



# US 301 (Gall Blvd.) Project Development & Environment Study

from SR 56 (Proposed) to SR 39 (Buchman Hwy.)

Pasco County, Florida

Work Program Item Segment Number: 416564-1

# State Environmental Impact Report



August 2015

**STATE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (SEIR)  
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT (PD&E) STUDY  
US 301 (GALL BOULEVARD) FROM SR 56 (PROPOSED)  
TO SR 39 (PAUL BUCHMAN HIGHWAY)  
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**Work Program Item Segment Number: 416564-1**

**Prepared for:**



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**August 2015**

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# Florida Department of Transportation STATE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

## ***1. General Information***

Project Name: US 301 (Gall Boulevard) Project Development and Environment Study

Project Limits: From SR 56 (Proposed) to SR 39 (Buchman Highway)

Work Program Item Segment Number: 416564-1

## ***2. Project Description***

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to consider the proposed widening of a portion of US 301 (Gall Boulevard). Located in Pasco County, the limits of this study are the proposed future connection of State Road (SR) 56 on the south (approximately Mile Post (MP) 1.600) to just south of the proposed future realigned SR 39 (Buchman Highway) intersection on the north (MP 3.554), a distance of approximately two miles. The project location map is included as **Figure 2-1**.

### **A. Existing Conditions:**

The existing US 301 (Gall Boulevard) corridor within the study area is currently a two-lane undivided north/south facility. Within the study area, US 301 (Gall Boulevard) is functionally classified as:

- **Rural Principal Arterial - Other** from MP 1.600 (project southern termini) to MP 2.452 (just north of Shamrock Place), for a distance of 0.852 mile, and
- **Urban Principal Arterial - Other** from MP 2.452 (just north of Shamrock Place) to MP 3.554 (project northern termini), for a distance of 1.102 mile.

The existing posted speed limit is 55 miles per hour (mph) south and 45 mph north of Chancey Road, respectively. The existing right-of-way (ROW) width is approximately 100 feet. **Figure 2-2** depicts the existing roadway typical section.

### **B. Proposed Improvements:**

The proposed improvements would consist of two typical sections, both of which are suburban typicals. The first typical section (**Figure 2-3**) from the future SR 56 to Chancy Road would have: four, 12-foot lanes; a 54-foot median; two, 7-foot paved shoulders that could also be used by bicycles; type E curbs and gutters; as well as, 5-foot sidewalks.

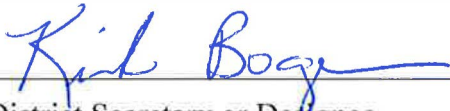
This typical section is expandable to six lanes by adding two lanes to the inside reducing the overall median width to 24 feet.

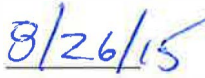
The second typical section (**Figure 2-4**) from Chancy Road to the proposed SR 39 (Buchman Highway) consists of four, 11-foot lanes; a variable width median; two, 7-foot paved shoulders that could be used for bicycles and bordered by Type E curb and gutter; as well as, two, 5-foot sidewalks. This typical section would serve as a transition between US 301 (Gall Boulevard) proposed typical section to the south and the ultimate 4-lane section of US 301 that begins just south of the proposed realigned SR 39 (Buchman Highway) intersection. Both typical sections would hold the existing west ROW line and expand the project corridor to the east.

Proposed improvements include: widening US 301 (Gall Boulevard) to four lanes, as well as intersection improvements at Chancey Road and the proposed SR 56.

Improvements would also include stormwater management facilities and floodplain compensation sites.

**3. *Approved for Public Availability (Before Public Hearing)***

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
District Secretary or Designee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

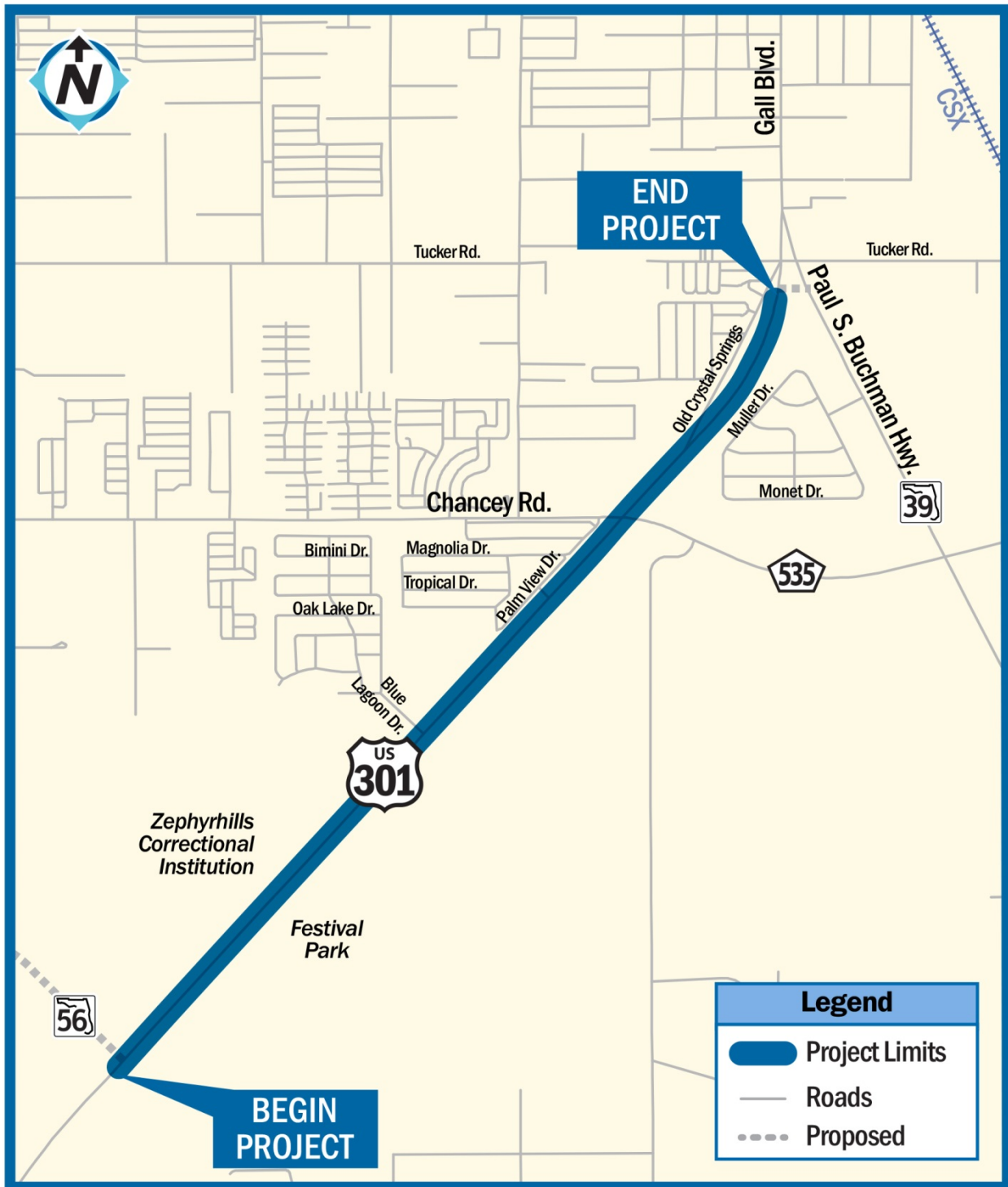
A Public Hearing was held on \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**4. *Approval of Final Document (After Public Hearing)***

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Secretary or Designee

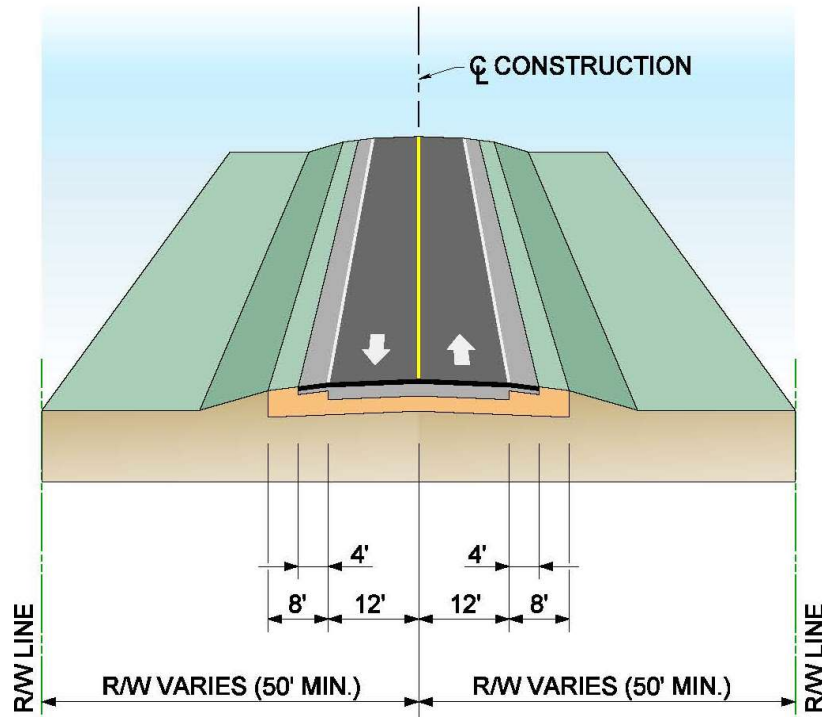
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Date

**FIGURE 2-1  
PROJECT LOCATION MAP**



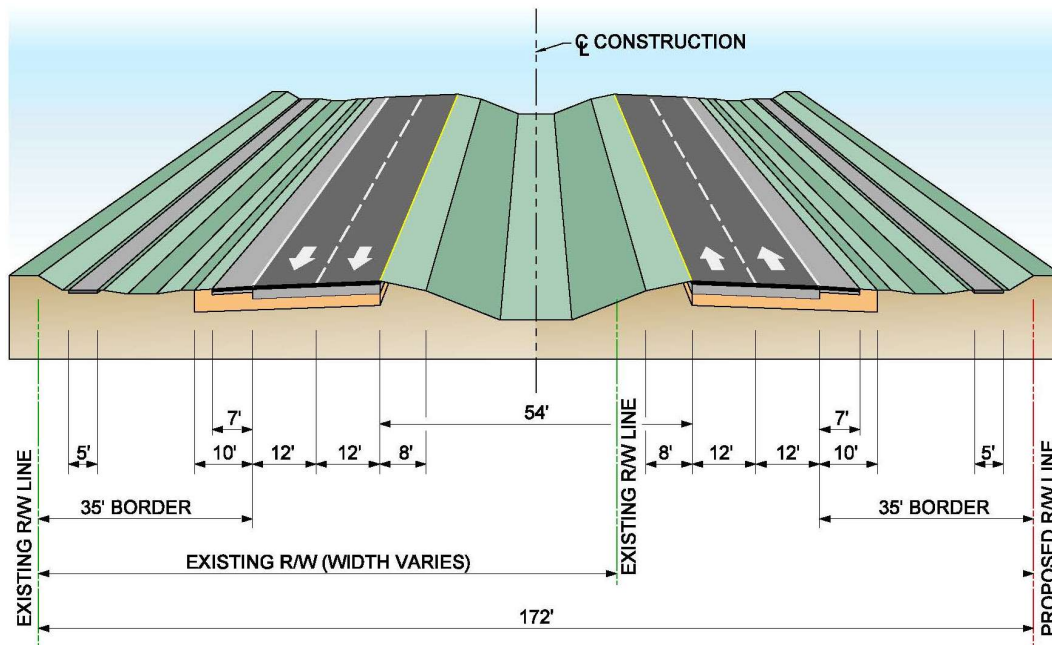
Source: URS, 2015.

**FIGURE 2-2  
EXISTING TYPICAL SECTION**



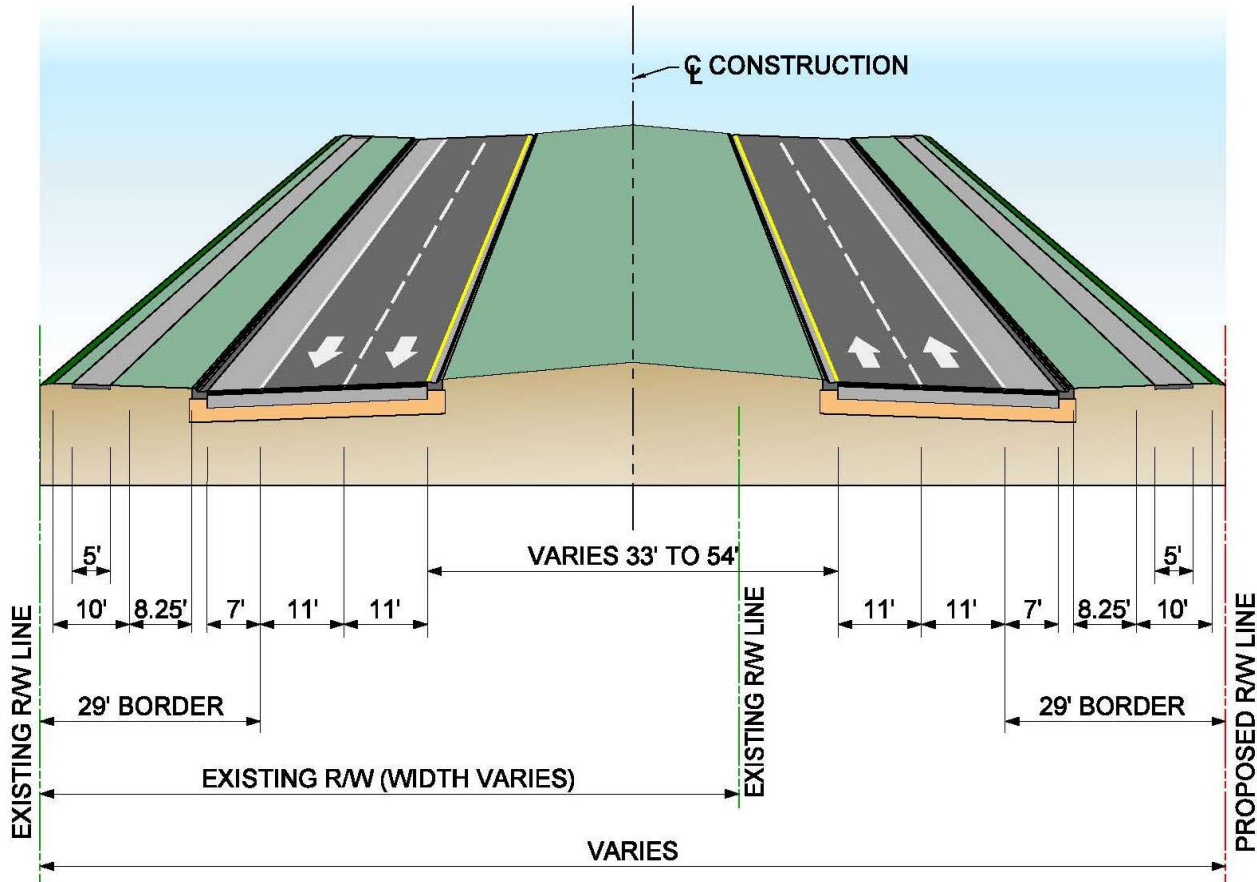
Source: URS, 2015.

**FIGURE 2-3  
PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION (PROPOSED SR 56 TO CHANCEY ROAD)**



Source: URS, 2015.

**FIGURE 2-4  
PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION (CHANCEY ROAD TO SOUTH OF PROPOSED REALIGNED SR 39)**



Source: URS, 2015.



## 5. Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist

Topical Categories	Sig	Min	N	NoInv	Basis for Decision
<b>A. SOCIAL IMPACTS</b>					
1 Land Use Changes	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.1</u>
2 Community Cohesion	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.2</u>
3 Relocation Potential	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.3</u>
4 Community Services	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.4</u>
5 Title VI Considerations	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.5</u>
6 Controversy Potential	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.6</u>
7 Bicycle and Pedestrians	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.7</u>
8 Utilities and Railroads	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section A.8</u>
<b>B. CULTURAL IMPACTS</b>					
1 Historical Sites/District	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section B.1</u>
2 Archaeological Sites	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section B.2</u>
3 Recreation Areas	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
<b>C. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT</b>					
1 Wetlands	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section C.1</u>
2 Aquatic Preserves	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
3 Water Quality	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section C.2</u>
4 Outstanding FL Waters	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
5 Wild and Scenic Rivers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
6 Floodplains	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section C.3</u>
7 Coastal Barrier Islands	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
8 Wildlife and Habitat	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section C.4</u>
9 Farmlands	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
10 Essential Fish Habitat	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
<b>D. PHYSICAL IMPACTS</b>					
1 Noise	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section D.1</u>
2 Air	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section D.2</u>
3 Construction	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section D.3</u>
4 Contamination	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	<u>Attachment A: Section D.4</u>
5 Navigation	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	

\*Sig = Significant; Min = Minimal; N=None; NoInv = No Involvement.

Note: Basis of decision is documented in the referenced attachment.

### E. PERMITS REQUIRED

It is anticipated that the following permits will be required for this project:

- Section 404 Dredge and Fill Permit – US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) – Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) – Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
- Gopher Tortoise Relocation Permit (as necessary) – FWC

## **6. *Commitments and Recommendations***

### **Commitments**

To be completed after the Public Hearing.

### **Recommendations**

To be completed after the Public Hearing.

### **List of Attachments**

Attachment A: Environmental Basis for Decision

Attachment B: Public Involvement Summary

# SEIR Attachment A: Environmental Basis of Decision

## ***A. Social Impacts***

### ***A.1 Land Use Changes***

The project corridor lies at the southern edge of the City of Zephyrhills, and passes through an unincorporated area of Pasco County. Existing land use along the project corridor supports a mix of residential, commercial, agricultural, planned unit, and industrial uses. The densest area of development occurs along the corridor's western edge and includes residential and commercial use, while the eastern edge supports less intense commercial and planned unit development.

The Pasco County Future Land Use Map designates a mix of commercial, residential, activity center, employment center, and public use along the corridor. The planned commercial, activity, and employment areas are focused at the southern end of the project corridor in the vicinity of the proposed SR 56 intersection.

Comparison between existing and planned land use shows use along the corridor will likely intensify in the future. The widening of US 301 would be compatible with and support the more intense use associated with the approved pattern of development in the area of the project. Therefore, this category has been designated as **NONE** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

### ***A.2. Community Cohesion***

The proposed improvements to US 301 would not cause adverse impacts to local neighborhoods or communities. The project would result in ROW expansion. However, that expansion would be accommodated to the east of the existing roadway on open land away from homes and businesses. It is anticipated that with the widening of the existing 2-lane facility and inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the proposed project would improve the connectivity and traffic flow within the community, potentially making the facility safer for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle movements along US 301. Therefore, this category has been designated as **NONE** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

### ***A.3. Relocation Potential***

Additional ROW would be required to support the proposed improvement of US 301. Based on analysis, the widening of US 301 would not result in any residential or business relocations with the exception of a single commercial sign relocation at the intersection of US 301 and Chancey Road. Therefore, this category has been designated as **NONE** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### ***A.4. Community Services***

There would be no substantial adverse impacts to neighborhoods, services and/or community facilities as a result of project implementation. It is anticipated that with the widening of the existing 2-lane facility, traffic congestion and flow would ease along US 301 (Gall Boulevard). This would have a positive effect on emergency services by potentially reducing the emergency response times in the community. Therefore, this category has been designated as **NONE** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### ***A.5. Title VI Considerations***

This project is being developed in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Historically disadvantaged populations, including low-income and minority residents, are present in the area of the project. However, negative effects associated with the project are limited and focused in areas outside of existing neighborhoods and away from the location of existing residents. Based on a review of direct and indirect effects, the widening of US 301 would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on any disadvantaged population. Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### ***A.6. Controversy Potential***

A coordinated public involvement effort is underway for the study. Input is being solicited from area residents through multiple small group community meetings, a project website, and periodic newsletter. To date, no comments in opposition to the project have been received. A summary of the public involvement efforts and comments received to date is included in **Attachment B: Public Involvement**.

A public hearing is planned to be held in the fall of 2015. Implementation of this project is not expected to be controversial as impacts to businesses, neighborhoods, and community facilities are not anticipated. Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### ***A.7. Bicycles and Pedestrians***

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities were evaluated in accordance with the standards established in 23 USC 109. Both proposed typical sections include 5-foot sidewalks on both sides of the roadway as well as 7-foot paved shoulders capable of supporting bike lanes. These facilities will be designed in accordance with the Florida "Bicycle Facilities Planning and Design Handbook" and relevant AASHTO Standards.

Plans produced by The West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) and Pasco Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) identify a need for bicycle/pedestrian facilities along this segment of US 301. Bicycle and Pedestrian facilities on US 301 (Gall Boulevard) in the area of the project would link a planned (funded) trail segment to the north with a planned (unfunded) segment to the south. The CCC and MPO both have current adopted maps that depict the proposed multi-modal improvements along US 301 (Gall Boulevard). Coordination with the MPO is ongoing.

Short sidewalk segments near Chancy Road and 5-foot paved shoulders on US 301 represent the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure present in the corridor. No other bicycle or pedestrian accommodation is present. The bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure included as part of this project are consistent with local plans, and would enhance bicycle and pedestrian mobility along the corridor. Therefore, this category has been designated as **NONE** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### ***A.8. Utilities and Railroads***

Existing utilities and railroads are addressed in **Section 4.1.10** of the *Preliminary Engineering Report (PER)* and potential impacts are addressed in **Section 8.12** of the *PER*. The exact locations of existing utilities and the extent of impacts will be determined during the final design phase through coordination with the utility owners; however, some impacts are expected as a result of widening the roadway to the outside. Disruptions to service and utility relocations will be minimized to the greatest extent feasible.

There are no at-grade railroad crossings along the US 301 Corridor. This category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

### ***B. Cultural Impacts***

#### ***B.1. Historic Sites/Districts***

Historical background research indicated that nine previously recorded historic resources were located in the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) project APE: (8PA00674, 8PA00675, 8PA01164, 8PA02675, and 8PA02720 through 8PA02724). They include one resource group (8PA01164), one road segment (8PA02675), and seven buildings (8PA00674, 8PA00675, and 8PA02720 through 8PA02724). 8PA01164, Clyde's Cottages, was determined eligible for NRHP listing in 2010, and a Section 106 report was prepared in 2012. The evaluation of effects to Clyde's Cottages (8PA01164) resulted in a finding of No Adverse Effect with conditions. The segment of US 301 (8PA02675) within the project APE was not evaluated by the SHPO, and the seven other previously recorded historic resources were determined ineligible (FMSF).

In addition to the previously recorded historic resources, five historic resources were newly recorded within the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) project APE (8PA02838 through 8PA02842). They include one resource group (8PA02838) comprised of two buildings (8PA02839 and 8PA02840) and two other buildings (8PA02841 and 8PA02842). None is considered potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP.

With the exception of 8PA01164, the results of background research and field survey indicate that no historic resources that are listed, determined eligible, or considered potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP are located within the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) PD&E Study project APE. In the Programming Screen Summary Report for EDTM #3107 (FDOT 2014), it was noted that the FHWA determined "the project will probably not impact the identified Section 106 resource," 8PA01164. This category has been designated as **NONE** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

## ***B.2. Archaeological Sites***

Archaeological background research indicated that 19 previously recorded archaeological sites are located within one mile of the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) project corridor. Of these, three sites, 8PA00382, 8PA01140, and 8PA02053 are located proximate to, but outside, the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) ROW. Given the known patterns of aboriginal settlement in the vicinity, combined with the results of previous surveys, five areas along the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) PD&E Study corridor are considered to have a moderate potential for prehistoric period archaeological site occurrence. Given the results of the historic research, no historic period archaeological sites, including nineteenth century homesteads, forts, trails, roads, or Indian encampments were expected. As a result of field survey, no new archaeological resources were discovered and no evidence of any previously recorded sites was found. In conclusion, the results of background research and field survey indicate that no archaeological sites that are listed, determined eligible, or considered potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP are located within the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) PD&E Study project APE. This category has been designated as **NONE** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

## ***C. Natural Environment***

### ***C.1. Wetlands***

The project study area was assessed for potential impacts to wetlands and other surface waters. For comparison purposes, it is assumed that all wetlands/other surface waters located within the proposed ROW would be impacted by the proposed US 301 (Gall Boulevard) improvements; therefore, all were included in the impact assessment. The impact area of each wetland/other surface water equals its total acreage within the project ROW. All wet ditches were included in the impact analysis due to the presence of aquatic vegetation and the potential for this surface water to serve as suitable foraging habitat for the wood stork (*Mycteria americana*).

The proposed improvements would result in unavoidable wetland impacts of 1.6 acres to freshwater wetland and other surface water habitats. Mitigation for impacts to wetlands and other surface waters will be conducted as necessary to meet the permitting agencies' requirements. The exact type of mitigation used to offset wetland impacts from the proposed US 301 (Gall Boulevard) improvements will be coordinated with USACE and SWFWMD during the design phase of this project. Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist. A detailed review of potential wetland impacts can be found in the *Wetlands Evaluation and Biological Assessment Report (WEBAR)*.

### ***C.2. Water Quality***

According to the Preliminary Pond Siting Report (PPSR), the land use across the southern one half of the study area (south of Chancey Road) is dominated by agricultural use (improved pastures), open land, commercial use (Festival Park) and correctional facilities (Zephyrhills Correctional Institution) with high-density residential areas located in the vicinity of the intersection of US 301 (Gall Boulevard) and Chancey Road. The northern one-half of the study area is dominated by high-density residential areas and mixed wetlands and freshwater marshes. There are no state listed or impaired water bodies within the specific project limits. The addition of impervious surface within the project corridor will increase stormwater runoff.

Portions of the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) project corridor, from the southern end of the project to the north side of the intersection of US 301 (Gall Boulevard) and Chancey Road, are within a drainage basin that has been classified as an area of impaired water quality. This portion of the project lies within Watershed Basin I.D. (WBID) No. 1443A (Tampa Bay Tributaries), and comprises a portion of the watershed for the Hillsborough River, which is located south and east of the southern end of the project corridor. This reach of the river is a Class 3F water body, and the river is classified as impaired with respect to nutrients and dissolved oxygen. The FDEP has not adopted any TMDLs for this portion of the river; however, the state has adopted Rule 62-346.050 for basins listed for nutrient impairment. This rule requires a net improvement in water quality with respect to nutrients in the water that is discharged from stormwater management ponds into receiving waters in the impaired drainage basin.

Water quality impacts will be addressed during design and construction of the proposed roadway project. The project will be designed to treat all stormwater runoff generated from the additional impervious area in roadside stormwater management ponds, designed to meet criteria set forth by the SWFWMD and in accordance with the net improvement criteria. Proper Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be utilized during construction of the project to reduce or eliminate turbidity, erosion, and sedimentation into adjacent wetlands and surface waters found along the project corridor. The BMPs will prevent water quality degradation to surrounding or nearby waters during construction activities and will be designed to allow the discharged water to meet the net improvement requirement. Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

### ***C.3. Floodplains***

As stated in the Location Hydraulics Report (LHR), the following Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) FIRM panels were reviewed for the study area: 1201C0458F, 12101C0454F and 12101C0462F for Pasco County, Florida, all dated September 26, 2014. The majority of the project area is located within Flood Zone X (areas that have a 0.2% probability of flooding every year (500-year floodplain)). The proposed roadway expansion will result in a total of 0.64 acres of impacts to Flood Zone A, (areas with a 1% probability of flooding every year (100-year floodplain) and predicted flood water elevations have not been established). The proposed roadway expansion will also result in a total of 0.76 acres of impact, all located north of Chancey Road, to Flood Zone AE (areas which are 100-year flood plains with established base flood elevations).

The impacted Flood Zone AE flood plain is located in an area of high-density residential use located adjacent to Zephyr Creek, and the encroachment areas are classified as “minimal”. Minimal encroachments on a flood plain occur when there is a flood plain involvement but the impacts on human life, transportation facilities, and natural and beneficial flood plain values are not significant and can be resolved with minimal efforts. In the case of this project, three flood plain compensation (FPC) areas will be created applying the FDOT drainage design standards and following the SWFWMD procedures to achieve results that will not increase or significantly change the flood elevations and/or limits.

A total of seven existing cross drains have been identified for the length of the project. The transverse impacts resulting from the extension or replacement of the culverts will be analyzed

during the final design phase. To minimize upstream impacts due to modification of the cross drains, FDOT design criteria for conveyance systems will be utilized during the design phase. It is not anticipated that upsizing of the individual culverts will be required although all of the culverts will likely be lengthened to account for the increased ROW width. The proposed modifications to the existing cross drains will perform hydraulically in a manner equal to or greater than the existing structures, and backwater surface elevations are not expected to increase. As a result, there will be no significant adverse impacts on natural and beneficial flood plain values

There is no change in flood “Risk” associated with this project. Neither the identified encroachments on the flood plain nor the modifications to the cross drains will have a significant potential for interruption or termination of transportation facilities needed for emergency vehicles or use as an evacuation route. The proposed roadway will follow the same alignment as the existing roadway, so natural or beneficial flood plain values will not be significantly affected. Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### ***C.4. Wildlife and Habitat***

The potential effects of the Build Alternative on state- and federally-listed species were assessed by determining the natural habitats that would be affected by the project and determining the potential use of these habitats by listed species. The project study area was assessed for the presence of suitable habitat for federal- and state-listed species in accordance with 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 402 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, (ESA); Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C) – Preservation of Native Flora of Florida; Chapter 68A-27, 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. Potential effects of the Build Alternative on other species of concern that are not state- nor federally-listed but are protected by state and/or federal law were also assessed.

Along with database searches, field reviews of the project study area were conducted. The field review consisted of pedestrian transects throughout all habitat types found within the project study area. Of the 48 listed and protected species known to occur or that have historically been documented in Pasco County, 15 animal species and five plant species have the potential to occur within the project study area. Evaluations were based on the availability of appropriate habitat, documentation of the species within one mile of the project study area, and direct sightings of each species during field reviews.

General field surveys did not detect the occurrence of any protected plant species within the project study area. In addition, Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) databases and the FNAI data report do not list any protected plant species as having been documented within one mile of the project study area. Coordination with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) will be initiated and efforts will be made prior to construction to allow for seed collection and/or relocation to adjacent habitat or other suitable protected lands if protected plant species are observed within the project area during the design phase. As a result, it is anticipated that implementing the Build Alternative would have “no effect” on listed plant species.



The **eastern indigo snake** (*Drymarchon corais couperi*) is listed as threatened by the FWS. Suitable habitat for this species is available throughout the project study area. However, no eastern indigo snakes or gopher tortoise burrows were observed during the June 2013 or January 2015 field reviews and none have been documented within one mile of the project study area, based on review of FNAI data. To minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the eastern indigo snake, FDOT will commit to implementing the latest FWS's standard protection measures for the eastern indigo snake (updated August 2013), during construction of the project. Based on these commitments and the 2010 FWS Programmatic Concurrence Letter for the Eastern Indigo Snake, it has been determined that the Build Alternative "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the eastern indigo snake.

The **Florida scrub jay** (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) is listed as threatened by the FWS. The project study area falls within the FWS Consultation Area for this species. However, there is no suitable habitat available for this species within the project study area, none were observed during the field reviews of the project study area, and none have been documented within one mile of the project study area, based on review of FNAI data. Therefore, it has been determined that the Build Alternative would have "no effect" on the Florida scrub jay.

The **gopher tortoise** (*Gopherus polyphemus*) is listed as threatened by the FWC and is considered a candidate species by the FWS. Suitable habitat for the gopher tortoise is present within the project study area in open pasture areas and unpaved ROW, but no individuals or burrows were observed within the project study area during the field reviews. In order to protect this species, current FWC regulations require a permit for any ground disturbance activity occurring within 25-feet of a potentially occupied gopher tortoise burrow. Based on the FWC regulations, any gopher tortoise burrows located within 25 feet of the project construction area must be relocated to a permitted FWC recipient site (on- or off-site). FDOT will commit to survey the proposed project area for gopher tortoise burrows prior to construction. If gopher tortoises or potentially occupied burrows are observed, FDOT will coordinate with the FWC to secure all permits needed and perform relocation activities. With this commitment, it has been determined that the Build Alternative "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the gopher tortoise.

The **wood stork** (*Mycteria americana*) is listed as threatened by the FWS. Construction of the proposed project would result in impacts to wetlands and other surface waters expected to be used by wood storks. The FWS has defined the core foraging area (CFA) for the wood stork in Pasco County as a 15-mile radius from breeding colonies. Based on information provided by the FWS, FWC, and FNAI, seven (7) active wood stork nesting colonies are located within the 15-mile radius core foraging area of the project study area. No wood storks were observed within the project study area during the field reviews.

Because suitable habitat exists for the wood stork within the Build Alternative's proposed ROW, FDOT is committed to re-initiating informal Section 7 consultation during the projects permitting activities. At that time, the FDOT will evaluate the current information and provide suitable foraging habitat compensation within the service area of an FWS-approved wetland mitigation bank or wood stork conservation bank (preferably located within the CFA of wood stork foraging habitat lost). Based on these commitments and the 2010 FWS Programmatic

Concurrence Letter for the Wood Stork, it is anticipated that the Build Alternative “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” the wood stork.

The **limpkin** (*Aramus guarauna*), **little blue heron** (*Egretta caerulea*), **snowy egret** (*Egretta thula*), **tricolored heron** (*Egretta tricolor*), **roseate spoonbill** (*Platalea ajaja*), and **white ibis** (*Eudicimus albus*) are listed as species of special concern by the FWC. Suitable foraging habitat for wading birds is available within the project study area in the wetlands and other surface waters. During the June 2013 and January 2015 field reviews, white ibises and a little blue heron was observed foraging within the project study area. As part of implementing the proposed project, all wetland impacts will be mitigated to prevent a net loss of wetland habitat functions and values. Based on this information and FDOT’s commitments to mitigate for wetland impacts, it has been determined that the Build Alternative “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” these species.

The **Florida burrowing owl** (*Athene cunicularia floridana*) is listed as a species of special concern by the FWC. Suitable habitat for this species exists throughout the Build Alternative’s proposed ROW; however, no burrowing owls have been documented within one mile of the project study area and none were observed within the project study area during the June 2013 or January 2015 field reviews. FDOT will commit to survey areas of suitable habitat and coordinate with the FWC and FWS (as required) to secure all necessary approvals regarding this species. Therefore, it has been determined that the Build Alternative “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” the Florida burrowing owl.

The **southeastern American kestrel** (*Falco sparverius paulus*) is listed as threatened by the FWC. Suitable foraging habitat is available within the project study area for the southeastern American kestrel in the pastures; however, no individuals were observed within the project study area during the June 2013 or January 2015 field reviews, and none have been documented within one mile of the project study area, based on review of FNAI data. Due to its mobility and ability to use adjacent open areas for foraging, it has been determined that the Build Alternative would have “no effect” on the southeastern American kestrel.

The **Florida sandhill crane** (*Grus canadensis pratensis*) is listed as threatened by the FWC. Several sandhill cranes were observed foraging within the US 301 (Gall Boulevard) ROW during the June 2013 and January 2015 field reviews. As part of the proposed project, all adverse wetland impacts will be mitigated to prevent a net loss of wetland functions and values. In addition, FDOT will commit to survey the project area for Florida sandhill crane nests prior to construction. If Florida sandhill crane nests are found within the proposed project area, FDOT will coordinate with the FWC to ensure construction will not adversely impact this species. With this commitment, it has been determined that the Build Alternative “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” the Florida sandhill crane.

The **Sherman’s fox squirrel** (*Sciurus niger shermani*) is listed as a species of special concern by the FWC. No individuals were observed during the field reviews. However, FDOT biologists have observed a Sherman’s fox squirrel along SR 56 (proposed), within one mile of the project limits.

Due to its mobility and ability to use adjacent upland habitats for foraging, it has been determined that the Build Alternative “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” the Sherman’s fox squirrel.

Though the **bald eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) has been removed from federal and state listings, it is still protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 668 and the FWS Migratory Treaty Act in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 703-712.

The FWC online bald eagle nest locator website indicates that there are no nest sites documented within one mile of the project study area, with the nearest active nest documented approximately 1.5 miles north of the project study area. No bald eagle nests were observed within the project study area during the field reviews. Because bald eagle nests within Florida are closely monitored by the FWC, if a nest is observed within 660 feet of the preferred alignment, an Eagle Disturbance Permit may be required. If a bald eagle nest is found within 660 feet of the project area prior to construction, FDOT will coordinate with FWC and FWS to secure any and all approvals regarding this species.

Although the **Florida black bear** (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) has been removed from the state list, it is still protected and managed by the FWC pursuant to the Florida Black Bear Conservation Rule 68A-4.009, F.A.C. Marginal suitable habitat for the black bear is available within the project study area in the upland forests. According to FWC, the project study area is not located within the FWC-designated Primary or Secondary Florida black bear range. No black bears were observed within the project study area during the field reviews.

The project study area was also evaluated for the occurrence of listed species Critical Habitat designated by Congress in 17 CFR 35.1532. No designated Critical Habitat for any federally-listed species occurs within the project study area. Based on this information, it has been determined that the Build Alternative would not affect any Critical Habitat. Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

## ***D. Physical Impacts***

### ***D.1. Noise***

This traffic noise analysis has been prepared in accordance with all applicable guidelines as stated within both 23 CFR 772 and Part 2, Chapter 17 of the FDOT PD&E Manual. As such, the analysis was performed using the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)’s Traffic Noise Model (TNM, Version 2.5). Use of the TNM is required when evaluating the potential for traffic noise impacts during the design year of roadway improvement projects for which the regulations, policies and guidelines with 23 CFR 772 and Part 2, Chapter 17 of the PD&E Manual are applicable.

For properties with uses other than residential, the methodologies described in the FDOT’s *A Method to Determine Reasonableness and Feasibility of Noise Abatement at Special Use Locations* were also used. Special land uses include community pools and recreational areas.

One-hundred twenty one noise sensitive receptors (i.e., discrete representative locations on a property that has noise sensitive land uses) were evaluated within eight noise sensitive areas. One-hundred eighteen receptors were evaluated on residential property, two were evaluated at community pools located at the Palm View Gardens RV Resort and Bramblewood Mobile Home Park and one receptor was evaluated at the shuffleboard court at the Palm View Gardens RV Resort.

Future traffic noise levels with the proposed improvements are predicted to approach, meet, or exceed the NAC at 70 noise sensitive sites. These sites are predicted to experience future traffic noise levels with the proposed improvements to US 301 that would range from 66.0 to 74.4 dB(A).

The TNM was used to evaluate the ability of noise barriers to reduce traffic noise levels for the impacted noise sensitive receptors adjacent to US 301. The barriers were evaluated five feet within the FDOT's ROW at heights from eight to 22 feet (in two-foot increments). The length of each barrier was optimized to determine if at least the minimum noise reduction requirements (i.e., a minimum reduction of 5 dB(A) for two impacted receptors and a minimum reduction of 7 dB(A) for one benefitted receptor) could be achieved. Three noise barriers were originally considered.

The results of the evaluation indicate that construction of noise barriers is a potentially reasonable and feasible noise abatement method to reduce the predicted traffic noise levels for up to 69 of the 70 impacted sites at the following locations:

- Barrier 1: Residences at the Palm View Gardens RV Park (Receptors 4-59, 64, 66, 72, 73, and 77)
- Barrier 3: Residences at the Shady Oaks Mobile Home Park (Receptors 86-93)

Barrier 2: Palm View Gardens RV Resort Shuffleboard Court was not considered potentially reasonable and therefore not included in the above discussion.

The estimated cost to construct the noise barriers ranges from \$207,720 to \$917,400 depending on barrier length and height.

The FDOT is committed to the construction noise barriers at the locations above, contingent upon the following:

- Detailed noise analysis during the final design process supports the need for, and the feasibility and reasonableness of providing the barriers as abatement;  
The detailed analysis demonstrates that the cost of the noise barrier will not exceed the cost effective limit;
- The residents/property owners benefitted by the noise barrier desire that a noise barrier be constructed; and

- All safety and engineering conflicts or issues related to construction of a noise barrier are resolved.

This category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist. A detailed review of potential noise impacts can be found in the study's *Noise Study Report (NSR)*.

#### **D.2. Air**

The referenced project is located in Pasco County, Florida, an area currently designated by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as being in attainment for all of the criteria air pollutants. Because the project is in an attainment area and the project would reduce congestion, it is not likely that the proposed improvements will have an impact on local or regional air pollutant/pollutant precursor emissions or concentrations. As required by FDOT, the project was subject to a localized carbon monoxide (CO) screening analysis.

The project "passed" the screening test and has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### **D.3. Construction**

Construction activities for this proposed project will have minimal, temporary, yet unavoidable, air, noise, water quality, traffic flow, and visual impacts for those residents and travelers within the immediate vicinity of the project. These temporary construction impacts will be controlled by the adherence to the most recent edition of the FDOT's *Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction*.

Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** in the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist.

#### **D.4. Contamination**

Thirteen (13) mainline locations were investigated for sites that may present the potential for finding petroleum contamination or hazardous materials, and therefore may impact the proposed improvements for this project. *Specific details for each site can be found in the study's Contamination Screening Evaluation Report (CSEER)*.

Of the 13 mainline sites investigated, the following risk ratings have been applied: three (3) "High" ranking sites, two (2) "Medium" ranking sites, five (5) "Low" ranking sites, and three (3) sites ranked "No" for potential contamination concerns.

For the sites ranked "No" for potential contamination, no further action is planned. These sites have been evaluated and determined not to have any potential environmental risk to the study area at this time.

For sites ranked "Low" for potential contamination, no further action is required at this time. These sites/facilities have the potential to impact the project in the future, but based on select variables have been determined to have low risk, at this time. Variables that may change the risk

ranking include a facility's non-compliance to environmental regulations, new discharges to the soil or groundwater, and modifications to current permits. Should any of these variables change, additional assessment of the facilities will be conducted to determine if the low risk ranking is still appropriate.

For those locations with a risk ranking of "Medium" or "High", Level II field screening will be conducted if it is determined during the project's design that its construction activities could be within their vicinity. These sites have been determined to have potential contaminants, which may impact the proposed roadway improvement project. A soil and groundwater sampling plan could be developed for each site, if applicable. The sampling plan would provide sufficient detail as to the number of soil and groundwater samples to be obtained and the specific analytical test to be performed. A site location sketch for each facility showing all proposed boring locations and groundwater monitoring wells would be prepared.

Therefore, this category has been designated as **MINIMAL** on the Summary of Environmental Impact Checklist. A detailed review of potential contamination impacts can be found in the *CSER*.

# SEIR Attachment B: Public Involvement Summary

A comprehensive Public Involvement Program is being completed for this project. This program is in compliance with the FDOT Project Development and Environment Manual, Section 339.155, Florida Statutes (F.S.); Executive Orders 11990 and 11988; Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the NEPA; and 23 CFR 771.

At the start of the PD&E study, a kickoff newsletter was mailed to adjacent property owners and interested parties to notify the public that the study had commenced. Agency coordination commenced with the ETDM Programming Screen and distribution of an Advanced Notification.

The AN Package on the section of US 301 from Chancey Road to SR 39 (Buchman Highway) was transmitted to the Florida State Clearinghouse (FSC), Department of Environmental Protection/Office of Intergovernmental Programs, on September 19, 2013. During the 45 day review, the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) provided their comments on the project's purpose and need, and issued their Degree of Effect (DOE) findings by resource area for each of the proposed corridors. Upon completion of the ETDM Programming Screen review, a Programming Screen Summary Report (PSSR) was developed and entered into the EST which provided the FDOT's response to each DOE finding as well as discussion about the overall project. As a result of the AN and EST screening, there were no substantial comments received and no further coordination was necessary in the EST. The section of US 301 from future SR 56 to Chancey Road was included in the SR 54 EA/FONSI, from Cypress Creek to Zephyrhills East Bypass/Chancey Road, approved on January 25, 1993 so it did not need to be included in the PSSR development process.

In lieu of an alternatives public workshop, a series of small group meetings were held in the communities adjacent to the project. It was determined that, due to the demographics in the project area, residents were more likely to participate if the meetings were more convenient for them. Each of the communities adjacent to the project as well as civic organizations in the area were contacted and provided an opportunity to request a presentation. As a result, meetings were scheduled at the following locations:

- Tropical Acres Estates on February 23, 2015 at 8:30 a.m., 131 attendees, 23 written comments received
- Ramblewoods Manufactured Home Community on March 11, 2015 at 9:30 a.m., 43 attendees, 2 written comments received
- Moose Lodge on March 10, 2015 at 1:30 p.m., 24 attendees, 3 written comments received
- FDOT district headquarters on March 25, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. with the owners of Festival Park, a large outdoor event venue adjacent to the project
- Shady Oaks Mobile Modular Estates scheduled a meeting for May 21, 2015 at 9:00 a.m., however, it was cancelled by Shady Oaks prior to the meeting date; one comment was

received from a resident by email and one request for project information was received from Shady Oaks' legal representative

The purpose of the small group meetings was to provide project information and an opportunity for the public to provide comments regarding the location and conceptual design of the proposed improvements to US 301 within the project limits.

There have been no comments to date regarding opposition to the project and none regarding the selection of the no-build alternative. The majority of the comments were regarding access management needs along the project corridor. Based on the findings of the earlier EA/FONSI, ETAT comments included in the PPSR and undertaking the public involvement process to date, it has been determined that the proposed improvements to US 301 would not create any significant impacts to the environment. Also, when the project went through the ETDM Programming Screen process, the FDOT planned to seek approval of the PD&E study's environmental document by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In the meantime, the FDOT determined that it would instead process the study's environmental document as a State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR). The project is currently funded for design in the FDOT's District 7, 2016/2020 Five Year Work Program. The ROW and construction phases may be added in future work program updates.

A summary of the Public Hearing will be included once it is held and the comment period has ended.