - More publicly owned land is located on the south side of S.R. 40.
- Connected hydrology will be a concern, as water flows from the north side of S.R. 40 to the south side.
 - The trail will need to include cross drains in order to not impede natural water flow.



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- Maintenance Agreements
 - FDOT's current assumption is that county and local agencies would be responsible for maintaining the trail.
 - The request/prioritization of the projects by the local agencies showed intent towards maintenance by the local jurisdictions and those requests will be reviewed. Due to the complexity with the Forests, FDOT and Local Agencies, the agreements should be done during future phases.
 - Maintenance agreements would include additional documents with the Ocala National Forest & Lake George State Forest.
 - Agencies noted that they will need to in the future require a request for maintenance in writing to get their board approvals.
- Suggested landscaping in/around trails to use native plants to minimize required maintenance and add beauty to the trail.
 - Deemphasize sod.
 - Slopes of drainage swales may not be practical for natural planting. This would be determined during the Design phase.
- Midblock crossings are possible, but are not ideal due to the high truck volume and speeds.
 - Overhead crossings may not be cost feasible.
- Truck weigh station is within the study limits.
 - Trail would need to go around the weigh station.
- Ocala National Forest has different sign requirements while on their property.
 - Details will need to be refined during the PD&E phase.

V. Next Steps

- Upcoming Meetings
 - April / May for Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Committees/Board presentations
 - Meet with both US Forest and State Forest Staff
 - Will verify need for other MPO/TPO Presentations
 - County meetings during PD&E



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- All agencies present indicated a preference for working meetings to determine maintenance agreements and have working drafts ready for signature by the end of the PD&E phase.

VI. Attachments

- Agenda
- Project Visioning Team Project Fact Sheet
- Sign-in Sheet

