

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Project Name: US 301/State Road (SR) 35
Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study


Project Limits: From south of US 98 to SR 50/Cortez Boulevard

County/State: Pasco and Hernando Counties

WPI Segment No.: 447536-1

In accordance with Part 1, Chapter 11 of the *Florida Department of Transportation PD&E Manual* this Public Involvement Plan is submitted to the District Planning and Environmental Management Office for review and approval.

Submitted By:

DocuSigned by:

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Jeff Novotny, PE, AICP
Project Manager

American Consulting Engineers of Florida, LLC

Date:

4/5/2021 | 4:02 PM EDT

Approved By:

DocuSigned by:

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Kirk Bogen, P.E., Environmental Management Engineer
Planning & Environmental Management Office

Date:

4/6/2021 | 6:56 AM EDT

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2016 and executed by FHWA and FDOT.

April 2021

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

US 301/SR 35 PD&E Study from south of US 98 to SR 50/Cortez Boulevard Pasco and Hernando Counties, Florida

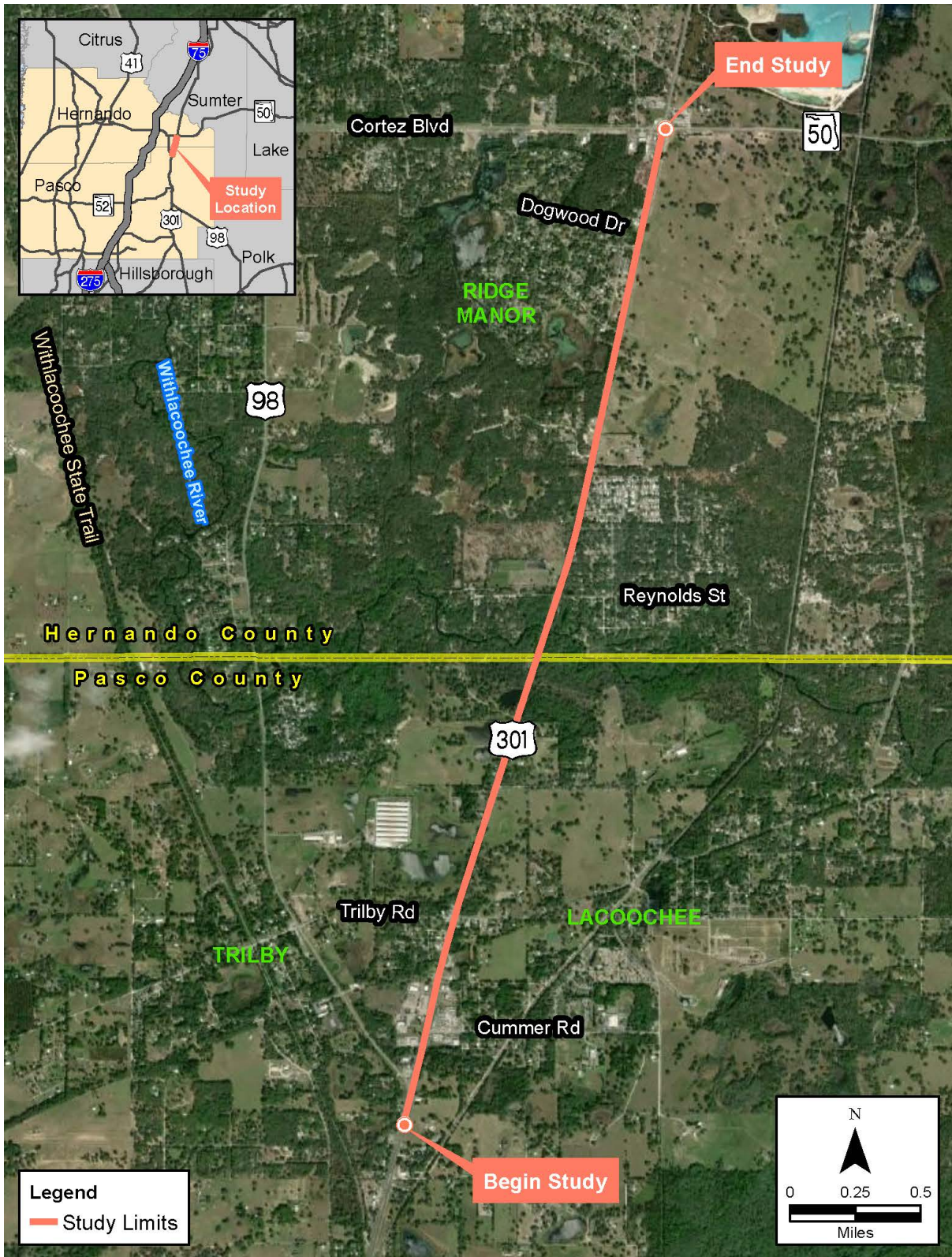
The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to assist in providing information to and obtaining input from concerned citizens, agencies, private groups (residential/business), and governmental entities. The overall goal of this plan is to help ensure that the study reflects the values and needs of the communities it is designed to benefit. A schedule of events and list of documentation exhibiting compliance with all procedures are included.

This program is in compliance with the *Florida Department of Transportation Project Development and Environment Manual, Part 1, Chapter 11*; Section 339.155, Florida Statute (F.S.), Executive Orders 11990 and 11988, Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 771.

I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT

- Project Name:** US 301 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study
- WPI Segment No.:** 447536-1
- Project Limits:** From south of US 98 to SR 50/Cortez Boulevard
Pasco and Hernando Counties
See project location map (**Figure 1**).
- Proposed Activity:** This is a PD&E study with an intended class of action of a Type 2 Categorical Exclusion (CE).
- Project Description:** This project will evaluate widening US 301 from a 2-lane undivided facility to a 4-lane divided facility and include pedestrian/bicycle accommodations. Issues related to traffic operations, safety, access management, freight movements, and transit will also be addressed in the study. The study will also evaluate stormwater management facility (SMF) and floodplain compensation (FPC) sites. The acquisition of right of way (ROW) is anticipated on this project.

Figure 1: Project Location Map



Project Contact Information

For information regarding this study, please contact:

FDOT Project Manager

Ashley Henzel, P.E.
Florida Department of Transportation
11201 N. McKinley Drive, MS 7-500
Tampa, FL 33612-6403
813-975-6433
800-226-7220
ashley.henzel@dot.state.fl.us

Public Information Director

Kris Carson
Florida Department of Transportation
11201 N. McKinley Drive, MS 7-110
Tampa, FL 33612-6403
813-975-6202
800-226-7220
kristen.carson@dot.state.fl.us

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District 7 is conducting a PD&E study along US 301 from south of US 98 to SR 50.

III. PROJECT GOALS

The project goal is to evaluate the corridor and evaluate the project needs. This study involves working with Pasco and Hernando Counties, Pasco Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and Hernando-Citrus MPO to identify, describe, and illustrate the overall goals for the development of context sensitive improvements to improve future mobility of US 301.

IV. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The project will evaluate widening US 301 from a 2-lane undivided facility to a 4-lane divided facility and include pedestrian/bicycle accommodations. Issues related to traffic operations, safety, access management, freight movements, and transit will also be addressed in the study. The study will also evaluate stormwater management facility (SMF) and floodplain compensation (FPC) sites. The acquisition of additional right of way (ROW) is anticipated on this project.

V. IDENTIFICATION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES

The following federal, state, regional or local agencies and Native American Tribal officials, having a concern in this study due to jurisdictional review or expressed interest, have been identified and will be contacted directly by FDOT as needed. As other concerned public agencies are identified throughout the study, they will be listed and contacted. ***This will be updated prior to the mailing.***

FEDERAL AGENCIES:

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Federal Transit Administration
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Regulatory Branch
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Tampa Regulatory Branch
U.S. Department of Interior – National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region IV

STATE AGENCIES:

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FDOT Office of Environmental Management
Florida State Clearinghouse, FDEP Office of Intergovernmental Programs

REGIONAL/LOCAL:

Southwest Florida Water Management District
Pasco County Public Transportation
Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council
West Central Florida MPO's Chairs Coordinating Committee
Pasco County Public Schools
Pasco County MPO
Hernando-Citrus MPO – Steve Diez (Executive Director)
Pasco County Government
Hernando County Government
Hernando County Public Schools

TRIBAL OFFICIALS:

Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
Muskogee (Creek) Nation
Poarch Band of Creek Indians of Alabama
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
Seminole Tribe of Florida

STATE AND LOCAL ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS:

U.S. Senators

Senator Marco Rubio
Senator Rick Scott

U.S. Representatives

Representative Daniel Webster (District 11)
Representative Gus Bilirakis (District 12)

Florida State Senators

Senator Wilton Simpson (District 10)

Florida State Representatives

Blaise Ingoglia (District 35)
Randall Scott "Randy" Maggard (District 38)

Pasco County Board Of County Commissioners

District 1 – Ron Oakley
District 2 – Mike Moore, Chairman
District 3 – Kathryn Starkey
District 4 – Mike Wells
District 5 – Jack Mariano, Vice Chairman

Pasco County Department of Public Works

Director of Public Works Branford N. Adumuah

Pasco County Fire Rescue

Fire Chief Scott Cassin

Pasco County School Board

Chairperson Colleen Beaudoin
 Vice Chairperson Kathryn Starkey
 Superintendent Kurt S. Browning

Pasco County Sheriff

Sheriff Chris Nocco

Hernando County Board of County Commissioners

District 1 – John Mitten, Chairman
 District 2 – Wayne Dukes, Second Vice Chairman
 District 3 – John Allocco, Vice Chairman
 District 4 – Jeff Holcomb
 District 5 – Steve Champion

Hernando County Department of Public Works

Director of Public Works J. Scott Herring

Hernando County Fire Rescue

Fire Chief Kevin Carroll

Hernando County School Board

Chairperson Susan Duval
 Vice Chairperson Linda K. Prescott
 Superintendent John Stratton

Hernando County Sheriff

Sheriff Al Nienhuis

VI. IDENTIFICATION OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

This project traverses through unincorporated areas of northeastern Pasco County and southeastern Hernando County. The involved census designated places according to the 2010 US Census are Trilby (#72425) and Lacoochee (#37275) in Pasco County and Ridge Manor (#60325) in Hernando County.

The ETDM programming Screen Summary Report was published on February 26, 2021. As part of the ETDM process the Sociocultural Data Report is developed which provides demographic data for the project area.

As shown in the figure to the right, demographic data within the project study area indicates that the minority population makes up 29.67%, with 20.57% of the total population which are Hispanic or Latino within the 500-foot project buffer area.

The CONSULTANT will ensure that all interested parties, including those with Limited English Proficiency, have an opportunity to participate in the transportation decision-making process.

| Project Area | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Race and Ethnicity Trends | ACS 2015 - 2019 |
| White Alone | 88.52% |
| Black or African American Alone | 4.78% |
| Asian Alone | 0.96% |
| Hispanic or Latino of Any Race | 20.57% |
| Minority | 29.67% |

Contact information to request project materials in Spanish will be included in advertisements, brochures, meeting invitations and newsletters. Spanish interpreters will be available (free of charge) at the public meetings.

The following local public interest groups, agencies, and organizations having a direct or expressed interest in the study have been identified and will be contacted by the FDOT:

Civic Organizations

The Greater Dade City Chamber of Commerce
Pasco Economic Development Commission
Greater Hernando County Chamber of Commerce

Community Services

Pasco County Housing Authority
Pasco County Emergency Services
Food Distribution Center – Lacoochee

Recreation

Stanley Park
Withlacoochee State Trail – Owensboro Junction Trailhead

Schools

Lacoochee Elementary School
Strawberry Church of Christ
Ridge Manor Christian Academy

Places of Worship

Trilacoochee Church of Christ
Glorious Church of God
New Hope Baptist Church
New Bethel AME Church
St. Anne’s Catholic Church
Ridge Manor Community United Methodist Church

Property Owners and Special Interest Groups

The existing land uses in the project corridor are mostly retail, commercial, residential, and transportation. The best way to engage these property and business owners will be to notify them by letters/newsletter and invite them to the Public Hearing.

Small Group Meetings

Small group meetings may be held with groups of people who may have specific issues or concerns that may not involve the general public in the project area. This may include neighborhood associations, environmental groups or agencies, public interest groups, county or city staff, affected businesses, committees, or other concerned people who may be impacted by the proposed transportation improvements. Meetings organized by outside groups or individuals do not have to follow the notification or advertisement requirements typically associated with a public meeting or hearing.

VII. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The following techniques will be used to notify the public of the proposed transportation improvements and to solicit public input into the project development process.

Newspaper Notification

The Tampa Bay Times
7300 Winter Street
Brooksville, FL 34613
727-869-6276

La Gaceta
3210 East 7th Avenue
Tampa, FL 33605
813-248-3921

Florida Sentinel Bulletin
2207 East 21st Avenue
Tampa, FL 33605
813-248-2825

Radio Notification

WMNF 88.5 FM
Tampa, FL 33603
<http://www.wmnf.org/>
813-238-8001

WUSF 89.7 FM
Tampa, FL 33620
<http://www.wusf.usf.edu/>
813-974-8700

WTMP 96.1 FM / Caliente
2005 Pan Am Circle, Suite 250
Tampa, FL 33607
813-259-9867

WLCC – AM 760 / Radio Luz
5211 West Laurel St, Suite A
Tampa, FL 33607

WFLA 970 AM
4002 Gandy Blvd
Tampa, FL 33611
844-832-1000

Television Notification

Channel 8
WFLA, NBC
200 S. Parker Street
Tampa, FL 33606

Bay News 9
Hernando Bureau
700 Carillon Parkway, Suite 9
St. Petersburg, FL 33716

Local Channel 622
HCGB – Government Broadcasting
20 North Main Street, Room 163
Brooksville, FL 34601

Channel 13
WTVT, Fox
3213 W. Kennedy Boulevard.
Tampa, FL 33609

In addition to working with the media, a number of different notification techniques will be used throughout the study process. These techniques include:

Letters/Newsletter:

Invitational and informational letters and newsletters will be distributed to elected and appointed officials, property owner/tenants, business owners/operators, and interested parties as feasible.

The first newsletter will be distributed to inform the public of the PD&E study underway, and will serve as the Kick-off Newsletter and as a notice to individuals on the mailing list.

The second newsletter will be distributed prior to the Public Hearing and will serve as a notice to individuals on the mailing list.

The third newsletter will be distributed upon receipt of the “Location and Design Concept Acceptance” (LDCA) at the completion of the PD&E Study.

**News/ Press Releases
to Local Media:**

If required, press releases will be submitted to the FDOT fourteen (14) days prior to the Public Hearing.

**Public Notices/Legal
Display Ads:**

One legal display advertisement announcing the Public Hearing will be published prior to the Public Hearing. First ad appearing at least 15 days, but no more than 30 days prior to the hearing. Second ad should run 7 to 12 days prior to the hearing and news releases will be prepared for publication by the FDOT and released at least seven (7) days before the Public Hearing. Public advertisements will consist of a legal classified ad published in the area newspaper with the largest circulation twice prior to the Public Hearing. In addition, the public hearing will be advertised in the Florida Register (FAR) at least seven (7) days prior to the hearing. The Public Hearing will also be advertised on the FDOT Public Information Office (PIO) website at least seven (7) days prior to the hearing.

Lastly a legal display ad will be published in the area newspaper to announce the LDCA at the completion of the PD&E Study.

Public Announcements:

In order to distribute the study information, a newsletter will be made available to organizations such as neighborhood/civic groups, churches, Pasco and Hernando Counties, and the communities within the project limits to publish in existing newsletters and websites. Any such correspondence will be coordinated through the District’s staff.

Direct Mail List:

The following will be contacted by direct mail in order to obtain input throughout the study process and in order to provide study information. These groups will be notified 21 days in advance of the Public Hearing, therefore notifications will be sent out 25 days prior to the hearing.

- Those whose property lies, in whole or in part within 300 feet on either side of the centerline for each alternative alignment as required by Section 399.155 F.S., as well as other local citizens who may be effected by the construction of this project. The property owner portion of the mailing list will be based on the county property appraiser’s tax rolls.
- Local elected and appointed officials, community leaders, or individuals who have requested to be placed on the study mailing list.
- Public or private groups, organizations, agencies or businesses that have been identified or have requested to be placed on the study mailing list.

**Presentations to Local
Officials**

Presentations will be given to local officials and agencies such as the Pasco and Hernando/Citrus MPO’s prior to the Public Hearing to apprise local officials of the study status. Specific location and design concepts, and receive their comments.

Public Hearing: Public Hearing will be held as required by federal regulations and state law.

Project Website: All pertinent study information, including maps, handouts, meeting materials, and documents will be posted on the FDOT District Seven PD&E study information website:
www.fdotd7studies.com/projects/us301-us98-to-sr50.

Public Outreach Activity Schedule (Tentative*):

| Year -> | 2020 | | | 2021 | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----|------|------|-----|-----|------|-----|
| | Season -> | SMR | FALL | WIN | SPR | SMR | FALL | WIN |
| Compile Mailing List | | | | | | | | |
| Kick-off Newsletter | | | | | | | | |
| Site Review / Confirmation | | | | | | | | |
| Public Hearing Notification | | | | | | | | |
| Newspaper Ad & FAR Notice | | | | | | | | |
| Elected / Appointed / Letters | | | | | | | | |
| Presentation / Display Material Review | | | | | | | | |
| Presentation to Pasco & Hernando/Citrus County MPO's | | | | | | | | |
| Public Hearing | | | | | | | | |
| Comments & Coordination Summary | | | | | | | | |

* The most up-to-date schedule for these outreach activities will be included in the updated schedule included with the monthly progress report.

VIII. COORDINATION WITH PASCO AND HERNANDO COUNTIES

The following agency and public information meetings will be held to involve the public and interested agencies in the US 301 from south of US 98 to SR 50/Cortez Boulevard PD&E Study process and to inform interested parties of the project's status.

Coordination Meetings with Local Officials

Meetings will be held throughout the study when deemed appropriate by the department to inform local officials of the project status, the recommended alternative concepts, and to receive their comments. Coordination will be accomplished by presentation upon request to Pasco County Board of County Commissioners, Pasco County Department of Public Works, Pasco County MPO, Hernando County Board of County Commissioners, Hernando County Department of Public Works, and the Hernando/Citrus MPO.

Unscheduled Meetings and Presentations

The FDOT and their representative (if required) will be available with proper notice to attend meetings or make presentations. Such meetings and presentations may be held at any hour between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm on any weekday. Aerial maps, press releases, advertisements, audio/visual displays, and other materials may be used for these meetings.

Coordination and Adjacent Projects

Efforts will be made to coordinate with any ongoing projects adjacent to the study limits.

IX. ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

A *Comments and Coordination Report* will be developed to summarize the Public Hearing results and recommendations. The report will also contain the overall input provided through the other public involvements techniques utilized in the study development process.

X. PUBLIC HEARING

In compliance with the *Florida Department of Transportation Project Development and Environment Manual*, 23 CFR 771 and Section 339.155, F.S., a Public Hearing will be held.

Hybrid Public Meetings and Hearings:

Public meetings and hearings will employ a hybrid meeting format that combines face-to-face and virtual meeting components with the guidance of the FDOT Office of Environmental Management (OEM). (Definition of a Hybrid meeting: attendees can participate from different locations.)

Potential Meeting Sites:

The Public Hearing will be held at an appropriate facility convenient to the study area and ADA accessible. Potential locations within the project limits include:

Ridge Manor Community United Methodist Church
34350 Cortez Blvd.
Dade City, FL 33523

Trilacoochee Church of Christ
20300 US 301
Dade City, FL 33523

Ridge Manor Community Center
34240 Cortez Blvd.
Ridge Manor, FL 33523

Public Advertisement:

A legal classified ad will appear in the ***Tampa Bay Times, La Gaceta and the Florida Sentinel Bulletin*** twice: the first will be published at least 21 days and not more than 30 days prior to the public hearing and the second will be published at least 7 days but no more than 12 days prior to the public hearing.

The Tampa Bay Times
Hernando Times Edition
15365 Cortez Boulevard
Brooksville, FL 34613
727-869-6276

La Gaceta
3210 East 7th Avenue
Tampa, FL 33605
813-248-3921

Florida Sentinel Bulletin
2207 East 21st Avenue
Tampa, FL 33605
813-248-2825

All advertisements will be sent to the local newspaper via email or registered mail, return receipt requested. In addition, a Public Hearing announcement will be published in the *Florida*

Administrative Register at least seven (7) days prior to the workshop. The notice will also be posted on the FDOT PIO website at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

Letters of Invitation:

Newsletters and/or notification letters will be mailed to all property owners whose property lies, in whole or part, within at least 300 feet of the centerline of the proposed alignment as required by Section 339.155, F.S. and to local elected and appointed officials notifying them of the upcoming Public Hearing. Notification and/or newsletter will be emailed to elected officials notifying them of the Public Hearing. Notices may also be hand delivered to residences and businesses /tenants located along the study corridor as deemed necessary by FDOT.

Hearing Preparation:

A PowerPoint presentation, project corridor aerial maps, graphics, handouts, and all the notices/advertisements will be prepared to supplement the Public Hearing presentation.

Transcript:

A verbatim transcript of the public hearing will be compiled by a court reporter and will include written and verbal comments received at the hearing as well as written comments received within the established comment period before and after the hearing. All public hearing documentation (handouts, presentations, graphics, etc.) will be included in the Public Hearing Scrapbook.

Documents for Public Review:

Environmental and engineering reports to support the study evaluation will be available for public review at least 21 calendar days prior to and 10 days following the public hearing date.

Locations of Review Documents:

Public notice will be provided in the public hearing advertisement and by mailed invitational newsletters/letters as to where the study documents are located for public review.

Recommended review sites are:

East Hernando Branch Library

6457 Windermere Road
Brooksville, FL 34602

Pasco County Law Public Library

38053 Live Oak Ave #126
Dade City, FL 33523

FDOT District Seven Headquarters

11201 N. McKinley Drive
Tampa, FL 33612

Title VI and Related Statutes:

All of the notifications and advertisements will be provided in the presentation, the handout, signage, and through availability of personnel. Per FDOT guidance dated September 17, 2013, the following public participation language will be used:

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact Alex Henry, Public Involvement Coordinator, at 813-975-6405 or (800) 226-7220 at least seven (7) working days in advance of the hearing.

Assistance for Spanish-speaking attendees.

Spanish language assistance will be provided in the study handouts and applicable websites throughout the duration of the study.

The following language will be used:

Comuníquese Con Nosotros

Si usted tiene preguntas o comentarios, o si simplemente desea más información, por favor comuníquese con el señor Manuel Flores al teléfono 813-975-4248 o al correo electrónico manuel.flores@dot.state.fl.us.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance:

Notification of the Department's intent to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will be provided in the advertisements for the Public Hearing, in invitational letters to property owners/tenants and local officials, in handouts and through the selection of a hearing location that meets current ADA requirements.

XI. PUBLIC HEARING FOLLOW-UP

The following procedures will occur after the Public Hearing.

Responses:

Responses to letters requiring a response received as a result of the hearing and questions and comments not answered at the Public Hearing will be made in writing.

Public Hearing Transcript Package:

A transcript package will be produced and submitted following the public hearing. The transcript package will include a verbatim hearing transcript prepared by an approved court reporter, an errata sheet detailing any transcript discrepancies, a copy of all correspondence received by the Department as part of the public hearing record, and affidavits of publication for newspaper ads advertising the hearing.

Comments and Coordination Report:

A *Comments and Coordination Report* will be produced and submitted at the conclusion of the study containing all documentation regarding public participation throughout the study period. This report shall include all comments and responses received from the public, coordination with local officials and agencies, and public meetings, etc., proof of publication, sign-in sheets, and all public correspondence.

Public Hearing Scrapbook: A scrapbook containing 11x17 reproductions of the public hearing display boards, concept plans, presentation materials, brochures, and sign-in sheets will be prepared. The scrapbook will contain information such as the total number of attendees; the alternatives that were shown; and a list of all reports that were displayed. The scrapbook cover page will include a study description, FDOT Work Program Item Segment Number (WPI Seg. No.), Federal Aid Project Number (FAP No.) if applicable, county; a study location map and the date, time, and location of the hearing. A flashdrive containing the electronic files in pdf format will also be included.

Study Team Debriefing: A debriefing will be held with the study team approximately two to three weeks after the Public Hearing to identify, review, and discuss comments and issues expressed by the public at the meeting. Questions and comments received from the public, but not answered at the hearing, will be addressed as necessary. If written response is required, the FDOT and/or their representatives will prepare letters of response. A copy of all responses will be included in the study files and incorporated in the *Comments and Coordination Report*.

XII. EVALUATION OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

A public involvement evaluation process will be developed to assess the effectiveness of the public involvement efforts utilized throughout the study. This process will include identification of the public involvement tools, establishment of performance measures, performance evaluations and identification of improvement strategies.

XIII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DURING THE NEXT PHASE

It is anticipated that during the next phase the Project Manager will maintain the appropriate level of public involvement activities throughout the final design process. These public involvement activities may include additional coordination meetings with local government and environmental permitting agencies, work sessions, and small group meetings as directed by FDOT.