



Alternatives Public Workshop Comments and Summary Report

Florida Department of Transportation, District One
Old Dixie Trail PD&E Study
Connecting the Trailheads of Auburndale-TECO Trail
to Haines City Trail
Polk County
FPID: 435391-1-22-01
Federal Aid Project Number: D117 054 B
ETDM Number: 14328

November 2021

Project Description – Old Dixie Trail PD&E:

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to evaluate the proposed Old Dixie Trail. The Old Dixie Trail will connect the trailheads of the Auburndale-TECO Trail and the Haines City Trail. The multi-use trail will be up to 12-feet wide and approximately 12-miles long. The trail will provide numerous benefits, including a safe non-motorized travel option for commuters and recreational trail users; supporting quality of life and providing economic benefits to the region; addressing a gap in the regional trail network; and offering connections to the Lake Alfred Trail, the Chain of Lanes Trail, as well as other planned and future trails.

A PD&E Study is a process developed by FDOT to evaluate social, economic, natural, and physical impacts associated with a transportation improvement project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. An important component of the PD&E Study process is public involvement. This includes coordination with stakeholders. Stakeholders are everyone who may have any interest, directly or indirectly, in a project including property owners, government agencies and jurisdictions, public and private entities, and agencies (civic, social, groups etc.), businesses, and transit agencies.

Alternatives Public Workshop:

The Old Dixie Trail project team held a virtual public workshop with a live component on September 16, 2021 from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Additionally, an in-person public workshop was held on September 23, 2021 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at the Lake Alfred Lions Club at 175 N. Nekoma Ave., Lake Alfred, FL 33850. The public was invited to attend, view project displays, and comment on proposed trail alignment alternatives. Project documents were available for public viewing at the Auburndale Public Library at 100 W. Bridgers Ave., Auburndale, FL 33823. They were also available on the project website for review prior to the virtual workshop and displayed at the in-person workshop. The workshop provided the opportunity for the public to offer feedback on the proposed alternatives for the official workshop record through October 7th.

Upon completion of the alternatives public workshop, comments and feedback were collected and summarized herein. All personal identifying data was removed from the reporting. Public comments received by email, mail, virtually, or in-person were treated the same.

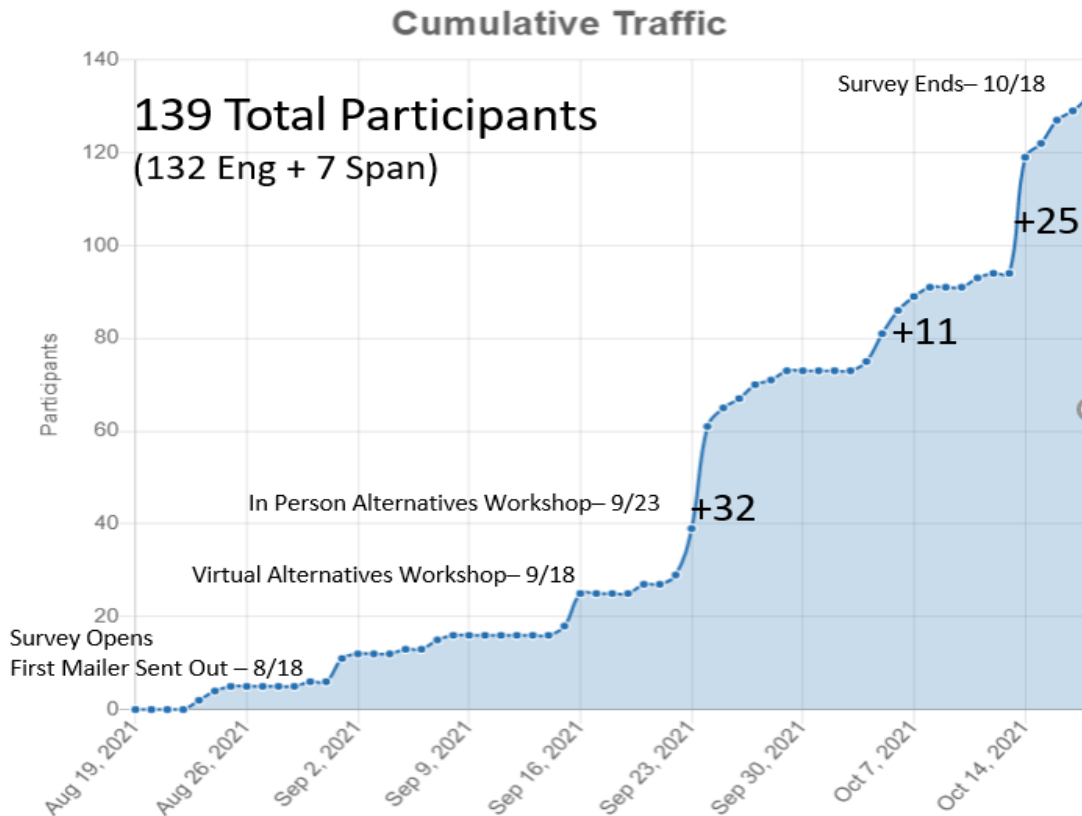
The Old Dixie Trail project team received communication through the project website (*Get Involved* page), MetroQuest survey, City of Auburndale Resolution #2021-09, email, social media, comment forms, and more. In total, FDOT received 188 questions and comments on the project. Of the 188 questions/comments, 121 supported Alternative 1 and 15 supported Alternative 2; the remaining 52 questions/comments were general in nature and did not offer support for either alternative.

Following the alternatives public workshop, FDOT will take the collective feedback, continue analysis, and make an informed decision on the preferred alternative. FDOT will then begin preparation for the Old Dixie Trail Public Hearing in the Spring of 2022 to present the public with the preferred alternative and study analysis.

MetroQuest Survey:


FDOT released an electronic questionnaire (<http://metroquestsurvey.com/jy43q>) to the public to educate and collect input from the community on the Old Dixie Trail PD&E Study. This gave the public the opportunity to offer valuable feedback on the two proposed alternatives and to share their thoughts and preferences for the Old Dixie Trail. A link to the questionnaire was provided on the newsletter that was mailed to the community, shared on social media, and was available to complete at the in-person public workshop. The survey platform was highly interactive and allowed participants to answer questions related to their personal transit experiences and usage. Participants could see their choices in real time, learn about the alternatives and their tradeoffs based on their own priorities. The survey included a priority ranking map screen to plot destinations, connectivity, amenities, access to transit, trail use preferences, multi-modal access, safety, and other trail use choices. The survey remained open for public feedback from August 18 to October 18. To engage non-English speaking members of the community, the survey was offered with a Spanish translation option. In total, 139 participants completed the MetroQuest survey. Of the 139 participants, 132 completed the survey in English and 7 in Spanish.

MetroQuest Survey Results



Public Questions/Comments and Responses

Public Feedback	Public Comment Responses
1. When will design and construction be funded?	Funding for the Old Dixie Trail is being coordinated with FDOT and local and County agencies. We don't have an exact time of when the funding will be available, but FDOT is actively working to get the next phases of the project funded.
2. Will golf carts be allowed on the trail?	The trail is currently proposed as a non-motorized travel option, so at this time we do not anticipate motorized vehicles like golf carts will be allowed to utilize the trail.
3. Will the trail have any shade, benches, lighting, or amenities?	FDOT welcomes all comments and thoughts on amenities for the potential trail. Specific amenities will be refined during the design of the project and coordinated with FDOT's local agency partners based on public feedback.
4. How can I stay involved?	We encourage the public to provide contact information and visit the project website. If you have already requested to be added to our mailing list, you have been added and no further action is needed. We will also have a public hearing, which is tentatively scheduled for spring 2022. As with the workshop, we will send out invitations for the public hearing and we encourage you to engage in that meeting as well. Thanks again for your interest in the Old Dixie Trail project. Your continued participation is an important part of the next phase in the PD&E process.
5. Which route involves the least amount of street and driveway crossings?	Alternative 1 has the least amount of cross street and driveway crossings.
6. Will there be restrictions as far as biking, skate boarding, or roller skating?	There won't be any restrictions on walking, running, biking, skate boarding, or roller skating, etc. However, the trail is being proposed as a non-motorized trail, so golf carts and other motorized vehicles would be prohibited at this time.
7. When will the construction start?	The trail is not currently programmed for construction funding in the FDOT 5-year Work Program. Once the PD&E Study is complete, a construction estimate will be available for the state and their local partners to try and identify potential future funding.

Public Feedback	Public Comment Responses
8. How quickly can funding be generated once a decision is made?	<p>FDOT is in the process of coordinating with the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and FDOT agency partners to determine the next phase of funding. Once the funding for design and construction is determined, FDOT will work with their agency partners to determine a schedule for the project.</p>
9. Which alternative is more susceptible to flooding?	<p>Evaluation of drainage and floodplains is a key part of our analysis during the PD&E Study. We received a comment on flooding concerns from the public around the proposed trail (purple) near the beginning of the project. We're currently researching this flooding concern; however, our preliminary analysis does not indicate any major flooding issues on either alternative. However, our analysis did reveal that existing cross drains along both alternatives 1 and 2 will need to be extended or replaced to accommodate the trail. When the project moves into design, flooding will be analyzed closely, and any issues will be addressed to alleviate flooding concerns.</p>
10. What is the projected year of completion, 2030?	<p>FDOT is in the process of coordinating with the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and FDOT agency partners to determine the next phase of funding. Once the funding for design and construction is determined, FDOT will work with their agency partners to determine a schedule for the project.</p>
11. Who would maintain the facility?	<p>FDOT has coordinated with each local agency and they will be the maintaining agency of the trail.</p>
12. What could we do to get this project advanced?	<p>Stay involved and be an advocate for the project. Additionally, we encourage you to, spread the word about the project, share the project website and encourage, friends, neighbors, etc. to get involved. We will also have a public hearing, which is tentatively scheduled for spring 2022. As with past meetings and workshops, we will send out invitations for the public hearing and we encourage you to engage in that meeting as well. We need positive community involvement to help the project advance to the next phase.</p>
13. What's the Old Dixie trail study schedule going to be like?	 <p>Estimated Study Schedule</p> <p><i>Feasibility Study - Completed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring 2017: Feasibility Study Begins Winter 2017: Feasibility Study Workshop Summer 2019: Feasibility Study Ends <p><i>PD&E Study - In Progress</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2019: PD&E Study Begins Summer 2021: PD&E Study Workshop Spring 2022: PD&E Public Hearing Winter 2022: PD&E Process Complete

Public Feedback	Public Comment Responses
14. Would horses be permitted on the trail?	Florida Statutes allow horses on pedestrian facilities, except where prohibited by local municipal ordinances. The project team will coordinate with the local municipalities on any restrictions.
15. Will this only be a walking trail? Will there be any benches on the trail?	The trail will be able to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and all non-motorized vehicles. All amenities will be coordinated directly with the maintaining agency, but benches can certainly be considered as an amenity.
16. If funding was available, would it be possible to have both alternatives built to provide pedestrian /bike access to both businesses, etc. along US 92 and a more pleasant trail to match the TECO/Chain of Lakes trails?	The intention of this PD&E Study is to select one preferred alternative; however, that does not mean that the analysis for all alternatives cannot be used in the future for another proposed project. If there is a need for both alternatives, FDOT will coordinate with our local agency partners.
17. Are there any more public workshops or stakeholder meetings scheduled?	FDOT will hold a formal public hearing for this study. The project team will present the final analysis and preferred alternative for the Old Dixie Trail. FDOT invites the public to attend the hearing and take the opportunity to give public testimony regarding proposed improvements. The department will make a final decision on the recommendations after the public hearing – when the public has an opportunity to review and comment on the preferred alternative. This hearing is planned for spring 2022.

General Public Comments

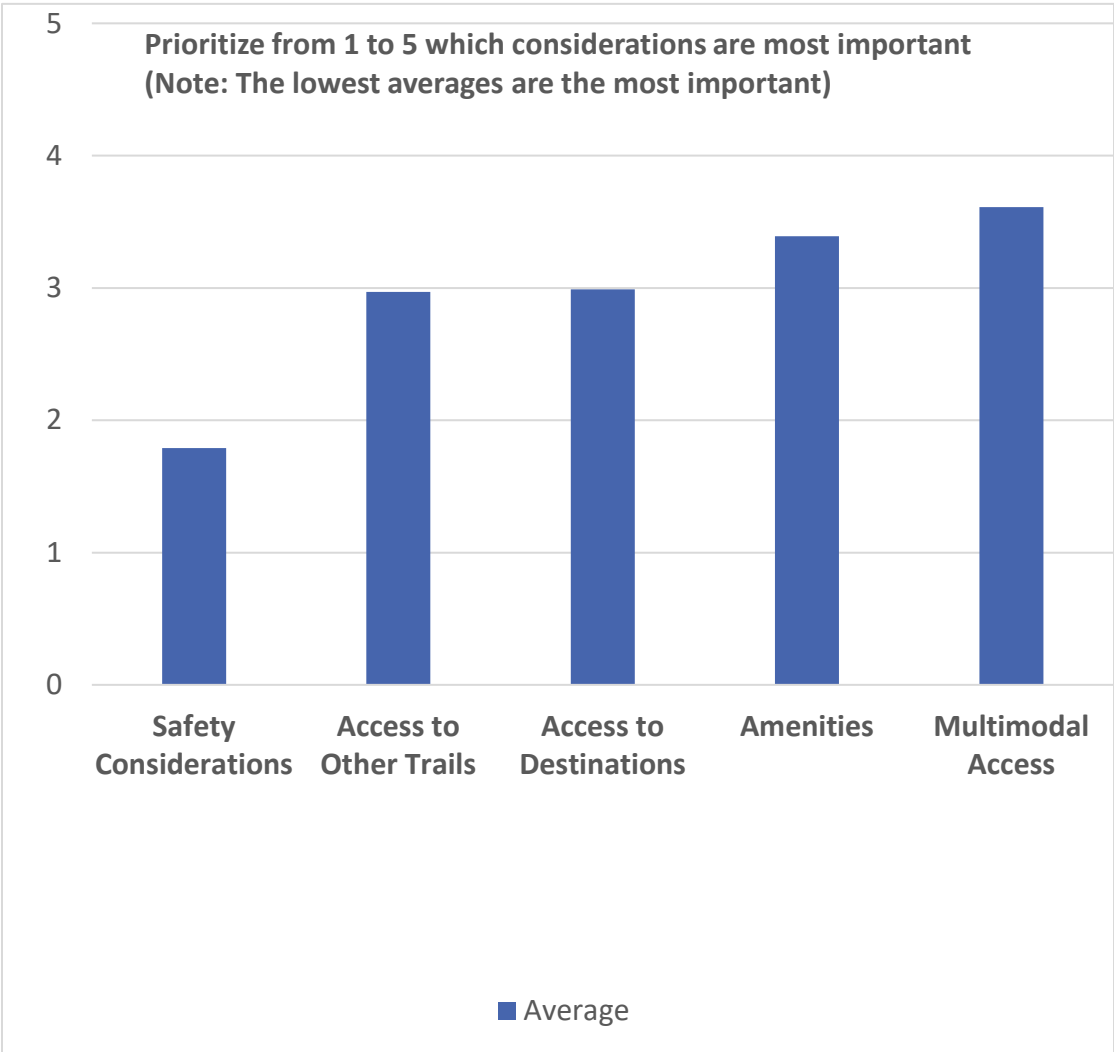
Trail Selection Comment	General Public Comments
Alternative 1	<p>Thank you for hosting the meeting tonight. It was well put together and very informative. I think that Alternative 1 is the better choice for a variety of reasons. I bike from downtown Winter Haven up the corridor often and over to Auburndale. I have even biked the abandoned right of way from the Auburndale Beach to Berkley Road just to say I did the Old Dixie Trail. That route will have much fewer driveways and be much more friendly for bikers. I think there may be some very willing landowners along that route who want to participate and see the value in this trail. I have recently gotten into riding area trails and see the value you this project from many different angles. As you know, this connection is a major key in linking Haines City/LA/Winter Haven/Auburndale to FL Poly, Van Fleet and the Coast 2 Coast. One item to take a look at is how do we get across Berkley Road. Best case would be a pedestrian bridge, but the PDE should address this topic or at least have a recommendation. I look forward to seeing this project come to fruition and please let me know if there is anything I can do to further assist. Thanks again for all you and your team are doing.</p>
N/A	<p>I have been watching to see if anyone is out in the area for this study but haven't seen anyone so far. The main areas of concern that I see with installing this bike trail are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keeping the specific segment between Berkley Rd. and Lake Ariana unpaved-this is where the old Railroad track used to run so it is very compact and travelable as is. 2. The hydrology of the stormwater run-off that paving would highly affect. The entire area is flood prone and this particular junction of ditches is extremely important in the flow and drainage leading to both Lake Lena and Lake Ariana. 3. The upkeep of the area-other than minimal mowing I think I am the only one who removes fallen limbs and sticks and picks up the litter. I placed a county trashcan on the trail, and nobody ever empties it. There are two huge piles of limbs directly in the path of the trail that I have no way to haul or remove since they installed stop posts on my end of the trail. I hope that you take these things into consideration during your community input and would love to be involved more once the trail is complete.
Alternative 1	<p>I love, love, love the name of the trail. Years ago, I trained for a half marathon on the van fleet trail. Currently I walk on the Auburndale TECO trail every day. When they did the recent southern extension. I was excited to learn future plans to the downtown Auburndale. As a frequent user I wanted to give my opinion to the options. I prefer the Alternative 1/Stadium road route. Highway 92 is just too busy to be enjoyable. As someone who is</p>

	excited about the prospect of the old dixie trail. Thank you for allowing me to give some input.
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Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 Support

Comment Method	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Survey Respondents Trail Selection	100	15
Virtual Workshop Trail Selection	2	0
In-person Workshop Comment Forms Trail Selection	11	0
Other (Social Media, etc.) Trail Selection	8	0
Total Responses	121 (89%)	15 (11%)

MetroQuest Survey Results – Prioritize Trail Considerations



MetroQuest Survey Results – Trail Usage

