



## Beckett Bridge

Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study

*from* Chesapeake Drive *to* Forest Avenue  
Tarpon Springs, Pinellas County, FL



Pinellas County Project ID: PID 2161 • ETDM #: 13040  
FDOT Financial Project ID: 424385-1-28-01

January 2016

# Comments & Coordination Report

Prepared for:  
Pinellas County  
Department of Environment & Infrastructure  
14 S Ft Harrison Avenue  
Clearwater, FL 33756

Prepared by:  
URS Corporation  
7650 W. Courtney Campbell Causeway  
Tampa, Florida 33607



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>1-1</b>
1.1	Project Description.....	1-1
1.2	Public Involvement Program .....	1-2
1.2.1	Project Website .....	1-3
<b>2.0</b>	<b>AGENCY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION .....</b>	<b>2-1</b>
2.1	Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM)/Advance Notification (AN) .....	2-1
2.2	Kick-Off Presentation to Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) .....	2-1
2.3	City of Tarpon Springs Staff Coordination Meeting .....	2-1
2.4	Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meetings .....	2-1
2.5	Presentations to the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) .....	2-2
2.6	Other Local Government Meetings .....	2-3
2.7	Cultural Resource Committee Meetings (CRC) .....	2-3
<b>3.0</b>	<b>OTHER STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS .....</b>	<b>3-1</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP .....</b>	<b>4-1</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>PUBLIC HEARING .....</b>	<b>5-1</b>

## LIST OF APPENDICES

### APPENDICES

A	Public Involvement Plan
B	Advance Notification / ETDM Programming Screen Summary Report
C	Presentations to Pinellas County BCC
D	City of Tarpon Springs Staff Coordination Meeting
E	Pinellas County MPO Meetings
F	Cultural Resource Committee Meetings
G	Other Stakeholder Meetings
H	Public Alternatives Workshop
I	Public Hearing



## 1.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Project Description

The Beckett Bridge (Bridge no. 154000) is a bascule (movable) bridge located in Tarpon Springs, Pinellas County, Florida. The bridge crosses Whitcomb Bayou and connects areas west and north of the Bayou to downtown Tarpon Springs. The bridge is also located on a popular route for access to Fred Howard Park, a Pinellas County park located approximately 3.1 miles west on the Gulf of Mexico.

The existing bridge was originally constructed in 1924 as a timber structure with a steel movable span. The fixed timber approach spans were replaced with concrete approach spans in 1956. The existing bridge is 358'-6" long, consisting of 10 spans. The bridge has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Eligibility is based on the bridge's contribution to early development of the area and because it is one of a few known, pre-1965, highway single-leaf rolling-lift bascule bridges remaining in Florida.

Major repairs, which included construction of crutch bents, repair of machinery, replacement of the electrical system and construction of a new control house, were performed in 1996. Additional repairs to the bridge machinery were needed in 1997 and 2011. Major rehabilitation or replacement of the bridge is needed to keep the bridge open and operating efficiently.

The project limits extend along Riverside Drive from Chesapeake Drive across Whitcomb Bayou to Forest Avenue, a distance of approximately 0.3 mile. Riverside Drive/North Spring Boulevard is an extension of Tarpon Avenue, which is a designated evacuation route. Beckett Bridge provides access to major north/south arterials including Alternate US 19 and US 19 for coastal residents during hurricane evacuation. The bridge also provides access for emergency vehicles, including police, ambulance, and fire.

Beckett Bridge is owned and operated by Pinellas County. A bridge tender is only present when required to open the drawbridge for a vessel, there are no full-time bridge tenders. US Coast Guard drawbridge opening regulation (33CFR117.341) states that "The draw of the Beckett Bridge, mile 0.5, at Tarpon Springs, Florida shall open on signal if at least two hours' notice is given." Whitcomb Bayou connects to the Gulf of Mexico via the Anclote River to the north.



Boats docked along Whitcomb, Spring and Minetta Bayous, and along artificial canals which connect to the southeastern portion of the Whitcomb Bayou, must pass the Beckett Bridge to access the Gulf of Mexico.

The bridge is considered functionally obsolete. This designation is based primarily on the substandard clear roadway width of only 20 feet and substandard roadway safety features. The existing typical section consists of one, 10-foot wide travel lane in each direction and 2-foot 2-inch-wide sidewalks separated by a curb on both sides of the bridge. The existing vertical clearance at the fenders is six feet. The tip of the bascule leaf overhangs the fender with the leaf fully raised and does not provide unlimited vertical clearance between the fenders for the width of the channel. The existing horizontal clearance between the fenders is 25 feet.

Pinellas County initiated a PD&E Study in coordination with FDOT District 7 in January 2012. The purpose of the study was to further evaluate options for replacement, rehabilitation, or removal of the existing Beckett Bridge.

The following alternatives were evaluated during the PD&E study:

- No Build
- No Build with Removal of the Existing Bridge
- Rehabilitation of the Existing Bridge
- Replacement with a New Movable Bridge
- Replacement with a New Fixed Bridge

## **1.2 Public Involvement Program**

A project specific Public Involvement Plan was prepared and implemented for this PD&E study. A copy of the plan is included in **Appendix A**. The program identified the key stakeholders and recommended activities to inform and solicit input from the community. Opportunities for community, stakeholder and agency input were provided throughout the duration of the study. A stakeholders' mailing list, which included property owners, local government staff and officials, agency representatives, special interest groups and other interested parties was maintained and updated throughout the study.



### 1.2.1 Project Website

A project specific website was created for this study. The website ([www.pinellascounty.org/beckettbridge](http://www.pinellascounty.org/beckettbridge)) provides updated information about the progress of the study, the study process, and public meetings. Information provided on the website includes the following:

- Project overview
- Information about the PD&E study process
- Project schedule
- Details about other community involvement opportunities
- Public meeting materials, displays, and presentations
- A summary of comments and responses received in response to each major public meeting

The page also includes contact information which allows visitors to contact the Pinellas County Project Manager with concerns and comments via email. The website will be maintained throughout all phases of the project including design and construction.



## 2.0 AGENCY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

### 2.1 Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM)/Advance Notification (AN)

FDOT District Seven initiated the ETDM screening phase of the project. This process initiated early coordination with all Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) members. The process began with distribution of the Advance Notification (AN) in October 2010. The *ETDM Programming Screen Summary Report* was published on June 30, 2011. A copy of the AN package and the summary report are included in **Appendix B**.

### 2.2 Kick-Off Presentation to Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)

A “Kick-Off Presentation” was made to the Pinellas County BCC to introduce the project on March 13, 2012 at a regularly scheduled BCC meeting. Invitations to the meeting were distributed to all federal, state and local government officials; Pinellas County and City of Tarpon Springs staff; and FDOT. A copy of the BCC agenda and meeting minutes as well as a copy of the invitation letters and mailing list are included in **Appendix C**.

### 2.3 City of Tarpon Springs Staff Coordination Meeting

Pinellas County hosted a coordination meeting with Tom Funcheon, City of Tarpon Springs Public Works Director, and Gary Schurman, Engineering Projects Supervisor, on September 13, 2012. Alternatives developed to date were presented and discussed. Strategies to involve the local communities and City officials and staff were also discussed. Copies of the agenda and meeting minutes are included in **Appendix D**.

### 2.4 Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meetings

Presentations were made at MPO Board and MPO Advisory Committee meetings between October 15, 2012 and November 14, 2012. The presentations included a discussion of the PD&E Process and the status of the ongoing study. In addition, conceptual designs and anticipated environmental impacts of alternatives that were anticipated to be carried forward to the Alternatives Community Workshop were presented. The meetings were held on the following dates:

- MPO Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting - 10/15/12
- MPO Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting - 10/22/12
- MPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) - 10/24/12





- MPO Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) - 10/25/12
- Pinellas County MPO Board - 11/14/12

A copy of the presentation as well as copies of the agenda and meeting minutes for each meeting are included in **Appendix E**.

After the BCC approved the Recommended Alternative at their October 22, 2013 meeting, presentations were made to the MPO CAC, TCC and MPO Board. This presentation included information about the Recommended Alternative proposed to be presented at the February 2014 public hearing. The meetings were held on the following dates:

- MPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) - 10/23/13
- MPO Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) - 10/25/13
- Pinellas County MPO Board - 11/13/13

By letter dated November 18, 2013 Mr. Bob LaSala, County Administrator stated that “The MPO’s Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC), Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), and the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) reviewed the evaluation.” The TCC and the CAC endorsed the study and the Recommended Alternative. The PTAC and BAC recommended that any alternative recommended for consideration include bicycle and pedestrians accommodations. Based on the presentation, advisory committee recommendations and a review of the alternatives, the MPO unanimously endorsed the Recommended Alternative to replace the bridge with a two-lane movable structure with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. A copy of this letter is included in **Appendix E**.

## **2.5 Presentations to the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)**

In addition to the “Kick-Off” presentation described in Section 2.2 above, the following presentations were made to the BCC:

- Alternatives proposed to be shown to the public at the January 2013 Alternatives Public Workshop were presented to the BCC on October 30, 2012.

The staff Recommended Alternative, replacement of the existing movable bridge with a new two-lane movable bridge on approximately the same alignment as the existing bridge, was presented to the BCC at their October 22, 2013 meeting. The BCC approved the staff’s recommendation to move forward and present the Recommended Alternative to the public at a

Public Hearing in February 2014. After consideration of all public input received at the Public Hearing, the BCC agreed to meet at a regularly scheduled BCC meeting on April 15, 2014 to decide whether to confirm their approval of the Recommended Alternative. The invitation to the public hearing included an invitation to the April 15, 2014 BCC meeting.

A presentation was made to the BCC on April 15, 2014 which summarized the results of the February 26, 2014 Public Hearing. The Commission confirmed and ratified their approval of the Recommended Alternative to move forward as the “Locally Preferred Alternative”, and to be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for approval.

## **2.6 Other Local Government Meetings**

The presentation described above for the MPO meetings was made to the City of Tarpon Springs City Commission on November 20, 2012. A second presentation was also made to the Tarpon Springs City Commission on October 1, 2013 to update them on the status of the project.

## **2.7 Cultural Resource Committee (CRC) Meetings**

A number of historic structures are located within the vicinity of the Beckett Bridge project corridor. In addition, the Beckett Bridge was determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by FHWA and SHPO early in the project. Accordingly, a Cultural Resource Committee (CRC) was assembled to address historic resource issues during the study. The first CRC meeting was held on October 29, 2012 at the Tarpon Springs Heritage Museum. Representatives from SHPO, FHWA, FDOT, Tarpon Springs Historic Society, USCG, City of Tarpon Springs and Pinellas County were invited. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss alternatives currently under consideration, the historic significance of the bridge and to provide an opportunity for input into the Section 106 process.

A second CRC meeting was held on March 13, 2013. At this meeting, public comments received at the Alternatives Community Workshop were presented. Discussion also included a review of the rehabilitation and movable bridge alternatives, potential effects to the historic bridge and discussion of possible mitigation/minimization measures. As a result of this meeting, the project team investigated three additional rehabilitation concepts that would provide safer and wider sidewalks.

A third CRC meeting was held on April 24, 2014, after the Public Hearing and subsequent County Commission Meeting. The “Replacement of the Existing Bridge with a New Low-Level





Movable Bridge Alternative” was presented as the Recommended Alternative at the February 26, 2014 Public Hearing. At the subsequent County Commission meeting on April 15, 2014, the Commission concurred that the Recommended Alternative could proceed to FHWA as the “Locally Preferred Alternative”. The April 24, 2014 CRC meeting included an update on the results of the Public Hearing and Commission meeting, a discussion of the Section 106 process completed to date, a discussion of effects, and a discussion of desired mitigation measures to be included in the Memorandum of Agreement.

The presentation, meeting minutes, and agendas for these meetings are included in **Appendix F**.

### 3.0 OTHER STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Presentations about the alternatives evaluated during the study were made to the following groups:

- Tarpon Springs Yacht Club Board Meetings
  - October 17, 2012
  - December 18, 2013
- Tarpon Springs Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting - November 21, 2012.
- Tarpon Springs Rotary Club - January 31, 2012
- Tarpon Springs Historical Society – January 16, 2014

A presentation was made about the status of the project and evaluation of alternatives at all meetings. Members of the project team were available to address questions and concerns at all meetings.

The PowerPoint that was presented at the MPO meetings and Local Government meetings was also made at the Tarpon Springs Yacht Club Board meeting on October 17, 2012 and at the Tarpon Springs Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting on November 21, 2012. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, the video presentation shown at the January 23, 2013 Alternatives Community Workshop was shown at the Tarpon Springs Rotary Club monthly meeting. Members of the project team were available to address questions and concerns at all meetings.

The PowerPoint presentations shown at the Tarpon Springs Historical Society on January 16, 2014, and at the December 18, 2014 Yacht Club meeting are included in **Appendix G**. In addition, meeting notes from the Tarpon Springs Yacht Club Board meeting are also located in **Appendix G**.

## 4.0 ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP

The Public Alternatives Workshop was held on January 23, 2013 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Tarpon Springs Yacht Club, in Tarpon Springs, Florida. The purpose of the meeting was to present the alternatives under evaluation and provide an opportunity for community input. Graphics and informational boards about the alternatives considered were on display and a short video presentation was played continuously throughout the evening. The workshop was conducted in an open house format; no formal presentation was made. Project team members and County staff were available to address individual questions and accept comments. Comment forms and the Alternatives Evaluation Matrix were provided to attendees. A court reporter was also available to record public comments.

An invitation to the workshop was distributed to property owners and stakeholders. Property ownership was determined by the best available information from the Pinellas County Property Appraiser's Office. The mailing list for the meeting included elected officials, local government staff, agency representatives, community groups, and property owners located within a minimum of 1,000 feet of the project area. The invitation letters, mailing list and a map indicating the boundaries of the property owners contacted are attached in **Appendix H**.

The meeting was advertised in the Suncoast News edition of the Tampa Tribune on Thursday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and in the Tampa Bay Times on Sunday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Copies of the newspaper advertisements are included in **Appendix H**.

Approximately 120 persons signed in at the meeting. A total of 71 comments were received between December 28, 2012 (the date the workshop invitation letter was mailed) and February 28, 2013. These comments included those submitted at the workshop on comment forms, via email, letters, the "contact us" page on the website, or verbally provided to the court reporter at the meeting. Copies of the workshop sign-in sheet and all public comments received are included in **Appendix H**. A general summary of responses was prepared to address the comments received. The summary of comments and responses were mailed to all attendees who submitted written comments and included their mailing address. If the comments were submitted via email, a copy of the summary was provided by email. The summary was also posted on the project website.

**Included in Appendix H:**

- Workshop Mailing Lists
- Newspaper Advertisements
- FAR Advertisement
- Invitation Letters for Elected Officials and Local Government Staff
- Presentation Boards on Display (small format)
- Presentation boards and a .wmv file of the narrated presentation
- Comments Received from the Public
- Summary of Comments Received
- Responses to Comments Received

## 5.0 PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held on February 26, 2014, at the Tarpon Springs Yacht Club. Information about the Recommended Alternative and all other alternatives evaluated during the PD&E study was presented. An invitation letter, project fact sheet, public notice and comment form were mailed to approximately 1,200 property owners and other stakeholders three weeks prior to the Public Hearing. One hundred persons signed in at the meeting.

Graphics and informational boards about the alternatives considered were on display prior to and after the formal portion of the Public Hearing. The formal portion of the hearing consisted of an introduction by County staff, a 30 minute video presentation and a formal public comment period. Project team members and County staff were available to address individual questions and accept comments. A Public Hearing Handout which included the Alternatives Evaluation Matrix was provided to attendees. Comment forms were available. A court reporter recorded the formal portion of the Public Hearing and was also available to record public comments on a one-to-one basis during the informal portion of the hearing.

Six individuals spoke at the public hearing. Twenty-two individuals submitted comments during the official Public Hearing comment period. These comments included those submitted on comment forms, in letters, via email or via the “contact us” page on the website, or verbally provided to the court reporter at the meeting. A summary of the comments is provided below.

- 19 – Supported the Recommended Alternative
- 1 – Requested a new low-level fixed bridge
- 1 - Requested preservation of existing bridge
- 1 – Requested consideration of a fixed bridge or repair of existing bridge with the elimination of the “drawbridge functionality”.

### *Speakers at Public Hearing:*

Five of the six speakers specifically stated that they supported the Recommended Alternative.

One objected and expressed desire for a low-level fixed bridge.



### *Comment Forms, Letters and Emails Received*

Fourteen individuals specifically supported the Recommended Alternative.

One individual expanded on their comments made at the Public Hearing.

Two individuals (Ms. Cyndi Tarapani and Mr. Robert Faison) objected to the Recommended Alternative.

- Ms. Tarapani requested preservation of the existing bridge
- Mr. Faison requested consideration of a fixed bridge or repair of the existing bridge but eliminate the functionality of the drawbridge.

Four individuals did not specifically state support for the Recommended Alternative, but stated concerns or raised questions associated with the proposed replacement of the existing bridge.

### *Summary of Comments and Concerns:*

#### **Comments related to the Proposed Detour**

- Is it possible to construct a temporary pedestrian bridge or provide a “ferry” for pedestrians during construction?
- Requested a temporary bridge during construction for vehicles and for emergency evacuation
- Suggested that construction techniques exist that could reduce detour time in half
- Requested detour signage that was clear to travelers, provided a specific detour signage plan
- Requested that roadways on the detour routes be repaired prior to closing the bridge

#### **Comments related to the design/looks of the Recommended Alternative**

- Requested design similar to existing, but wider with sidewalks and bike lanes as proposed.
- Requested that the new bridge be designed similar to existing historic bridge



## Comments Related to Roadway and Drainage

- Spring Boulevard needs to be elevated because it floods during high tides during storms, preventing access to the bridge for evacuation.
- Requested that drainage improvements be made to the approach roadways.

## Funding and Cost

- How will the bridge be funded?
- Will my property taxes be raised to pay for the bridge?

## Other Comments

- Can future Commissioners change the status of the project since it will take several years to design?
- Boat access to the Bayou is needed for sanctuary during hurricanes.
- The new bridge should be “boat friendly” with bumpers that don’t obstruct the slips at the Tarpon Springs Yacht Club.
- A number of individuals expressed support for incorporating parts of the existing bridge into the new bridge.
- The existing speed bumps are not necessary. The speed bumps cause safety problems for two-wheel vehicles. Local police should enforce the speed limits.
- Are there plans to deepen or restore the channel?
- There is an active osprey nest near the site.
- Requested that boat owners be able to operate the movable span remotely to eliminate the need for County staff to open the bridge

Two individuals who own property immediately adjacent to the bridge expressed concerns about how the proposed project could affect their property, as described below:

Stephen Katsarelis, owner of the single family residence in the southeast corner of the bridge, across from the Yacht Club supported the Recommended Alternative but expressed the following concerns:

- Concerned about privacy of his pool and hot tub from the raised bridge

- Concerned about impacts to his privacy fence and hedge
- Concerned about safety – specifically speeding on wider bridge, stated that more effective speed bumps should be considered
- Requested additional information about contaminated sites mentioned in the public hearing presentation

Robert Faison, resident at 408 Riverside Drive, immediately adjacent to the bridge in the northwest quadrant, across from Bayshore Mobile Home Park, objected to the Recommended Alternative. Mr. Faison recommended that the County consider a fixed bridge or repair the existing bridge but eliminate “the draw bridge functionality”. He also expressed the following concerns about impacts from the Recommended Alternative:

- Impacts from traffic noise from additional traffic
- Impacts to view
- Safety exiting residential driveway
- Increase in traffic accidents
- Impacts of Construction noise
- Impacts to wood privacy fence
- Impacts to his current access to the sidewalk on Riverside Drive

Ms. Tarapani, president of the Tarpon Springs Preservation Society, requested that the existing bridge be restored.

**Included in Appendix I:**

- Newspaper Advertisements
- FAR Advertisement
- Public Hearing Mailing Lists
- Invitation Letters for Elected Officials and Local Government Staff
- Comments Received
- Summary of Comments Received
- Sign-In Sheets
- Public Hearing Transcript
- Presentation boards and a .wmv file of the narrated presentation