

### LAKE / ORANGE COUNTY CONNECTOR (US 27 TO SR 429) ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY GROUP (EAG) MEETING #2 SUMMARY

**Date/Time:** Tuesday, February 12, 2019; 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Location:** Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX), 4974 ORL Tower Road, Orlando, FL 32807, Board Room

**Attendees:** Fifteen EAG members, one guest and eight staff members attended. Seven of the EAG members participated via GoToMeeting. See sign-in sheets attached.

#### I. Notifications

Invitation letters were emailed to 78 members of the EAG on January 15, 2019.



#### II. Welcome

Nicole Gough of Dewberry, CFX's General Engineering Consultant (GEC), called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. and welcomed everyone. She gave a brief introduction about the meeting and provided Title VI information and described the Goal of the EAG:

- Receive input regarding local needs, concerns and potential physical, natural, social and cultural impacts of the proposed project; and,
- Foster an atmosphere that encourages discussion

As an EAG Member we encourage you to:

- Assist in the identification of potential project impacts, opportunities and constraints, and
- Provide feedback and comments regarding the information presented

She also mentioned that the meeting was being recorded and there were members participating via GoToMeeting. Attendees introduced themselves and the organizations they represented.

### III. Lake / Orange County Connector PD&E Study Presentation

Will Sloup, Consultant Project Manager with Metric Engineering, presented the following information:

- **Study Objective**
  - The Lake / Orange County Connector PD&E study will determine if a limited access facility between US 27 in south Lake County and State Road 429 in west Orange County is economically and environmentally viable in accordance with CFX policies and procedures.
  - The study area lies within Lake County and Orange County and the limits are described as: Porter Road on the north; SR 429 on the east; Old YMCA Road on the south; and US 27 on the west.
  - At the present time, the study area is generally undeveloped.



- **Future Land Use**
  - The study area falls within the Wellness Way Area Plan and the Horizon West Special Planning Area.
  - The Wellness Way Area Plan has been recognized for many years as an area that has significant potential for economic development in southeast Lake County.
  - Horizon West is a fast-growing, master-planned community in southwest Orange County.

- **Project Development Process**

The proposed Lake / Orange Connector has gone through several steps in CFX's Project Development Process:

- Studies were conducted in 2002, 2007 and 2017 to determine if a limited-access, tolled connection between US 27 and SR 429 was feasible. These studies are available for review upon request.
- It is identified in the CFX Visioning +2040 Master Plan, and in the Lake County and Orange County Long Range Transportation Plans.
- The PD&E study and design phases are currently funded in the CFX Five-Year Work Plan.
- The proposed Lake / Orange County Connector project is currently at the PD&E study step of the project development process.
- CFX follows a project development process for new alignment expansion projects. At each step in the process, before construction commences, the project could be placed on hold to be revisited in the future.

- **Project Needs**

- The need for a transportation project arises from deficiencies, issues or concerns that currently exist or are expected to occur within the study area. In short, the need establishes the rationale for pursuing a project.
- The proposed Lake / Orange County Connector has six project needs as shown on the slide.
  - Improved connections between area roads
  - Future transportation demand
  - Consistency with local & regional plans
  - Economic viability & job creation
  - Intermodal opportunities
  - Evacuation & emergency services

- **PD&E Study**

- Simply stated, the PD&E Study will determine if there is an engineering and environmentally feasible alternative to meet the project needs.
- Using the results of previous studies as a foundation, the study began with an Alternative Corridor Evaluation which identified a recommended corridor area.

- We are now conducting alternatives analysis which will help us identify the recommended preferred alternative.
- **Alternative Corridor Evaluation**
  - During the Alternative Corridor Evaluation, a series of 800-foot wide corridors were developed and evaluated to determine how well the six project needs are satisfied.
  - The corridors were also evaluated, to the same desk-top level of detail, based on engineering, environmental and socio-economic criteria that were tailored to fit the characteristics of the study area.
  - Evaluation matrices were developed based on these criteria, to facilitate the comparison of the alternative corridors.
- **Stakeholder Outreach**
  - The development of the corridor alternatives was closely coordinated with our project stakeholders.
  - Individual meetings were held over the past several months with each stakeholder.
  - In addition, staff from Lake and Orange counties have been working with us as part of the study team.
- **Public Involvement**

Public involvement and interagency coordination have been and will continue to be an integral part of the assessment process.
- **EAG Input Received – July 30, 2018**

Additionally, as we developed our corridor alternatives, we considered the input we received from EAG members in July.
- **Alternative Corridor Evaluation**
  - The results obtained show Corridors 12, 17 and 20 could each provide a superior solution with an adequate balance between the three decisional components.
  - To allow for flexibility in the alternatives analysis phase, the recommended corridor encompasses the area that is bordered by Corridor 20 on the north and Corridor 17 on the south.
  - The results of the Alternative Corridor Evaluation are documented in the Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report. This document is available for review upon request. The recommended corridor area is shown in green and represents the area in which project alternatives have been developed.

- **Alternatives Analysis**

- Four project alternatives have been developed.
- Alternatives 1 and 2 are the northern routes while Alternatives 3 and 4 are the southern routes.
- All alternatives end at a common location at SR 429, whereas there are four potential tie-in locations at US 27.
- New interchanges are proposed with US 27, the future extension of County Road 455 (a potential diamond interchange is being used for analysis purposes), the future Valencia Parkway (partial interchange) and SR 429 (systems interchange).
- The conceptual designs show US 27 shifted to the east; this is to accommodate the interchange with US 27 while avoiding impacts to Lake Louisa State Park lands.
- The No-Action or No-Build Alternative serves as the baseline for comparison against the various build alternatives.
- There is always the possibility that the No-Build Alternative could be chosen as the preferred alternative.

- **Proposed Typical Section**

- The proposed typical section for all four project alternatives is shown on this slide.
- A potential right-of-way width of 330 feet would accommodate an initial 4-lanes and future widening to 8-lanes.
- Future widenings are to the inside and provide for potential multi-use lanes in the median.
- Right of way will vary in locations that accommodate interchanges.

- **Alternatives Analysis**

- Analysis requires a comparative evaluation to assess the project alternatives (including the No-Action Alternative).
- The objective of an alternatives evaluation matrix is to compare the performance of each viable alternative in meeting the evaluation criteria, and to quantify its impacts to the natural, social, cultural and physical environment.
- The evaluation matrix is on display today at the meeting.
- Analysis requires a comparative evaluation to assess the project alternatives (including the No-Action Alternative).

- The objective of an alternatives evaluation matrix is to compare the performance of each viable alternative in meeting the evaluation criteria, and to quantify its impacts to the natural, social, cultural and physical environment.
- We will continue to solicit public input on the project alternatives and eventually identify a recommended preferred alternative.
- Detailed engineering and environmental analysis will be performed on that alternative with the results documented in a series of engineering and environmental reports.

#### IV. Questions & Discussion

Nicole Gough of Dewberry opened the discussion period by asking if there were any questions.

**Beth Jackson, Orange County Environmental Protection Division:** We appreciate the effort to avoid the Schofield Tract, as there are lots of threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species in the area. Please be aware that the area meets the criteria for sand skinks, as well as other species like gopher tortoises. We ask that the final alternative have minimal impact to Lake Louisa State Park entrance way.

**Aldin Mathews, Lake Louisa State Park:** As a citizen, I want good roads as well as a good environment. We already have traffic challenges at the park's entrance coming northbound with the hill, high-speed traffic and RV's trying to turn in, so our main concern is safety of visitors. I don't know that any alternative is better than the others, once you get down to the details of looking at environmental concerns. There will be some traffic noise at the campground and cabins, but the hill might help alleviate that. Anything that could be done to mitigate traffic noise would be good. Is there any intent for right of way needs from park? Also, are there plans to eventually continue this to SR 33 to the west? Signage would be important for us.



**Will Sloup, Metric Engineering:** – No, there aren't any plans to continue to SR 33. And we don't anticipate any right of way needed from the park.

**Larry Fooks, Florida Department of Environmental Protection:** We appreciate you working to not affect the park entrance. With the increased volume of traffic, and the large RV's coming in and out of park, maybe it's a possibility to get a traffic light at the park entrance.

**Will Sloup:** We're coordinating with the Florida Department of Transportation District 5, which is aware of access management issues, particularly with the state park, so we will continue to coordinate with them. Of course, if traffic volumes warrant it, they would consider a signal.

**Ron Hart, Lake County Water Authority:** Have you considered sliding the interchange with CR 455 slightly to the east to avoid wetland impacts? Also, could CR 455 slightly slant to avoid the Schofield Tract?

**Will Sloup:** CR 455 extension is also undergoing a PD&E study by Lake County currently. What we're showing is the assumption of where that road might go. The idea is to show that there will be an interchange in that location and that it will probably be a diamond.

**Nicole Gough:** This is a moving target and our best estimate of where it will be.

Nicole said the study team has been documenting the potential for listed species and their habitats.

**Brian Barnett, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission:** Is there any of the environmental information available in the analysis?

**Nicole Gough:** No, there's no natural resources information in the study as of yet. They're still working on the more detailed natural resources evaluation documentation.

**Brian Barnett:** Just curious, whatever happened to Lake Needham? It looks like 10 years ago it dried up into a series of ponds.

**Will Sloup:** It appears to be a seasonal wet area. I do know there is a lot of development occurring on the south side of it now.

**Ron Hart:** When we look at the rainfall we've recorded in that area over the last 18 years, 14 years have been lower than average. The past two years, including hurricane rainfall, should help bring that back to what it used to be 20-30 years ago.

**Nicole Gough:** How do you see this proposed project affecting Clermont?

**Mark Griffin, City of Clermont:** Obviously more traffic to the south. We expect an impact in traffic, but not to our utility service area.

**Marge Holt, Sierra Club:** I'm looking at South Bradshaw Road near Lake Pike and Lake Adain – are there plans to bridge those areas?

**Will Sloup:** Yes, if there's a span across a water body, that's a bridge option. It could also be a bridge across deep wetlands. We need to get further along in our geotechnical investigations to determine that.

**Marge Holt:** Does the hydrological flow go towards Lake Louisa for most of this?

**Nicole Gough:** I haven't studied this – but Lake Louisa has a hill and there's topographic change within the study area and into the Lake Louisa area, so you're looking at separate basins.

**Marge Holt:** It would be great if we could maintain the flow to Lake Louisa.

**Nick McRay, Lake County Public Works:** We're not aware of any drainage conveyance from the study area over to Lake Louisa State Park. They are separate basins.

**Nicole Gough:** Will, could you discuss pond siting and how you address drainage at this level of study?

**Will Sloup:** Ponds are sited conceptually based on the existing basins that are out there. It's the stormwater that would be stored on site in that particular drainage basin.

**Ron Hart:** Where you propose any bridge crossing around Pike Lake, would you be treating water from roads into your ponds, or allow to discharge into the lake then doing some other mitigation project?

**Will Sloup:** These bridges are short, which means they most likely will be treated through ponds.

**Cammie Dewey, St. Johns River Water Management District:** Yes, we try to work to get water treated. It can be difficult to treat water on certain length bridges. In this area we have a lot of sandy hill areas, most ponds are dry. The ability to work with local governments for water harvesting to supplement reclaimed systems would be a plus. Here we have the chance to get infrastructure in place ahead of development that follows new roads.

**Nicole Gough:** The study team has had some meetings with the St. Johns River and South Florida Water Management Districts, as well as Lake County, to start talking about these water harvesting opportunities and perhaps implement strategies on this roadway.

Nicole asked Bill Adams of the St. Johns River Water Management District if he had any thoughts about consumptive use in relation to this study area.

**Bill Adams, St. Johns River Water Management District:** Regarding the project, once you decide on a corridor, you would look at what the water requirements through the construction period then the operation of the project. You'd have to determine what would require consumptive use permit then plan to plug the wells that would not be used throughout the life of the project.

**Larry Fooks:** It appears that in Alternative 1 there's a lake in the park, and one of the ramps appears to be in that area. Take extra care to not kill that lake. Alternative 1-1 may capture that, but when it gets west of US 27, we need to do something there.

**Ron Hart:** It may be good to capture stormwater from US 27 into a dry pond to get it into the groundwater level.

**Cammie Dewey:** We have issued permits along US 27 for those improvements; you may need to circle back with the Florida Department of Transportation to ensure what you're doing meshes with the permitting they've received. Some of the stormwater may already be treated as a result. The permit is #90260.

**Brian Barnett:** I need to point out this area is in the common range for Black Bear, so this facility will bring about Black Bear mortalities from car collisions. Identify a particular wildlife crossing; we can work with you to get a crossing in the design of the road.

**Nicole Gough:** Can you share telemetry you have on that?

**Brian Barnett:** We don't have a lot of reports with human/Black Bear interactions here, because it's mostly rural. There have been bear deaths on US 27 close by. The range extends from Kissimmee to Clermont for common Black Bears.

**Ron Hart:** Does the numbering of the alternatives indicate their priority?

**Will Sloup:** No, we are still evaluating the alternatives and we don't have a priority yet.

**Brian Barnett:** At what point do you anticipate disseminating portions of the study to agencies for input?

**Will Sloup:** We're continuing with public involvement and collecting comments. After the March 7 public meeting we will conclude the comments on the alternatives evaluation. We will then move to identifying which is preferred alternative to consider for further evaluation then show at the public hearing. That's the alternative that will be documented in the preliminary engineering report. The draft of those documents will go out for inspection at least 21 days before the public hearing, so likely in early June. What you'll see at the next round of EAG and PAG meetings, will be recommended alternative go forward, as well as the no-build alternative.

**Rich Mospens, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission:** The two maps don't give a lot of detail unless you zoom in. It looks like when you zoom in the proposed ramps to US 27 are within the current right of way?

**Will Sloup:** Yes, there will be additional right of way needed, but the connection – US 27 will need to be slightly relocated to the east to avoid Lake Louisa State Park. Each alternative holds the west right-of-way line to its current configuration.

There were no further questions. Nicole turned to Kathy Putnam, to close the meeting.

#### **V. Lake / Orange County Connector PD&E Study Presentation, continued**

To conclude the presentation Kathy Putnam, CFX's Public Involvement Coordinator, presented the following information:

- The study schedule, indicating we are in second round of EAG and PAG meetings.
- The second public meeting will be March 7 5:30 – 7:30 at Bridgewater Middle School.
- The final EAG meeting is expected sometime in May. The Public Hearing is expected in late June.
- The study team is available for small stakeholder meetings.
- All the materials presented today will be on the website tomorrow.

#### **END OF SUMMARY**

This meeting summary was prepared by Kathy Putnam, Public Involvement Coordinator with Quest Corporation of America. It is not verbatim but is a summary of the meeting activities and overall discussion. If you feel something should be added or revised, please contact Kathy Putnam by email at [LakeOrangeStudy@CFXway.com](mailto:LakeOrangeStudy@CFXway.com) or by telephone 407-802-3210 within five days of receipt of this summary.

**SIGN IN**

Lake/Orange County Connector Feasibility/Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study  
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY GROUP - MEETING NO. 2

CFX Project No.: 599-225

CFX Headquarters, 4974 ORL Tower Rd, Orlando, FL 32807

February 12, 2019 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Name	Organization	Address	City/State/Zip	Email Address	Initials
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Traci Deen	Conservation Trust for Florida	1731 NW 6th Street, Suite D	Gainesville, FL 32609	traci@conserveflorida.org	
Nahir DeTizio	Florida Highway Administration (FHWA) - FL	400 W. Washington Street - Suite 4200	Orlando, FL 32801	nahir.detizio@dot.gov	
Cammie Dewey	St. Johns River Water Management District	601 S. Lake Destiny Road, Suite 200	Maitland, FL 32751	cdewey@sjrwm.com	GoTo Meeting 
Laura DiGruttolo	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Farris Bryant Building 620 S. Meridian Street	Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600	laura.digruttolo@myfwc.com	
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William Graf	South Florida Water Management District	Orlando Service Center 1707 Orlando Central Pkwy., Suite 200	Orlando, FL 32809	wgraf@sfwmd.gov	
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Mary Hamilton	Lake County	315 W. Main Street, #411	Tavares, FL 32778	mhamilton@lakecountyfl.gov	
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Marjorie Holt	Sierra Club of Florida	Florida Regional Office 1990 Central Avenue	St. Petersburg, FL 33712	marjorieholt@earthlink.net	
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Timothy Parsons	FL Dept of State - Div of Historical Resources	RA Gray Building 500 S. Bronough Street	Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250	timothy.parsons@dos.myflorida.com	
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Zakia Williams	US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	North Florida Ecological Services Field Office 7915 Baymeadows Way, Suite 200	Jacksonville, FL 32256-7517	zakia_williams@fws.gov	GoTo Meeting ✓
John Wrublik	US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	North Florida Ecological Services Field Office 7915 Baymeadows Way, Suite 200	Jacksonville, FL 32256-7517	john_wrublik@fws.gov	
Lori Patterson	Dixie River Basin Authority				GoTo Meeting ✓
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Larry Fooks	DEP	1800 Wickiwa Cir Apopka	32712	Larry.Fooks@floridadep.gov	LF



# STAFF SIGN IN SHEET

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**STAFF SIGN IN SHEET**

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