

I-4 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study
from east of 50th Street to the Polk Parkway

ADDENDUM - Wetland Evaluation and
Biological Assessment Report

Cover Update April 2019

Project Limits:

I-4 from east of 50th Street to the Polk Parkway

Hillsborough County, Florida

Polk County, Florida

Work Program Item Segment Number:

431746-1

Prepared for:

Florida Department of Transportation

District Seven

11201 North McKinley Drive

Tampa, Florida 33612-6456



Prior to the public hearing held on October 19, 2015, a Draft *Wetland Evaluation Biological Assessment Report (WEBAR)* was prepared as part of the I-4 (SR 400) Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study. The draft WEBAR provided results of an evaluation of wetlands and protected species within the I-4 (SR 400) right of way (ROW) and measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate for any potential impacts from the proposed improvements, which were presented at the hearing. Following the Public Hearing, slight revisions to the recommended typical sections presented at the Public Hearing were developed. These new recommended typical sections are anticipated to improve safety along the corridor through providing 12-foot lanes. The purpose of this WEBAR Addendum is to determine the effect, if any, of the revised typical sections on the natural environment including wetlands and protected species. The new recommended typical sections did not change environmental impacts, nor introduce any additional right of way requirements.

Wetlands

Wetlands and surface water were assessed to determine potential impacts associated with the proposed improvements along I-4 (SR 400). Pursuant to Executive Order 11990 entitled “Protection of Wetlands,” (May 1977) the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) developed a policy, Preservation of the Nation’s Wetlands (USDOT Order 5660.1A), dated August 24, 1978, which requires all federally authorized transportation projects to protect wetlands to the fullest extent possible. In accordance with this policy, as well as *Part 2, Chapter 18 - Wetlands and Other Surface Waters* of the FDOT PD&E Manual, wetlands and surface water impacts were assessed.

Although unavoidable wetland impacts will occur as a result of the proposed improvements along I-4 (SR 400), these wetlands are located adjacent to the existing roadway and were previously disturbed by roadway construction, adjacent land uses, and the invasion of nuisance and exotic species. Wetland, jurisdictional surface water and stormwater management facilities (conveyance) acreages were calculated assuming complete involvement of the ROW. This approach resulted in a “worst-case” scenario for estimated impacts. Identified and mapped within the proposed I-4 (SR 400) project were 17.93 acres of jurisdictional wetlands and 67.16 acres of jurisdictional

surface waters and stormwater management facilities (conveyances). Of the 67.16 acres, 20.63 acres are previously permitted stormwater management facilities (conveyances) which were designed, and constructed to accommodate the future expansion of I-4 (SR 400) to 10 lanes. Pursuant to Chapter 62-340.700 Florida Statutes, these types of features are not jurisdictional and therefore do not require mitigation. Jurisdictional surface waters comprise 46.53 acres and may fully or partially be impacted due to proposed construction of the proposed improvements along I-4 (SR 400).

Final determination of jurisdictional boundaries, in addition to mitigation requirements, will be coordinated between the FDOT and permitting agencies during the final design stage of the project. The results of this PD&E study indicate there are no practicable alternatives to the proposed impacts due to the need to increase roadway capacity and safety considerations.

Protected Species

The project ROW was evaluated for the presence of federal and/or state protected species and their suitable habitat in accordance with 50 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Part 402 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, Chapters 5B-40: *Preservation of Native Flora of Florida* and 68A-27 Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C) *Rules Relating to Endangered or Threatened Species* and Part 2, Chapter 27 - *Wildlife and Habitat Impacts* of the FDOT PD&E Manual.

Literature reviews, agency database searches and field reviews were conducted to document state and federally protected species presence, their habitat and/or critical habitat occurring or potentially occurring within the project area. The project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* federal and state protected species.

Federally protected species include:

- Eastern indigo snake
- Florida scrub jay
- Florida golden aster

- Wood stork

State protected species include:

- Florida burrowing owl
- Florida sandhill crane
- Gopher tortoise
- Southeastern American kestrel
- Sherman's fox squirrel
- Wetland dependent avian species

The project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* one protected, non-listed species:

- Bald eagle

The project is anticipated to have *no effect* on the sand and blue-tailed mole skink.

Coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was conducted on June 5, 2015 for review of the Final Draft WEBAR. FDOT received a letter from the FWS on July 21, 2015 in which the FWS concurred with the determination of affect for federally protected fauna. The FWS was contacted in July 2016 to determine if the Addendum needed to be sent to them for review. It was determined that the change in typical sections did not impact the Effects Determination. Please see Attachment A for FWS concurrence letter.

Coordination with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) was conducted in July 2016 for the review of the Final Draft WEBAR. FDOT received an email in August 2016 from the FFWCC stating concurrence with the commitments outlined in the document. Please see Attachment B for the FFWCC concurrence email.

[Commitments](#)

- Wetland impacts, including impacts to wood stork suitable foraging habitat that will result from the construction of this project will be mitigated for pursuant to

Section 373.4127, F.S., or as otherwise agreed upon between FDOT and the appropriate regulatory agencies during the design phase.

- Due to the presence of gopher tortoise habitat and the observation of a potentially occupied burrow within the project limits, a gopher tortoise survey of appropriate habitat within the construction limits (roadway footprint and stormwater management areas) will be performed prior to construction activities pursuant to the current FFWCC guidelines. The Gopher Tortoise Permitting Guidelines, revised February 2015 will be adhered to for survey methodology and permitting guidance prior to construction activity. FDOT will secure any necessary permits needed for this species from the FFWCC and relocate gopher tortoise prior to construction.
- The USFWS's most current *Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake* will be adhered to during construction.
- If active bald eagle nests are observed within the 660-foot construction buffer zone of the project area, the FDOT will coordinate with FFWCC and USFWS to secure all necessary approvals regarding this species prior to constructing the project.
- FDOT commits to initiate future informal consultation with the USFWS and provide updated information as necessary for the federally protected species that may be involved with the proposed project.

Conclusion

The Recommended Build Alternative provides for two express lanes (ELs) in each direction of I-4 from 50th Street to the Polk Parkway. Following the Public Hearing, slight revisions to the recommended typical sections presented at the Public Hearing were developed. These new recommended typical sections are anticipated to improve safety along the corridor through providing 12-foot lanes. The new recommended typical sections did not change environmental impacts, nor introduce any additional right of way requirements. The new recommended proposed typical sections predominantly allow for two 12-foot ELs, buffer separation, and three 12-foot general use lanes (GULs) in each direction. In order to minimize environmental impacts due to right of way constraints, from West of Alexander Street to County Line Road has a

recommended typical section with two 11-foot ELs and a 3-foot buffer instead of 12-foot ELs and buffer separation as recommended throughout the remainder of the project. The new recommended proposed typical sections can be found on the following page.

The findings from the WEBAR have not changed as a result of the new recommended typical sections.

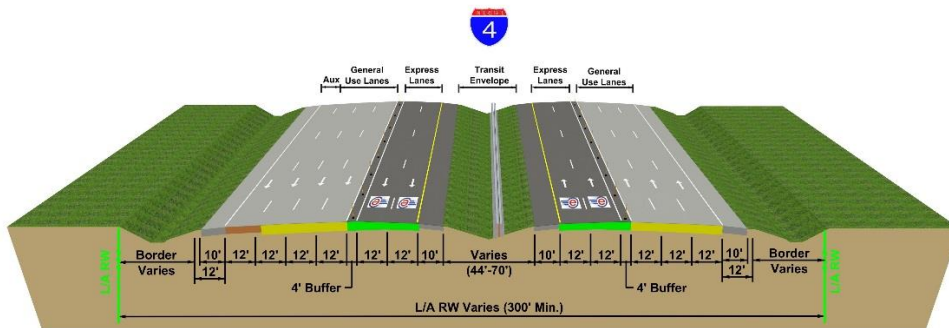


Figure 1. New Recommended Proposed Typical Section

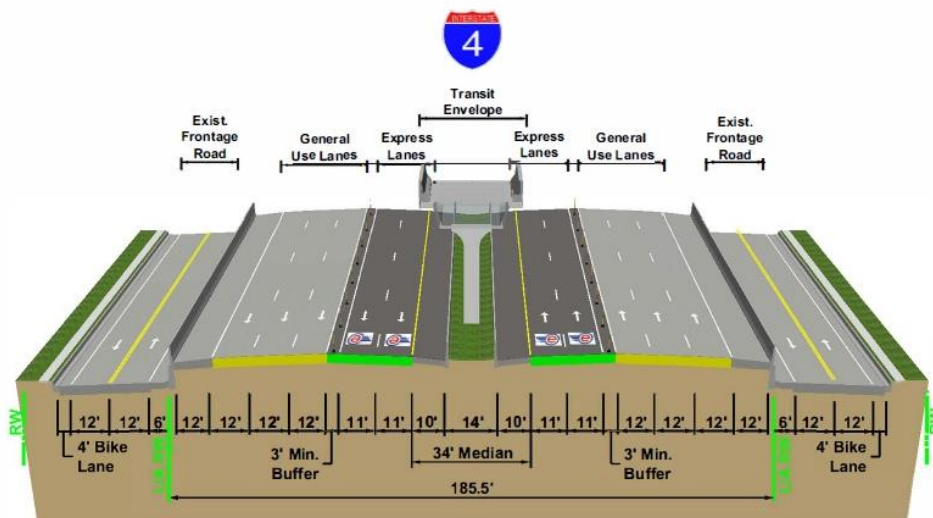


Figure 2. New Recommended Proposed Typical Section in Plant City

APPENDIX A – FWS Concurrence Letter

APPENDIX B – FFWCC Concurrence Email