

ENDANGERED SPECIES EVALUATION
US 98 DADE CITY BYPASS
Project Development and Environment Study
from US 301 South to US 301 North
Pasco County, Florida

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is proposing improvements to the US 98 Dade City Bypass (US 98 Bypass) from the vicinity of the US 301 South intersection to the vicinity of the US 301 North intersection, in Dade City, Pasco County, Florida, a distance of about 1.6 miles. The proposed improvements consist of widening the existing two-lane rural roadway to a four-lane divided highway to accommodate present and future traffic demands.

US 98 is an east-west arterial highway across the central and panhandle regions of Florida. US 98 traverses peninsular Florida in a northwesterly direction from Palm Beach to the Panhandle. Through the project area, the US 98 Bypass runs in a northerly direction bypassing downtown Dade City in Pasco County. The US 98 PD&E project is located within the limits of Dade City in eastern Pasco County beginning in the vicinity of the US 301 South intersection and ending in the vicinity of the US 301 North intersection. Typically, the existing US 98 Bypass is a two-lane rural roadway through the project area. Turn lanes have been added at select intersections. The right-of-way contains numerous jogs and setbacks and varies in width from 60 feet to 115 feet.. The project location map and Project Aerial are attached in Exhibit A of this document.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) was contacted for its information on the occurrence of listed species. In its letter dated March 24, 2000, FFWCC indicated, "No records from the Office of Environmental Service's database were located within the project area." Additionally, in its letter dated March 27, 2000, they indicated, "There are no known bald eagle nests within one mile of your project site." These letters are attached in Exhibit B of this document.

Review of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species List for Pasco County were also conducted. Since the project is located within the landward extent of Pasco County, all marine species that do occur in Pasco County have not been included in this analysis. Other species listed were American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*), and the wood stork (*Mycteria americana*).

A field inspection of the US 98 Bypass project was conducted on November 3, 1999. The inspection was conducted by both FDOT personnel (Todd Mecklenborg) and Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc. biologists (Christa Ippoliti, Tom Davidowicz, and Jeff Weisner). The purpose of this inspection was to observe any listed species that might be present and to determine if any suitable habitat existed for them and specific occurrences for listed species within the project corridor.

The field inspection revealed that no habitat existed within the study corridor that would exhibit listed species. No specific occurrences or observations were made for any listed species that would occur within Pasco County. The lack of specific habitat for listed species within the study area is to be expected as the corridor is urban in nature and is highly developed. Additionally, no native upland habitats are proposed to be impacted as a part of the project.

A Request for Concurrence was initiated with the FWS on March 28, 2000. On April 14, 2000, the FWS indicated that “The Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect the resources protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1974, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, *et. seq.*). This finding fulfills the requirements of the Act.” A copy of the request and concurrence letters are attached.

Therefore, through a literature search, review of the FNAI and FWS databases for Pasco County, field verification, and agency coordination at both the State and Federal Levels, no threatened and/or endangered species are expected to occur at the project site. As a result, the US 98 Bypass Project is expected to have “No Involvement” with listed species/or their critical habitats.

Exhibit A

Exhibit B