

Final Comments and Coordination Report

S.R. 50 PD&E Study Reevaluation

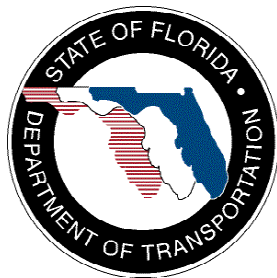
**From U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the east intersection of
S.R. 50 / S.R. 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass]**

Hernando County, Florida

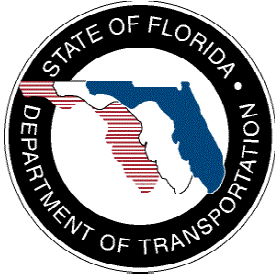
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**Florida Department of Transportation
District 7**



March 2004



FINAL COMMENTS AND COORDINATION REPORT

Florida Department of Transportation
Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Reevaluation Study

S.R. 50 PD&E Study Reevaluation **From U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the east intersection of** **S.R. 50 / S.R. 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass]** Hernando County, Florida

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Submitted to:

Florida Department of Transportation - District 7
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March 2004

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study Reevaluation, which evaluates capacity improvement options along S.R. 50 (Cortez Boulevard) in Hernando County, Florida. The proposed project involves widening S.R. 50 from the existing 4-lane typical section to a 6-lane typical section from U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the east intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass], a distance of approximately 13.7 miles. Figure 1-1, Project Location Map, illustrates the limits of the project area in relation to the local roadway network.

The recommended alternative for the 6-laning of S.R. 50 from U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the east intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass] consists of three different typicals. The portion of the project from U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the western intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A is recommended to be widened to a 6-lane rural typical section (65 mph design speed) within 200 feet of existing right-of-way. The portions of the project from the western intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A to west of Candlelight Boulevard [along the Brooksville Bypass] and east of Ray Browning Road to the eastern intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass] is a 6-lane modified urban typical section with a 50 mph design speed within the existing variable right-of-way. A 6-lane urban typical section with a 50 mph design speed is recommended for the portion of the project from west of Candlelight Boulevard to east of Ray Browning Road [along the Brooksville Bypass] that requires a minimum of 126 feet of proposed right-of-way. The alignment for the entire project corridor is primarily within the existing right-of-way. Specifically, alternative alignments were not necessary along S.R. 50, because the previous PD&E Study provided the need for S.R. 50 from U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the eastern intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass] to be initially widened to the existing 4-lane typical section and expandable to a 6-lane typical section. The recommendations of the previous PD&E Study were approved by FHWA on 3/22/90.

A Public Involvement Program has been developed and is being carried out as an integral part of this project. The purpose of this program is to establish and maintain communication with the public at-large and individuals and agencies concerned with the project and its potential impacts. To ensure open communication and agency and public input, the Department has provided early in the project process an Advance Notification package to State and Federal agencies and other interested parties defining the project and, in cursory terms, describing anticipated issues and impacts. Additionally, in an effort to resolve the issues identified, the Department has conducted an interagency coordination and consultation effort, and public participation process. This report details the Department's program to identify, address, and resolve the project-related issues identified through the Public Involvement Program.

2.0 ADVANCE NOTIFICATION PROCESS

The FDOT, through the Advance Notification (AN) Process, informed a number of Federal, State, regional and local agencies of this project and its scope of anticipated activities. The AN Package was distributed to the Florida State Clearinghouse on May 16, 2002. Copies of the AN Package and comments are included in Appendix A.

The following agencies received an AN Package, in addition to the agencies on the Florida State Clearinghouse distribution list. An asterisk (*) indicates those agencies that responded to the package.

Federal Agencies

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Division Administrator
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Regional Environmental Office
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Regional Environmental Officer
- U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Chief
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IV, Regional Administrator
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Field Supervisor
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), Regulatory Branch, District Engineer
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Southern Region, Regional Forester *
- U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Trust Responsibilities, Chief

State Agencies

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), District Director *
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Director, Office of Environmental Services
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources, State Historic Preservation Officer *
- Florida Department of Transportation, EMO Manager

Regional/Local Agencies

- Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council, Executive Director *
- Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), Executive Director *

Other

- Seminole Tribe of Florida, Chairperson
- Muskogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, Principal Chief
- Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, Principal Chief
- Poarch Band of Creek Indians of Alabama, Chairperson
- Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Chairperson

Generally, the comments indicated either consistency with applicable requirements, a request for further coordination during the project's final engineering design, or a statement of no comment. Outlined below is a summary of these comments with responses as appropriate.

Agency: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Southern Region

Comment: An acknowledgement of "No Comment" for this project was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Southern Region to the State Clearinghouse via the MyFlorida.com website.

Response: No response required.

Agency: Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Comment: "As noted on the Advance Notification Fact Sheet, highway construction activities will require issuance of an Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), pursuant to Part IV of Chapter 373, *Florida Statutes (F.S.)*, and Rules 62-113, 40D-4, and 40D-40, *Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)*, and an NPDES permit by the Department. A wetland jurisdictional determination, per Rule 62-340, *F.A.C.*, should be obtained prior to further planning. Early coordination of project plans with SWFWMD regulatory staff may help prevent future permitting problems."

Response: None required (it should be noted that preliminary delineation of wetlands were performed, and a coordination meeting was held with SWFWMD, as a part of the Study).

Comment: "The permit applicant will be required to eliminate or reduce any proposed wetland resource impacts of highway construction to the greatest extent practicable:

- Minimization should emphasize avoidance-oriented corridor alignments; wetland fill reductions via steep or vertically retained side slopes; and median width reductions within safety limits.
- Wetlands should not be displaced by the installation of stormwater conveyance and treatment swales; instead, compensatory treatment in adjacent uplands should be considered the preferred alternative.
- After avoidance and minimization have been exhausted, mitigation must be proposed to offset the adverse impacts of the project to existing wetland functions and values.

- The cumulative impacts of concurrent and future road improvement projects in the vicinity of the subject project should also be addressed.”

Response: None required (wetland impacts are minimized in the Study’s preferred alternatives).

Comment: “The project area lies within the Brooksville Ridge, a physiographic region with high recharge to the Upper Floridian aquifer – the principal source of drinking water in the state. The ridge area overlies an unconfined portion of the aquifer. Due to the connectivity, surface land uses and activities generating non-point source pollution can have direct impacts to groundwater. Under Section 62-40.310 (1)(h), *F.A.C.*, the Department’s review of programs, rules and plans seeks to ‘[p]rotect aquifers from depletion through water conservation and preservation of the functions of high recharge areas.’

- Water recharged to the aquifer in the ridge area flows to the west where it feeds natural springs along the coast. The protection of surface water and groundwater quality within the recharge basin of the area’s first magnitude spring – the Weeki Wachee Main Spring – is of significant interest to the Department. Based upon the work and findings of the multi-agency Florida Springs Task Force, the Department has assigned a high priority to the protection and restoration of Florida’s springs, which are among the most valuable ecological and economic resources of the state. Because the highway improvement project traverses this critical area, the Department recommends that the FDOT consider a full range of planning strategies to protect groundwater and nearby surface water resources. The PD&E Study should include an evaluation of existing stormwater treatment adequacy and details on the future stormwater treatment facilities. The use of karst sensitive area Best Management Practices may be necessary for stormwater facility design and construction.
- The Weeki Wachee Preserve Project conservation lands located at the western end of the project have been purchased by SWFWMD to preserve and restore the area’s hardwood hammock, swamp, riverine and estuarine ecosystems; maintain and improve water quality; provide recreational opportunities; and preserve significant historical and archaeological sites. The 442 acres purchased include lands at the southwest, northwest and southeast corners of U.S. Highway 19 and State Road 50 and the Weeki Wachee Springs water park. The springs discharge an average of 112 million gallons per day and are the headwaters of the Weeki Wachee River. In addition to water resource quality and quantity concerns, the SWFWMD and Department are interested in preserving the wildlife corridor functions of this riverine system. Therefore, future environmental documentation should include an evaluation of the primary, secondary and cumulative impact of highway construction on the above public lands.
- Under Article X, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution (as amended in 1998), disposition of state-owned conservation lands are restricted to those lands “no longer needed for conservation purposes.” The FDOT will need to request that the governing board (SWFWMD Governing

Board) holding title to conservation lands within the modified highway corridor determine whether the subject parcels are no longer needed for conservation purposes. This new requirement must be met before the conveyance of these lands can proceed. Proposals to utilize state conservation lands are also required to meet the guidelines of the state's linear facility policy, *POLICY Use of Natural Resource Lands by Linear Facilities As Approved By Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund on January 23, 1996.*

Response: No response required (these concerns were addressed in a coordination meeting with SWFWMD during the Study).

Agency: Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources

Comment: "...We note that the project will have a cultural resource survey update performed. Therefore, conditioned upon the DOT undertaking a cultural resource survey update, and appropriately avoiding or minimizing project impacts to any identified significant archaeological or historic sites, the proposed project will have no adverse effect on historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places*, or otherwise of historical or archaeological value. If these conditions are met, the project will also be consistent with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* and the historic preservation aspects of Florida's Coastal Management Program."

Response: No response required (the cultural resource assessment was performed for this Study).

Agency: Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council

Comment: "Pursuant to the provisions of Presidential Executive Order 12372, Governor's Executive Order 95-359, and WRPC Rules Chapter 29E-6, *Florida Administrative Code*, the staff of the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council reviewed the above-reference proposal and find it to be consistent with the goals and policies of the WRPC's adopted *Strategic Regional Policy Plan for the Withlacoochee Region* and, in particular, with:

- Policy 2.4.13: Plan and design transportation facilities that provide maximum access to jobs and markets.
- Goal 2.11: To promote efficiency and economic productivity from economic development by ensuring that future economic development and transportation projects are properly sited to avoid and/or mitigate adverse impacts to incompatible adjacent land uses.
- Policy 2.11.1: Adopted local policies and procedures which ensure that new economic development and transportation projects are properly sites to avoid and/or mitigate adverse impacts to existing uses and natural resources.
- Policy 4.6.2: Design and build new local, state, and private roads, bridges, and causeways so as not to interfere with surface water flows, and with appropriate protective measures to avoid degrading water quality.

- Policy 4.8.6: Design new transportation and utility facilities to avoid interference with the natural operation of wetlands, and in a sufficient size and height to accommodate the movement and migration of wildlife through the area.
- Policy 4.8.18: Design new public and private roads so as not to impede the natural flow of water.
- Policy 4.9.2: Design roads and bridges to incorporate design features that facilitate the free passage of wildlife so as to avoid vehicle and animal collisions.
- Goal 5.5: Provide transportation facilities to ensure that the regionally significant roadways operate at acceptable levels of service.
- Policy 5.5.1: Level of service standards for regionally significant roadways should be consistent with the Florida Department of Transportation recommended level of service standards.
- Policy 5.5.2: Perform timely maintenance, expansion, and repair of roads and bridges to minimize costly reconstruction and to enhance safety.
- Policy 5.5.9: Coordinate land use plans and transportation planning efforts to ensure that land use decisions and transportation improvements are complementary.
- Policy 5.6.2: Ensure that transportation improvements in coastal high-hazard areas and environmentally sensitive areas are made only after evaluating the interests of human transportation need versus the need to protect and preserve regionally significant resources.”

Response: No response required.

Agency: Southwest Florida Water Management District

Comment: An acknowledgement of “No Comment/Consistent” for this project was provided by the Southwest Florida Water Management District via the State Clearinghouse on MyFlorida.com website.

Response: No response required.

3.0 PUBLIC OFFICIAL/AGENCY KICKOFF MEETING

The Public Official/Agency Kickoff Meeting was held on Monday, July 29, 2002, at 1:00 p.m. at the Hernando County Government Center, 20 North Main Street, Brooksville, Florida. The purpose of the meeting was to inform elected officials and local, state, regional, and federal agencies of the project and to obtain specific data on matters pertinent to the project, including technical, socio-economic, ecological and environmental information. The FDOT also asked about local knowledge and/or concerns as related to the proposed improvements along the S.R. 50 project corridor. The meeting format was open and informal. Approximately 14 people were in attendance.

Notification letters were mailed to elected officials and agency representatives on July 2, 2002, at least 21 days prior to the Kickoff Meeting. A handout was provided to all attendees at the Kickoff Meeting on July 29, 2002, which explained the need for the project, the purpose of the Study Reevaluation, the project schedule and contact information. The Kickoff Meeting handout also included the project location map as well as a comment form. Copies of the notification letters, handout and oral comment documentation are included in Appendix C.

3.1 Project Kickoff Meeting Comments

No written comments were received in response to the Project Kickoff Letter; however, the following is a summary of the oral comments and responses from the Kickoff Meeting.

Comment: Preference for offsite ponds instead of deeper ditches or swales, to avoid utility impacts.

Response: Alternatives, including offsite ponds, will be evaluated in the Study's preliminary drainage analysis.

Comment: Complained that westbound S.R. 50, at the intersection after U.S. 19, goes from 7-lanes to 2-lanes then to 4-lanes in front of a shopping center, thus causing serious congestion.

Response: Laneage requirements will be developed as part of the Study's traffic analysis.

Comment: Complained about adding lanes instead of other remedies, and mentioned that the County is looking into a countywide transit plan.

Response: Multi-modal considerations will be included in the Study.

Comment: There is no consistent plan as developers are asked to donate right-of-way for frontage roads along S.R. 50, and that some properties were designated for frontage roads while others were designated for reverse frontage roads. It was also advised that the frontage roads should be considered to be more like access roads.

Response: The FDOT will incorporate a frontage / reverse frontage road plan when it is developed by the County (the Study will proceed until the plan is developed, if it occurs).

Comment: Describing the eastern limits might be more understandable if U.S. 98 were added to S.R. 50/S.R. 50A intersection.

Response: Expanding the description will be considered (using “along the Brooksville Bypass” was used instead to clarify this portion of the project).

4.0 PUBLIC MEETINGS

4.1 Public Hearing

A Public Hearing is the official public forum used by FDOT through which citizens and government officials express their concerns, opinions and comments regarding a project. The Public Hearing for the Study Reevaluation was held on Thursday, August 21, 2003, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, 20428 Cortez Boulevard, Brooksville, Florida. The focus of the Public Hearing was to receive comments from the property owners, public officials, agencies, and interested citizens, concerning the Recommended "Build" Alternative along with a "No Build" Alternative based on the environmental and engineering analyses performed to date. Approximately 82 people were in attendance at the Public Hearing.

The notification, which included the Project Handout was e-mailed to elected officials and agency representatives on July 29, 2003. Property owners whose property lies in whole or in part within 300 feet from the centerline of the proposed project were notified on July 31, 2003, 21 days in advance, in accordance with Florida Statutes and the PD&E Manual. Interested citizens were also notified with a Project Handout of the Hearing.

The support documents for the Public Hearing were made available for public review prior to and after the Public Hearing beginning July 31, 2003 through September 2, 2003, at the West Hernando/S.T. Foggia Branch Library located at 6335 Blackbird Avenue in Brooksville, Florida.

Legal display advertisements for the Hearing were published on July 31, 2003 and August 15, 2003, in the Hernando Today section of the Tampa Tribune. Notice of the Hearing was also published in the Florida Administrative Weekly on August 1, 2003, which is included in Appendix D.

The Hearing consisted of an informal session and a formal session. The informal session began at 4:30 p.m. and lasted until 6:00 p.m. During that time, the public could view the conceptual plans and project documents on display, speak to the court reporter in a one-on-one setting, or ask questions to Department representatives. Project handouts were available to all attendees. The formal portion of the Hearing began at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Robert Clifford, District Modal Planning and Development Manager, presided at the Hearing. The public was able to view the project video during the formal presentation, which was followed by a formal comment session. The court reporter transcribed the entire formal portion. Following the formal portion of the Public Hearing, the informal portion resumed until 7:30 p.m.

Persons were able to offer statements as part of the Official Public Hearing Record in one of four ways: (1) make an oral statement during the formal portion of this Hearing; (2) make an oral statement to the court reporter in a one-on-one setting during the informal portion of the Hearing; (3) complete the Comment Form provided and submit it to the court reporter or drop it in one of the "Comment" boxes; or (4) complete and mail written comments to the address

listed on the Comment Form by September 2, 2003 to become part of the official Public Hearing record. Copies of the legal display advertisements, project handout and Public Hearing transcript (including the Public Workshop) are included in Appendix D.

4.1.1 Public Hearing Comments

A total of 13 comments were received from the public in response to the Public Hearing. The corresponding breakdown of type for these comments were as follows: 10 written comments were received, 3 oral comments were made during the formal portion of the Public Hearing and no oral comments were provided to the court reporter at the Public Hearing. A summary of the comments and responses is provided below.

Comment: Support of the project.

Two written statements were received from the public in support of the project.

Response: No response was required.

Comment: Proposed Pond Location within Basin B.

One written comment and one oral comment were received from the public that stated their opposition to the apparent lack of consideration in choosing the location and physical size of the drainage basin for the following reasons: cost, loss of county tax revenue, elevation and functionality, environmental impact and failure to provide notice to the residents in the basin area. An additional comment was received that was in opposition of the proposed location of the pond due to the loss of tax revenues from the relocated residents. One comment was in opposition of the pond location, which offered suggestions for other alternative pond locations. One comment was in opposition to locating a stormwater pond within their neighborhood, which could cause additional flooding, potential sinkholes and environmental impacts (mosquitoes, frogs, snakes, etc.) within the area.

Response: A written response was provided by FDOT regarding this comment (refer to the letter dated September 22, 2003), which is provided in Appendix D as well as a verbal response that was provided at the Public Hearing. The verbal response consisted of an explanation that pond sites will be considered in more detail in the design phase, when survey and geotechnical data are available, which may result in a reconfiguration or relocation of the pond.

Comment: Alternative Roadway Improvements.

One oral comment was received to include improvements along Wiscon Road into the design of the project because it is currently used to circumvent the town of Brooksville.

Response: Since a verbal reply was provided at the Public Hearing, a written response was not necessary. This verbal reply informed the citizen that although alternative corridors were considered, maintaining the existing alignment was preferred since there is sufficient existing right-of-way for the build alternative and Wiscon Road does not extend through the entire length of the Study corridor (between logical termini).

Comment: Relocation of 15kV power lines in Segment 1.

One written comment was received from the public indicating concern regarding the proposed relocation of the major power feed line to the south that would make a major impact to the quality of life and real estate values of the homes along Brentlawn Street. One comment was received that suggested moving the electric poles closer to homes causes more health problems for residents and also lowers the value of all their properties.

Response: A written response was provided by FDOT regarding this comment (refer to the letter dated September 22, 2003), which is provided in Appendix D.

Comment: Noise Abatement Considerations.

One written comment was received regarding the disposition of the possible noise evaluation and resolution for Segment 1, which seems to lack any concern and is based on budgetary constraints only.

Response: A written response was provided by FDOT regarding this comment (refer to the letter dated September 22, 2003), which is provided in Appendix D.

Comment: Limited Access and Traffic Control.

One written comment was received from the public regarding no effort to evaluate the effect of six lane traffic will have on the existing side roads, which will remain with the problem of crossing six lanes instead of four at the present.

Response: A written response was provided by FDOT regarding this comment (refer to the letter dated September 22, 2003), which is provided in Appendix D.

Comment: Drainage.

One written comment was received from the public that stated they have existing flooding problems along Seahorse Avenue in association with the existing four lane roadway; therefore, they are opposed to widening S.R. 50 to six lanes, which could potentially add to the existing flooding problem. One written comment was received from the public that discussed the existing flooding problems associated with the existing retention ponds within their neighborhood.

Response: Written responses were not necessary because verbal replies were provided at the Public Hearing. It was explained that a separate

drainage design would be performed for the six lane widening, which would include ponds to prevent additional flooding. It was also explained that the flooding within the neighborhood is not connected or caused by S.R. 50.

Comment: Access issues for business.

One written comment was received from a business regarding proposed modifications to the existing median opening and existing driveway connection.

Response: A verbal reply was provided at the Public Hearing; therefore, a written response was not necessary. The verbal reply informed the business owner that the median openings and driveways shown on the Study's exhibits and concept plans are in conformance with the State's Access Management guidelines. However, these features will be revisited in the future design phase.

Comment: Widening S.R. 50 to six lanes.

Two written comments were received that were in opposition to widening S.R. 50 from the existing four lane section to the proposed six lane section due to the lack of traffic to justify the proposed widening. One written comment was received that was in opposition to the widening of S.R. 50 with the exception of Segment 2, which was supported due to existing traffic congestion, and it discussed the difficulty the fire department has crossing the existing four lane section. One comment was received that indicated people that have a business or residents along S.R. 50 are opposed to this expansion.

Response: No response was necessary because verbal replies were provided at the Public Hearing. These replies included an explanation of the need to meet 20-year traffic projections.

Comment: Speed Limit.

One written comment was received that discussed the proposed 65 mph versus the existing 55 mph. The comment discussed the dangers associated with speeding along the existing roadway that would increase if the speed limit were changed, and the potential increase for accidents.

Response: A written response was not necessary since a verbal response was provided at the Public Hearing. The verbal reply explained the intent and purpose of FIHS standards.

4.2 Public Workshop

The Public Workshop was an extension of the Public Hearing that was held on August 21, 2003. It was determined prior to the Public Hearing that several property owners were inadvertently omitted from the mailing list, and did not receive adequate notice in the mail. These property owners were located more than 300 feet from the centerline of the roadway in an area where one of the pond sites was being considered for the Study's build alternative. Project Handouts were hand delivered to these property owners several days before the Public Hearing, and a Public Workshop was subsequently scheduled so that they would be notified by mail in the appropriate amount of time. The Public Workshop took place on Thursday, September 18, 2003, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, 20428 Cortez Boulevard, Brooksville, Florida. The Public Workshop extended the opportunity to view the same exhibits and to provide input and comments for the public record of this project. The response period for the Public Hearing, which was conducted by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), was extended from September 2, 2003 to September 29, 2003. Approximately 30 people were in attendance.

Notification letters were mailed on August 28, 2003 to those property owners and interested citizens that may be affected by the project and did not receive the required 20 calendar day notification of the original Public Hearing, as discussed above.

Project documents and conceptual design plans developed by the Department were available for public review from July 31, 2003 through September 29, 2003 at the West Hernando/S.T. Foggia Branch Library; 6335 Blackbird Avenue; Brooksville, Florida.

Legal display advertisements for the Public Workshop were published on August 28, 2003 and September 12, 2003, in the Hernando Today section of the Tampa Tribune, and a copy is included in Appendix E.

The Public Workshop consisted of an informal session and a formal session. The informal session began at 5:00 p.m. and lasted until 6:00 p.m. During that time, the public could view the conceptual plans and project documents on display, speak to the court reporter in a one-on-one setting, or ask questions to Department representatives. Project handouts were available to all attendees. The formal portion of the Public Workshop began at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Robert Clifford, District Modal Planning and Development Manager, presided at the Public Workshop. The public was able to view the project video during the formal presentation, which was followed by a formal comment session. The court reporter transcribed the entire formal portion (refer to Appendix D, where the transcript is combined with the transcript of the August 21, 2003 Public Hearing). Following the formal portion of the Public Hearing, the informal portion resumed until 7:00 p.m.

Persons were able to offer statements as part of the Official Public Hearing Record in one of four ways: (1) make an oral statement during the formal portion

of this Public Hearing; (2) make an oral statement to the court reporter in a one-on-one setting during the informal portion of the Public Workshop; (3) complete the Comment Form provided and submit it to the court reporter or drop it in one of the "Comment" boxes; or (4) complete and mail written comments to the address listed on the Comment Form by September 29, 2003 to become part of the official Public Hearing record.

Copies of the legal display advertisements and project handout are also included in Appendix E.

4.2.1 Public Workshop Comments

A total of 4 comments were received from the public in response to the Public Hearing. The corresponding breakdown of type for these comments were as follows: 2 written comments were received, 1 oral comment was made during the formal portion of the Public Hearing and 1 oral comment was provided to the court reporter at the Public Hearing. These comments and responses are provided below.

Comment: Barnett Road Realignment Alternates 1 through 3 for the property known as Southern Hills

One written comment was received from the subconsultant that is providing civil engineering services for LandMar Group for the property known as Southern Hills in Brooksville, Florida. Conceptual design plans were provided along with a discussion of the proposed access road. Alternate 1 proposed an access connection to a north-south collector road that will continue southward through the property, connect to a proposed entrance road at U.S. 41. Alternates 2 and 3 include considerations, which will maintain some form of the existing connection of Barnett Road to S.R. 50.

LandMar plans to construct one of these connections in mid to late 2004, with permit application scheduled for late 2003/early 2004. A request was made for copies of the design plans, reports and electronic files as well as notification of future project meetings (which were provided).

Response: No response was required (refer to Appendix D for the development plans that were provided).

Comment: Proposed Pond Site within Basin B

One written and two oral comments were received that discussed the need to research other available vacant land for the alternative locations for the proposed pond site for Basin B prior to relocating 9 residents as well as the loss of tax revenue for a stormwater pond versus 9 homes.

Response: A written response was provided by FDOT regarding this comment (refer to the letter dated October 9, 2003), which is provided in Appendix E.

Comment: Notification

One written comment was received that discussed the lack of notification for the property owners at the proposed pond site for Basin B.

Response: A written response was not necessary because a verbal reply was provided at the Public Workshop. This reply advised that all affected properties were notified using information provided by the County Property Appraiser's Office.

Comment: Request for Public Hearing Newsletters

One oral comment (telephone conversation) was received from the Brookridge Community Association requesting copies of the newsletter from the Public Hearing.

Response: A written response as well as 100 copies of the Public Hearing newsletter was provided by FDOT regarding this comment (refer to the letter dated September 30, 2003), which is provided in Appendix E.

Public comments received at the Public Hearing and Public Workshop primarily dealt with the pond site selection for Basin "B" as well as access management and traffic control issues.

5.0 COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

Coordination and consultation were accomplished through a series of meetings and correspondence over the course of the Study Reevaluation to ensure all appropriate parties were apprised of the project status and provided ample opportunity to submit comments.

Meetings were held throughout the course of the Study Reevaluation to the governing transportation body in Hernando County. These meetings were held to provide updates on project development milestones. The following meetings were held:

- December 2002 – Hernando County Personnel (Dennis Dix and Charles Mixson)
- April 21, 2003 – Hernando County Personnel (Charles Mixson, Larry Jennings, Tom Lott, Gregg Sutton, Chris Weert and Dennis Dix)
- July 29, 2003 – Hernando County Personnel (Dennis Dix) via conference call and Hernando County MPO Personnel (Hugh Pascoe)
- July 31, 2003 – Hernando County Personnel (Gregg Sutton) and Consultant Personnel (Larry Fluty – TBE)

In addition, the Government Liaison updated the Hernando County MPO regarding the status of this Study on August 1, 2003. The FDOT Project Manager made another presentation to the Hernando County MPO on November 20, 2003 following the Public Hearing.

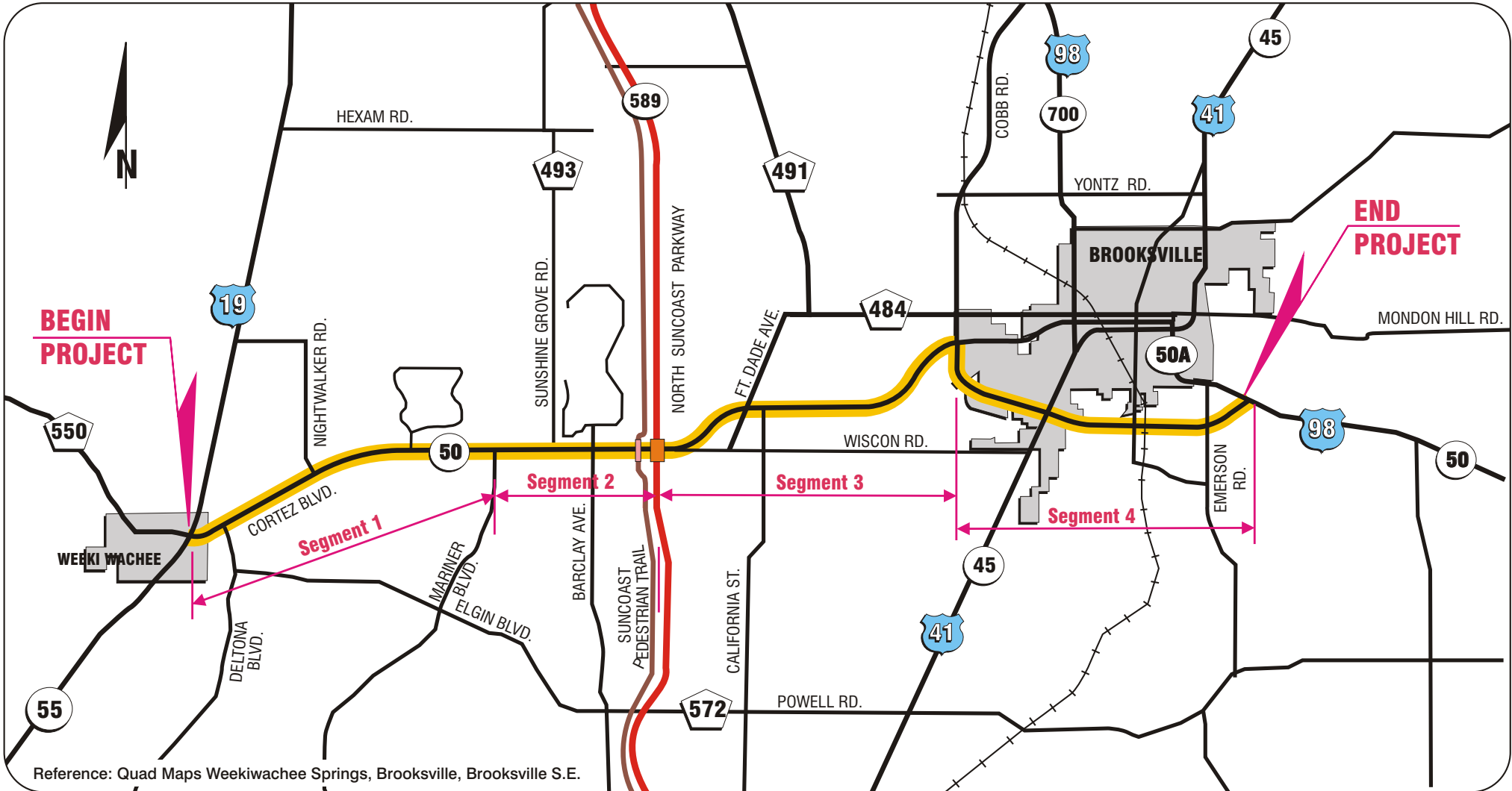
There was and continues to be an extensive public outreach effort undertaken for this project that resulted in a partnership between the local community and the Department to provide a safe roadway that can accommodate future traffic needs, while addressing local issues and concerns.

5.1 Summary

Coordination conducted and public comments received during the PD&E Study Reevaluation led the Department to select the recommended alternative for the 6-laning of S.R. 50, which consists of three different typical sections. The portion of the project from U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the western intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A is recommended to be widened to a 6-lane rural typical section (65 mph design speed) within 200 feet of existing right-of-way. The portions of the project from the western intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A to west of Candlelight Boulevard [along the Brooksville Bypass] and east of Ray Browning Road to the eastern intersection of S.R. 50/S.R. 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass] is a 6-lane modified urban typical section with a 50 mph design speed within the existing variable right-of-way. A 6-lane urban typical section is recommended for the portion of the project from west of Candlelight Boulevard to east of Ray Browning Road [along the Brooksville Bypass] that requires a minimum of 126 feet of proposed right-of-way.

The alignment for the entire project corridor is primarily within the existing right-of-way, and the Study's *Final Preliminary Engineering Memorandum* contains a detailed description of the preferred typical sections.

Public comments received at the Public Hearing and Workshop primarily dealt with the proposed pond sites, existing flood conditions, congestion, noise, and design speeds. The majority of the public's concerns were focused on the nine residential properties within a proposed pond site that would need to be relocated, if the pond configuration is retained through the design phase. It was explained to these property owners that the pond may be reconfigured or relocated once additional information (e.g. topographic survey, geotechnical data and detailed hydraulic modeling) is obtained and analyzed in the future design phase. No comments were received as part of the FHWA review for the Study, no changes were required to the preferred build alternative following the Public Hearing and Workshop, and there are no comments that are outstanding at the time this report was finalized.



Reference: Quad Maps Weekiwachee Springs, Brooksville, Brooksville S.E.

LEGEND

-  Project Study Limits
-  Major Interchange
-  Railroad

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**S.R. 50 (CORTEZ BLVD.)
PD&E STUDY REEVALUATION**

From U.S. 19 (S.R. 55) to the East Intersection of
S.R. 50 / 50A [along the Brooksville Bypass]
Hernando County, Florida

PROJECT LOCATION MAP



WPI SEG. NO: 407951 1
FAP NO: 300 - 1 (7)

FIGURE 1-1