

Southern Blvd Bridge PD&E Study Alternatives Public Workshop, March 13, 2008

Responses to Public Comments

The following responses are provided to address the concerns and requests received from the public following the Project Team's "Alternatives Public Workshop", held on March 13, 2008 at the West Palm Beach Convention Center. The responses are organized in the same manner as the Summary of Public Comments Received.

Five viable alternatives were presented at the workshop. As documented in the Summary of Responses to written comments received from the public, a number of individuals expressed a preference for one or more of the five options. The project team is currently evaluating additional engineering and environmental issues associated with these five alternatives as well as responses from the public. A "Preferred Alternative" will be selected within the next few months. This alternative will be presented at a Public Hearing, which is anticipated to be held in November 2008.

Please note that the "No Build" alternative will remain under consideration throughout the study process. The No-Build alternative would include only routine maintenance and repair of the existing bridge. The Rehabilitation alternative will be further evaluated. The Rehabilitation would include major repairs needed to keep the bridge operational for the remainder of its useful life. Repairs would include replacement of electrical and mechanical components and correction of structural deficiencies. The Rehabilitation alternative would require eventual replacement of the existing bridge with a new bridge.

Comments Concerning Aesthetic Issues

Potential visual impacts have been considered during development of alternatives. Once a preferred alternative alignment is selected, aesthetics of the bridge will continue to be an important aspect of the project. At this time, no specific bridge design has been considered. A design that reflects the character of the surrounding community will be developed with input from the community.

No plans for specific landscaping or other aesthetic features (e.g. gateways, fountains, plaques, etc.) will be developed during this phase of the project. When the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) is complete and design proceeds for the Preferred Alternative, these issues will be addressed. All comments concerning landscaping and other aesthetic issues on the bridge, along the causeway and at the approaches of the movable bridge, will be considered.

Specific Concerns about Minimizing Impacts to Properties on the West Side of the Movable Bridge:

All practicable measures will be taken to minimize impacts to the "swale" adjacent to the Southbridge Condominiums.

The proposed roadway approaching the bridge on the west side will only be about two feet higher in elevation than the existing roadway at the intersection of SR 80 (Southern Blvd.) and Flagler Drive for all alternatives.

There will be no improvements to SR 80 (Southern Blvd.) west of Washington Road. Reconstruction and resurfacing of the existing SR 80 roadway will be limited to what is required to tie in the new bridge to the existing roadway.

Comments Concerning the Traffic Circle in the Town of Palm Beach

No improvements are proposed to the roadway (SR 80) east of the tide relief bridge, except for work required to tie in the new bridge to the existing roadway. At this time no changes or alterations to the traffic circle are anticipated.

Comments Concerning Parking on the Causeway

All alternatives will provide the same number of parking spaces on the Causeway that are currently available. Efforts will be made to keep the majority of the spaces on the north side of the roadway. Construction of additional parking is not proposed as part of this bridge replacement project. Impacts to existing “green space” will be minimized.

Comments Concerning Recreational/Fishing Opportunities on the Bridge and along the Causeway

There are no plans to save any of the existing bridge structure to be used as a recreational fishing pier. In addition, this project does not include construction of a new, separate fishing pier. Construction of a new recreational pier could result in additional impacts to seagrass areas and to adjacent property.

Expanding the causeway by filling in the waterway to provide additional recreational areas is not proposed. Additional fill in the Lake Worth Lagoon could adversely affect existing fish and wildlife habitat and seagrass beds.

The project team is evaluating construction of a 42-inch high (height above sidewalk) aluminum bridge railing on the outside of the proposed bridge. This rail height is the minimum allowed by Florida Department of Transportation standards. All reasonable measures will be considered to accommodate fishing from the bridge.

Construction of a sidewalk under the west end of the movable bridge to connect the sidewalks on the east side of Flagler Drive is not proposed. Construction of this facility would result in additional seagrass impacts and impacts to adjacent private property.