

NORTH LAKE TRAIL PHASE 3 - CORRIDOR PLANNING STUDY

FPID # 441626-1

PROJECT VISIONING TEAM MEETING

 Thursday, February 14, 2019
3 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.

 Astor Community Association
24148 Ann Street, Astor, FL 32102

I. Introduction

- Judy Pizzo welcomed attendees to the third Project Visioning Team (PVT) Meeting for the North Lake Trail Phase 3 Corridor Planning Study.
- Most attendees introduced themselves and their organizations to the PVT members.
- Informed attendees of the three (3) alternatives under evaluation.
 - Alternative A – S.R. 19
 - Alternative B – C.R. 445
 - Alternative C – C.R. 445A

II. Outcome from Previous Meetings

- Public Meeting
 - Trail was well-received by the public at the Public Meeting on January 24, 2019.
- FDOT Units & Management Meetings
 - Trail alternatives were well-received by FDOT.

III. Alternatives Evaluation

- Connections to nearby hiking/biking trails
- Alternative B
 - No midblock crossings.
 - Pedestrian crossing across S.R. 19 at C.R. 445
- Adjacent roadway traffic volume
 - Highest on S.R. 19
 - Volume is less on C.R. 445 and C.R. 445A
 - Fewer trucks on these roads.
- C.R. 445 has a bridge crossing over the Alexander Springs Creek.
- Alexander Springs is a wilderness area (Billies Bay Wilderness)
 - Between S.R. 19 and C.R. 445

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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
- C.R. 445A
 - Most of this area has right of way constraints, which would result in the need for curb and gutter.
- Reasons to eliminate the Railroad Grade Road alternative:
 - Potential misuse of the trail
 - Potential conflict with prescribed burns in forest
 - Potential conflict with hunting activities in forest
 - Potential conflict with logging operations in forest
 - Would result in additional clearing for a corridor adjacent to the existing dirt roadway

IV. Project Deliverables

- Final Corridor Planning Technical Memorandum is in progress.
 - Draft will be completed within the next couple of months.
 - Judy indicated that the draft report will be shared with the PVT members prior to finalizing the document.
- Upcoming MPO/TPO updates
 - April/May Lake~Sumter MPO presentation
 - Prefer to have the presentations combined (5 minutes for both projects total)
- S.R. 40 Black Bear Trail PD&E Study will help educate stakeholders about potential mitigation efforts, costs, user groups, etc. that may be applied to the North Lake Trail Phase 3 project when it receives funding for the next project phase.

V. Open Discussion

- Existing trailhead for the National Scenic Trail is located north of C.R. 445 on S.R. 19
 - Includes a paved parking lot.
- Lake County Trails Master Plan was adopted in September 2018.
 - Includes all three (3) North Lake Trail alternatives

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- Discussions of future accommodations for trail users (i.e. unintended consequences)
 - Users could backpack and camp in the forest.
 - Unmanaged recreation impacts to the forest.
- CSX is doing a property sale right now for many of corridors in their system.
- Pittman Ranger Station (across from Lake Dorr) is a historic site.
- North Lake Trail would need to be a 2 or 3 phases if constructed by the County or MPO.
- Landscaping
 - Discussed creating a vegetation buffer between the road and the trail.
 - Native vegetation is preferred.
 - Sand pines are short-lived and would drop a lot of leaves on the trail (hard to maintain).
- Alternate paths through the forest were considered, and eliminated from additional study.
 - Would require a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).
 - Incompatible land uses of recreational trail with forest protection.
- Paisley Woods Off-Road Bicycle Trail
 - A 22-mile loop through the southeastern corridor of the Ocala National Forest.
 - Unpaved facilities are considered temporary and can be restored to forest if needed in the future.
 - Irretrievable commitment of resources if you use asphalt.
- The PVT advised that the situational climate / local activities should remain a consideration for trail alternatives under evaluation by FDOT and any potential trail amenities developed in the future by other agencies.
 - There is a concern for an increase in RTVs.
- It seems that most of the existing roadway network is by easement from the Federal Government/Ocala National Forest.
- Discussed landscape architecture to bring the forest edge to the trail, rather than bringing the trail closer to the trail.
 - Frangible vegetation can be planted in clear zones to create a buffer between the trail and road.
- Ocala National Forest has different sign requirements while on their property.
 - Details will need to be refined during the PD&E phase.

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VI. Next Steps

- Future phases for the North Lake Trail Phase 3 project are not funded at this time.
- Final documents will show a preference for a particular alternative, but the viable alternatives will continue to move forward for additional evaluation in PD&E.
- Due to the use of underlying property that is Federal (US Forest) there is a need to follow NEPA even if nonfederal funds are used in the development of the trail. The PD&E process will need to address the requirements of the US Forest Service.
- The project team will schedule meetings with the Ocala National Forest and Lake George State Forests to document known concerns and preferred mitigation strategies for various situations.

I. Attachments

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