

CENTRAL FLORIDA EXPRESSWAY AUTHORITY

**MINUTES
CENTRAL FLORIDA EXPRESSWAY AUTHORITY
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
August 20th, 2020**

Location: Virtual

The Committee Meeting can be accessed through Zoom Webinar by calling the toll-free number (877) 853-5257 and entering the webinar ID: 910 1438 6242 or can be viewed by clicking the link, [https://cfxway.zoom.us/Environmental Stewardship Committee Meeting/8.20.20](https://cfxway.zoom.us/Environmental%20Stewardship%20Committee%20Meeting/8.20.20) and entering the passcode: 027458

Committee Members Present:

Robert Mindick, Osceola County Representative, Committee Chair
Jim Barfield, Brevard County Representative
Richard Durr, Seminole County Representative
Beth Jackson, Orange County Representative
Charles Lee, Citizen Representative
Timothee Sallin, Lake County Representative
Brittany Sellers, City of Orlando Representative

Also Present:

Laura Kelley, Executive Director
Glenn Pressimone, Chief of Infrastructure
Michelle Maikisch, Chief of Staff/ Public Affairs Officer
Mimi Lamaute, Board Services Coordinator/CFX Financial Disclosure Coordinator
Rita Moore, Recording Secretary/Executive Assistant
Dale Allen, Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation
Ralph Bove, Volkert, Inc.
Dan Kristoff, RS&H
Kelli Muddle, Volkert, Inc.
Clif Tate, Kimley-Horn and Associates

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 am by Chairman Mindick. Roll Call was conducted to confirm a quorum.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

We received one public comment which was read in by General Counsel, Woody Rodriguez.

C. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – (Info Item)

Ms. Kelley, CFX Executive Director, welcomed everyone to the committee and thanked them for their time and commitment.

Mr. Rodriguez, CFX General Counsel, explained the procedures and policies of the Committee voting process. Mr. Rodriguez stated that the Committee members will be operating under Robert's Rules.

Chairman Mindick stated the purpose of the Environmental Stewardship Committee from the Committee Charter.

D. FLORIDA NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL CROSSING OF SR 528 – PRESENTED BY DALE ALLEN, FLORIDA GREENWAYS AND TRAILS FOUNDATION (info. item)

Mr. Dale Allen presented a proposed land bridge crossing of S.R. 528. After looking at a multitude of options for a corridor the idea of a land bridge was proposed as an option. St. Johns Water Management district was consulted about the potential site and had two main concerns, impacts to the wetland and cavity trees for the red-cockaded woodpecker. The potential site was selected for multiple reasons, mainly it has no impact to the wetlands or the red-cockaded woodpecker nesting cavity trees. The site is west of Turkey Creek Road, which is pasture land with no trees and on its north side it would fall on a former road, so it will not affect wetlands. FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation was consulted as well, they stated they were not aware of any Florida red-cockaded woodpecker's in the area. CFX offered three (3) different proposals for the project, a 20 ft. wide pedestrian only bridge, 50 ft. wide multi-use bridge (limited wildlife capacity), and 100 ft. bridge land bridge that would accommodate a multi-use corridor for people and wildlife.

A discussion was had around the whether the land bridge would continue paving the disturbed road into Hal Scott Regional Park and Preserve. Mr. Allen stated that at these beginning stages we have no plans for that.

A discussion was had around the Department of Transportation in Volusia County newly constructed wildlife crossing over Interstate-4 and the development of the land on one side of it that renders the crossing potentially wasted and concerns that the south end of the proposed S.R. 528 bridge could meet a similar end if no promises were made by the landowners to preserve the land around this bridge. Mr. Lee stated that this should be a wildlife crossing in his opinion and suggested working and speaking with Deseret Ranch. Mr. Allen responded that Florida Greenway and Trails Foundation is in talks with Deseret Ranch and they are cooperative and in the loop.

Ms. Sellers suggested gathering quantifiable data around best practices regarding other land bridges. Specifically, requirements for wildlife, what species would use the bridge, and referring to the National Wildlife Foundation guidelines. She suggested identifying benefits of the land bridge to the owners/developers.

(This item was presented for information only. No formal committee action was taken.)

E. OSCEOLA / BREVARD COUNTY CONNECTOR CONCEPT, FEASIBILITY AND MOBILITY (CF&M) STUDY – PRESENTED BY CLIF TATE P.E., PROJECT MANAGER, KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES – INFO ITEM

Mr. Clif Tate of Kimley-Horn and Associates presented the CF&M study for the Osceola/Brevard County Connector. He stated that we are currently in the feasibility stage of the project development process which looks for potential flaws in the project. The East Central Florida Corridor Task Force recommended study areas for two new East-West transportation corridors. There are three major property owners in the study area, Deseret Ranches, St. Johns River Water Management District, and the Viera Company. Osceola County and Deseret Ranches have developed the North Ranch Sector Plan which include corridors consistent with the task force recommendations. The Viera company's master plan does not include an expressway corridor through its property and they have expressed opposition to an expressway corridor impacting their existing or planned development, or wilderness conservation areas. Mr. Tate presented an environmental board with potential constraints to the project. He then presented the alternatives board which illustrated the social constraints. Mr. Tate presented conceptual corridors and asked the Committee members to provide input on the different alignments.

Discussion was had around the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) from the Viera Company and the work with the Environmental Community to work out all the details of conservation lands that were included in the DRI. Mr. Barfield stated that he had concerns that some of that land could be impacted with multiple alignments shown as they 'skirt' the area.

Mr. Durr commented on the language in the response from the Viera Company specifically about if an alignment was chosen that crossed through the DRI area it would effectively reopen the DRI.

Discussion was had around understanding some of the opportunities and constraints with each alignment. Mr. Durr stated he would like to know the needs and rationale between the spacing between the connections.

Discussion was had around corridor D1 and D2 and its impacts to Tosohatchee and if the plan is to co-locate that route to be co-located with the existing bridge that already impacts Tosohatchee or would it have further impacts? Mr. Tate answered D1 connects to SR520 and then stops and D2 would start and run parallel to 520.

Discussion was had around which of the alternatives would actually impact the Viera Company? Mr. Tate answered that F1 and F1b would impact Viera. There is a power line that comes down south toward I-95 so we've laid this out so it would run parallel with that power line.

Ms. Jackson stated that Corridor D1 or D2 it would also have significant impacts on the Econlockhatchee river and the mosaic of wetlands that feed both the Econlockhatchee river and the St. Johns river.

Discussion was had around the Deseret Ranches Sector Plan and the amount of transportation planning that went into it. Mr. Lee commented that Deseret had strong wishes for a crossing springing off Nova Rd. and joining the old Pineda route. When the Governors Task Force met to discuss this, it concluded that the study of this corridor could remain but of all the possibilities presented that this corridor presented the greatest environmental impacts. Mr. Lee suggested an addition to 192 to join with 520, an entire co-location exercise similar to the Wekiwa Parkway design.

Ms. Sellers seconded Mr. Durr's comment regarding the opportunities and constraints of the alternatives.

Chairman Mindick stated we really need to look at the impact to the EW Corridor that connects the Econlockhatchee river to the St. Johns conversation areas. Anything going through the north band of the study area would have a high environmental impact. The F4 alternative looks like it would have the least environmental impact. Every time we look at something crossing the St. Johns river, I think this is the major corridor nationally for wildlife movement and climate change adjustments.

(This item was presented for information only. No formal committee action was taken.)

F. SOUTHPORT CONNECTOR EXPRESSWAY PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT (PD&E) STUDY – PRESENTED BY RALPH BOVE, PROJECT MANAGER, VOLKERT, INC. – INFO ITEM

Ralph Bove of Volkert, Inc. presented the PD&E study for the Southport Connector Expressway. This is in the area of northern Polk county and western Osceola county. The Southport connector is generally oriented along the existing cypress parkway alignment as it intersects the poinciana parkway, then crossing reedy creek into an area south of Lake Toho and terminating at Canoe Creek Rd. Osceola County conducted the South Lake Toho Master Plan which included a Southport Connector alignment study. FDOT conducted a preliminary Southport Connector Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER). These provided some good background when CFX acquired the jurisdiction of Osceola County and engaged in the Southport Connector CF&M study, that was completed in May of 2018 and included a re evaluation of the FDOT ACER. Potential Environmental Challenges and impacts were identified along the Southport Connector study area. Volkert Inc. will prepare a Natural Resource Evaluation (NRE) which will establish an impact matrix which will help identify a preferred alternative. Mr. Bove summarized the process and multiple reports that will be produced by Volkert, Inc. on the 15-month track of the study.

Discussion was had around CFXs decision to pursue the Southport Connector project after it was placed on hold due to projected toll revenues. Mr. Pressimone stated that CFX continued to monitor changes in development and CFX was approached by Green Isle DRI about the potential for donation of right-of-way. Mr. Lee voiced concerns about the cost to travel for the community.

A discussion was had around the Nature Conservancy's position on the Southport Connector project as laid out in the presentation. Mr. Lee stated he reached out to The Nature Conservancy on their input regarding the Southport Connector that was included in the presentation. A letter was added to the record regarding the Nature Conservancy's position. Mr. Pressimone stated we will be revisiting our relationship with the Nature Conservancy in this study.

Chairman Mindick commented he did not see the mitigation banks on this study especially pertaining to the private ranches that are on property in this study zone. Chairman Mindick recommended spending more time on this project and stressed its importance.

(This item was presented for information only. No formal committee action was taken.)

G. NORTHEAST CONNECTOR EXPRESSWAY PHASE 1 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT (PD&E) STUDY – PRESENTED BY DAN KRISTOFF P.E., PROJECT MANAGER, RS&H– (INFO ITEM)

Mr. Dan Kristoff of RS&H presented the Northeast Connector Expressway Phase 1 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. Study area is from Cyrils Drive to Nova Road, 4.40 miles. Two (2) alternative corridors will be evaluated and presented at a public meeting. One (1) corridor will be selected from the two and more precise alignments will be investigated, and engineering and environmental reports will be prepared. No fatal flaws in anticipated wetland and species impacts. Our goal is avoidance of the wetland systems where possible.

A discussion was had around the proximity this corridor would have to the Lake Ajay community. Mr. Kristoff estimated that it was a mile and half away.

A discussion was had around unfulfilled need to pin down the dedication of wildlife corridors within the NE district. Mr. Lee stated that the advent of the study of this route would be a good place to incorporate efforts to get commitments from Deseret Ranches and Tavistock for the permanent dedication of those wildlife corridors and they have got to include uplands and wetlands.

A discussion was had around the sensitivity of this study area and the need to look at it very carefully. Chairman Mindick stated that the upland species will need to be looked at very carefully. He stated that Caracara and burrowing owls may also be present in this area.

(This item was presented for information only. No formal committee action was taken.)

H. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Mindick requested input from the Committee Members on preferences for meeting frequency and suggestions for upcoming meeting topics.

Mr. Barfield suggested presenting upcoming projects and studies in the early stages.

Mr. Durr seconded Mr. Barfield's recommendation.

Ms. Jackson requested a summary of the East Central Florida Corridors Task Force as they seem to drive many of the road projects.

Mr. Lee suggested quarterly meetings depending on need and requested a status update on the Osceola Parkway and the Split Oak Preserve.

Ms. Kelley of CFX suggested every 2-month frequency and move to a quarterly frequency once we are caught up.

A motion was made by Ms. Jackson and seconded by Mr. Lee to set the frequency of our meetings to every two (2) months. The motion carried unanimously with five (7) members present voting AYE by voice vote.

Mr. Lee exited the meeting at 11:06 a.m.

Chairman Mindick requested more information on 'Item E' and 'Item F' of the Agenda in a future meeting.

I. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Mindick adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:09 a.m.

Minutes approved on October 22nd, 2020.

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