



SUMMARY

Public Meeting on January 31, 2023

Cortez Road (SR 684) from SR 789 (Gulf Drive) to 123rd Street West
Bridge Replacement Design (Manatee County)

Financial Project ID Number: 430204-2

LOCATION

In-Person

Kirkwood Presbyterian Church – Pfrangle Hall
6101 Cortez Road, Bradenton, FL 34210
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Online (Virtual)

Any time between January 24, 2023 and February 10, 2023
www.swflroads.com/project/430204-2

ATTENDEES

102 Signed in Participants
Ryan Weeks, Florida Department of Transportation (Project Manager)
Adam Rose, Florida Department of Transportation
Kathy Gardyas, Florida Department of Transportation
Janella Newsome, Florida Department of Transportation
Doug Hershey, Lochner (Consultant Project Manager)
Jose Hernandez, Lochner
Todd Mitchell, WSP
Laura Turner, Laura Turner Planning Services

PREPARED BY

Laura Turner

Date: March 7, 2023

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is preparing design plans for the Cortez Road bridge replacement from SR 789 (Gulf Drive) in Bradenton Beach to 123rd Street West in Cortez. The existing bridge (a movable bascule span) was constructed in 1956 with an intended design life of 50 years and has had ongoing maintenance and repairs over the past 20 years to keep the bridge safe and operable. Despite these repairs, the bridge continues to have low sufficiency ratings and it remains functionally obsolete.

A Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study was completed from 2013 through 2019 to evaluate potential bridge replacement alternatives along with the “no build” alternative. The study recommended that the high-level bridge replacement alternative move forward into design. The design phase began in October 2019. The Bridge Aesthetics Committee was created, consisting of 11 members representing local stakeholders. To date, the BAC has met nine times.

An in-person public meeting was held on January 31, 2023 to provide the public the opportunity to review project materials, hold one-on-one conversations with the project team, and to share input. The same meeting materials were available virtually (through the project website at www.swflroads.com/project/430204-2) from January 24, 2023 through February 10, 2023. This summary provides the highlights of the notification process, information shared at the public meeting, received comments, and the next steps.

Meeting Notification

Several notification techniques were used to publicize the public meeting, which are summarized here.

<i>Sent Out or Posted</i>	<i>Notification Activity</i>
January 4, 2023	Newsletter emailed to 35 elected officials
January 5, 2023	Newsletter emailed to 27 appointed officials
January 5, 2023	Newsletter emailed to 11 Bridge Aesthetics Committee members
January 5, 2023	Newsletter emailed to 36 stakeholders
January 6, 2023	Letter and newsletter mailed to 173 property owners
January 12, 2023	180 newsletters were hand delivered to businesses and local gathering spots in the area
January 13, 2023	Meeting notice posted on www.fdot.gov on District One's Public Notices page
January 19, 2023	Ad published in <i>Florida Administrative Register</i>
January 19, 2023	Newspaper display ad published in <i>Bradenton Herald</i>
January 23, 2023	Meeting materials (project video, 3D animation, display boards, comment form, and newsletter) uploaded to project website (www.swflroads.com/project/430204-2)
January 23, 2023	FDOT PIO emailed press release to media outlets in Manatee County

At the Meeting

As individuals signed in, copies of the comment form and newsletter were available. They also noted how they learned about the public meeting, by: mail (17), email (24), website (5), or other (42). Some of the other ways they learned about the meeting included: flyer, news story or feed, newspaper, Facebook, and friends.

Throughout the evening, the following items were available for review:

- Display boards
 - Title VI
 - Roll Plot
 - Aesthetics Recommendations
 - Bridge at Night
 - Bridge Construction Phasing
- Project presentation video and slides
- 3D animation
- Comment Form
- Newsletter

The same project materials were available virtually at www.swflroads.com/project/430204-2 from January 24, 2023 through February 10, 2023.

Comments Received

While comments are encouraged throughout the design project, comments received from January 4, 2023 (beginning of the meeting notification process) through February 10, 2023 (last day of the meeting comment period) are included in this meeting summary. Fifty-eight (58) individuals submitted written comments either by using comments forms or sending emails. A member of the project team provided written responses to all comments submitted during this time.

The following description summarizes the comments that were shared. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of times a comment was made. Note that the number in parenthesis does not match the number of submitted comments as several different topics often were covered in one submittal.

***Requested to be Added to Project Mailing List* (26)**

***Information Requests* (3)**

- Evaluations of existing roadway and bridge in comparison to proposed roadway and bridge (1)
- Evaluations of existing connecting side streets with proposed connecting side streets (1)
- Provide information about the January 31st public meeting (1)

***Community Meeting Requests* (2)**

- Cortez Park (1)
- Bridgeport Condos (1)

***Support for the Project* (9)**

- Necessary and well done (1)
- Will improve traffic bottlenecks (1)
- Aesthetic improvements (1)
- Likes wide sidewalks and bike lanes (4)
- Likes lookouts (1)
- Likes wave pattern and color palette (1)
- Likes bridge design (2)
- Addresses bridge safety issues (1)
- Helps with auto and boat traffic (1)
- Underpass for business access (1)

***Against the Project* (20)**

- Design a 35-foot bridge instead (3)
 - Fits in with the surroundings, pro-pedestrian, pro-cyclist, pro-disabled (1)
- Need to preserve “Old Florida” culture/Cortez Village (9)
- PD&E Study recommendation miscalculated survey results; 2 of 3 respondents opposed the 65-foot bridge (1)
- Will not help traffic (4)
- Dollars should be spent elsewhere, like for teachers (1)

- Use the high span design for Manatee Avenue bridge; leave the low span for Cortez Road (1)
- Repair and update existing bridge instead (1)
- No larger bridge (1)
- Maintain a good, small bridge instead (1)
- Replace existing bridge with a new drawbridge and use savings to provide island style parking (1)
- Instead, build a new bridge at a different location (2)
 - 75th Street Circle to the island (1)
 - Longboat Key Pass (1)
- Need parking at east end, San Remos Shores (1)
- Business Impacts – including parking and access (4)
- Quality of life disseminated (1)
- Not needed (1)
- Not best use of taxpayer dollars; waste (2)
- High Span is too high (1)
- High Span will adversely affect surrounding marine environment (1)
- Development and poorly conceived projects are destroying the island (1)
- Retention ponds will breed mosquitoes (1)
- East end underpass will make area even more appealing to vagrants (1)
- Cortez Park will be compromised by new bridge (1)

Design Elements

- Would have selected different lighting (1)
- Consider adding benches to the bridge (1)
- Beautiful design with concerns (1)
 - On ramp for eastbound Cortez Road instead of Hunters Point Way access (1)
 - Gulf Drive intersection (1)
 - Keep character of Cortez Village (1)
- Suggest having a slightly different alignment by having Cortez Road go directly across to avoid elevation and reducing access on the east end (1)
- Create “bus only lane” on new bridge, which could also be used by small Electric Vehicles, like golf carts (1)
- Likes the enhanced multi-column pier and cheek walls (1)
- Likes the 4 overlooks and “wave” pattern (1)
- Need to limit bridge lighting pollution; consider function first followed by light pollution and aesthetics (1)
- Make the pedestrian/bike lane adjacent to Bridgeport Condos (under bridge) as wide as possible (1)
- Place 10-foot pedestrian/bike multi-use path on north side of bridge approach, west of 125th Street (1)
 - Facilitate access from south side of Cortez Road to north side to access bridge (1)
 - Helps eliminate need to cross Cortez Road (1)

Additional Project Comments

- Concerns about bridge impacts: neighborhood cut through traffic, businesses, loss of parking, lease (1)
- Request that Cortez Historical Society be added to the project's Bridge Aesthetics Committee (1)
- Traffic will ruin the Island (1)
- Higher bridge will not help traffic (5)
- Bridgeport Condos Concerns: communicating during construction and more immediately, aesthetics and sound (1)
- Need to deny, or greatly reduce, new development of Bridge Street area; no space for more people (1)
- Islands cause of traffic issues (1)

Other Improvements

- Roundabout needed at Cortez Road and Gulf Drive (8)
 - Will ease traffic backups (2)
- Traffic issues at Gulf Drive need to be addressed (1)
- Hunters Point Way Intersection (3)
 - Needs a traffic signal (2)
 - Signal needed especially for those making left turn to go east on Cortez Road (1)
 - Need pedestrian/bicycle crosswalk signal (1)
 - Have a roundabout to slow down traffic (1)
- Another additional bridge is needed from Sarasota to Coquina Beach to alleviate traffic on Anna Maria Island (1)
- Traffic Solution offered (1)
 - Bridge won't help with traffic
 - Build bridge at different location, instead of replace Cortez bridge; look at area west of Paradise Bay to Bradenton Beach boat landing area
 - No boats, trailers, and trucks through Cortez and on bridge
 - Goes around Bradenton Beach town center and roundabout
 - Longboat Key will have direct connection
 - Cortez residents, west of the fire station will be able to get home
 - Help emergency services in Cortez, Anna Maria Island, and Longboat Key
 - Avoids the nightmare during construction of the new Cortez Bridge
 - Existing bridge lifespan will be extended by having less traffic, including fewer heavy vehicles
 - Signage to protect Cortez businesses
 - Avoids changing the look of Cortez
 - Make east end part of the causeway
 - Impacts to FISH would be offset by less pollution with less "stop and go" traffic
 - Have roundabouts at both ends
- Consider another option for Anna Maria bridge by extending the existing causeway with a small section of tunnel (1)
- Put parking on the mainland and have a ferry shuttle between mainland and baches (1)
- Discourage traffic going through Cortez Park (2)
- Need traffic signal at 125th Street (3)
- Need traffic signal at 101st Street (1)
- Fix the entrance to San Remo Shores first; needs a traffic signal (1)
- Consider eliminating public parking at Coquina Beach and Anna Maria Beach (1)

Meeting Format (2)

- Good project overview (2)
- Likes that team is asking for community input; especially liked the 3D animation (1)
- Informative (1)

Questions

- What are the following: location of 6-foot bike lanes, bridge slope, surface for biking and walking? (1)
- Are other bike designs being considered at the west end to allow to curve under the bridge? (1)
- Where are the bike lanes on the bridge? (2)
- Will golf carts be allowed on the sidewalks? (1)
- Will eminent domain be needed for any properties on the Bradenton Beach side? (1)
- How to avoid using “breakdown lanes” as travel lanes? (1)
- Could small vehicles use “breakdown lanes”? Could they become HOV lanes? (1)
- What are the elevations at Tide Tables and Annie’s Bait Shop? (1)
- Has the design team considered future impacts of sea level rise by 2050? (1)
- Several questions about the FDOT Design Drainage Manual (1)
- What are the costs over a 30-year period for: flat drawbridge, 30-foot bridge, and 65-foot parking lot bridge? (1)
- What is the status/construction timeframe for the Manatee Avenue bridge? (1)
- When will construction begin on the Cortez Bridge? (1)
- What is the status and schedule for approvals & completed documents? (1)
- Will construction be at night? (1)
- What is the construction phasing of the new bridge? (1)
- What is the access for bicyclists and pedestrians at the east end of the bridge (1)
- How will traffic be routed for Cove Sand Yacht Club? (1)
- Will there be stair access from 127th Street to the new bridge? (2)
- What is the construction time line (information Manatee County Public Schools needs as they transport students to and from Anna Maria Island to the mainland)? (1)
- How will residents living off of 129th Street West be able to get access by car to Cortez Road going in each direction during all phases of construction (1)
- Will there be a traffic light at Hunters Point Way? (1)
- Will there be a traffic light at Gulf Drive, as there is today? (1)
- How high will the “traffic barrier” on the bridge be, between the sidewalk and shoulder; what material will be used to construct the traffic barrier? (1)
- Will fishing be allowed on the new bridge? (1)
- What changes, if any, will there be to the existing bus stops on both sides of Cortez Road at the eastern end of the bridge, during and after construction? (1)
- How long is construction expected to last? (1)

Next Steps

This public input has been shared with the project team for consideration as design continues. It is anticipated that 90% design plans will be submitted in Summer 2023 with final design plans to be submitted in Spring 2025. It is anticipated that construction will begin in late 2025 or early 2026.