



Florida Department of Transportation

**State Road (S.R.) 70 from West of S.R. 31
to Southeast Highlands County Line Road PD&E Study
Public Hearing**

January 2026

FPID #: 451942-1



**Scan QR code
to visit project website**

Public Hearing Purpose



Collect Feedback on
Preferred Alternative

Inform the Public on
Preferred Alternative



Project Overview

- Study begins at West S.R. 31 and ends at Southeast Highlands County Line Rd (16.7 miles)
- Evaluate widening the existing 2-lane undivided roadway to a 4-lane divided roadway
- Safety and operational improvements including:
 - Shared-use paths
 - Wildlife crossings
 - Roadway signage
 - Pavement markings
 - Stormwater management facilities



Project Need

The need for the project is based on:



SAFETY



SYSTEM LINKAGE



TRANSPORTATION DEMAND



PROJECT GOALS

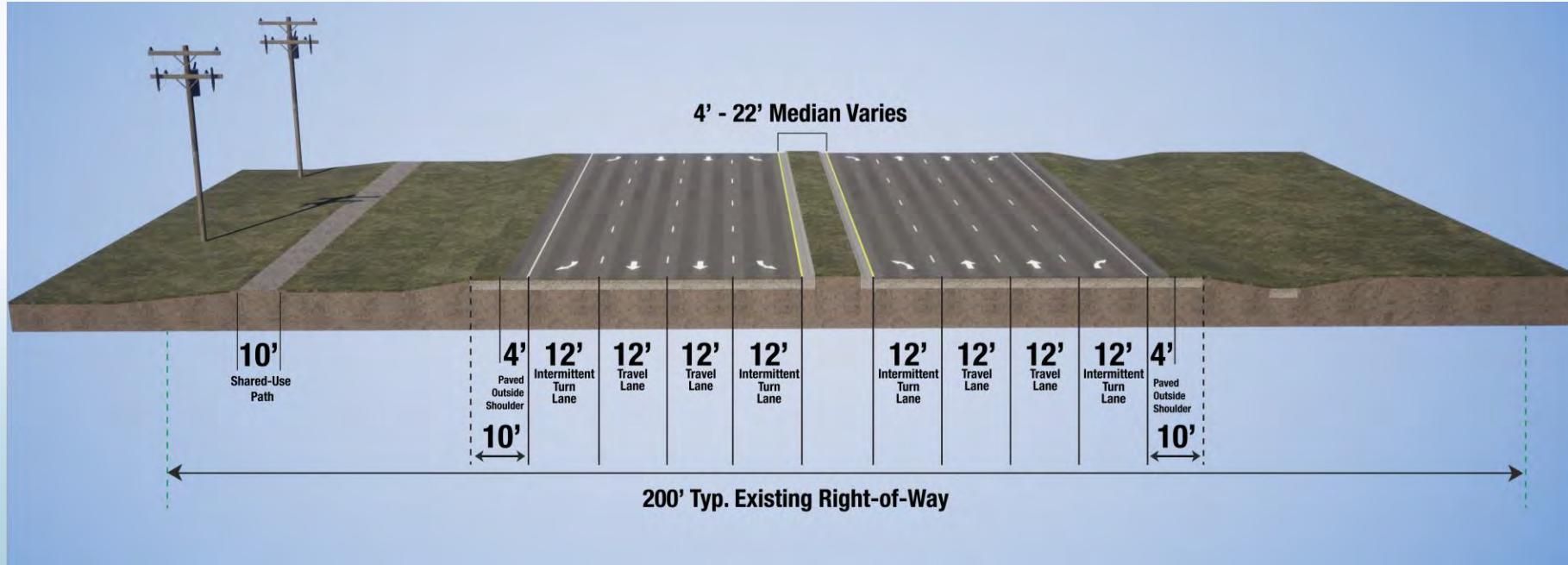
To address roadway and traffic safety conditions, maintain important east-west connectivity, and accommodate freight activity

Existing Conditions

- Functional Classification of “Rural Principal Arterial – Other”
- Existing context classification of C2-Rural
- Posted speed limit is generally 60 mph
- Existing Right-of-Way (ROW) is generally 200 ft-wide



Existing Conditions



West of S.R. 31 to West of Southeast Townsend Ave.

- 4-lane divided facility with 12-ft travel lanes
- Travel lanes are separated by a grass median and intermittent right and left turn lanes
- 10-ft shared use path is present on the northern side

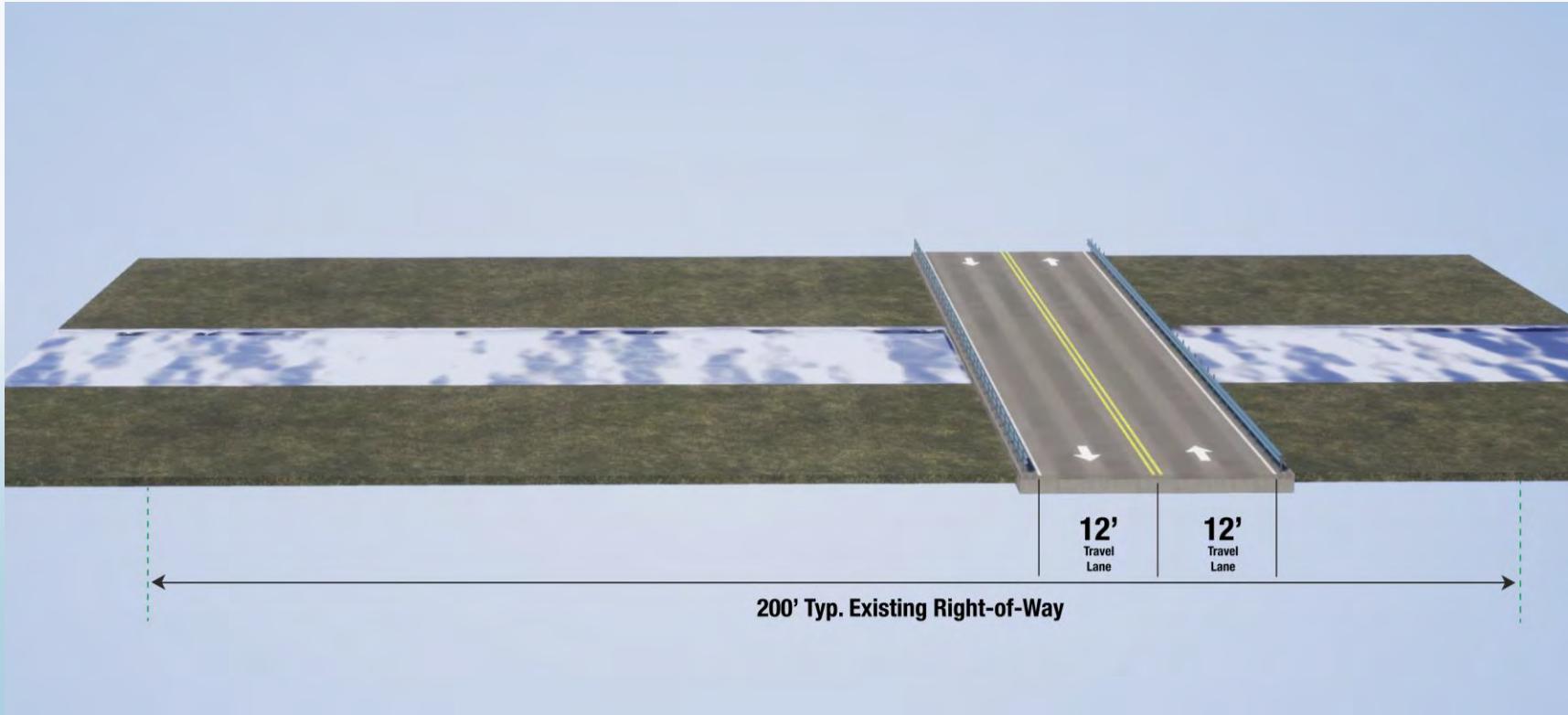
Existing Conditions (cont.)



West of Southeast Townsend Ave. to Southeast Highlands County Line Rd.

- 2-lane undivided facility with 12-ft travel lanes and 12-ft outside shoulders (5-ft paved)
- Intermittent passing lanes provided east of C.R. 760

Existing Conditions (cont.)



Bridges over Whidden Creek and Joshua Creek

- Two 12-ft travel lanes with guardrail and traffic railings

Project History

SR 70 PD&E Study

Scope:

- Evaluate widening the existing two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided roadway versus the "no-build" alternative
- Evaluate any social and environmental impacts, safety enhancements, additional right-of-way needs, and traffic performance

Solution:

- PD&E Preferred Alternative:
 - Improve traffic safety
 - Maintain regional connectivity
 - Accommodate freight activity

Key Findings



Preferred Alternative Overview

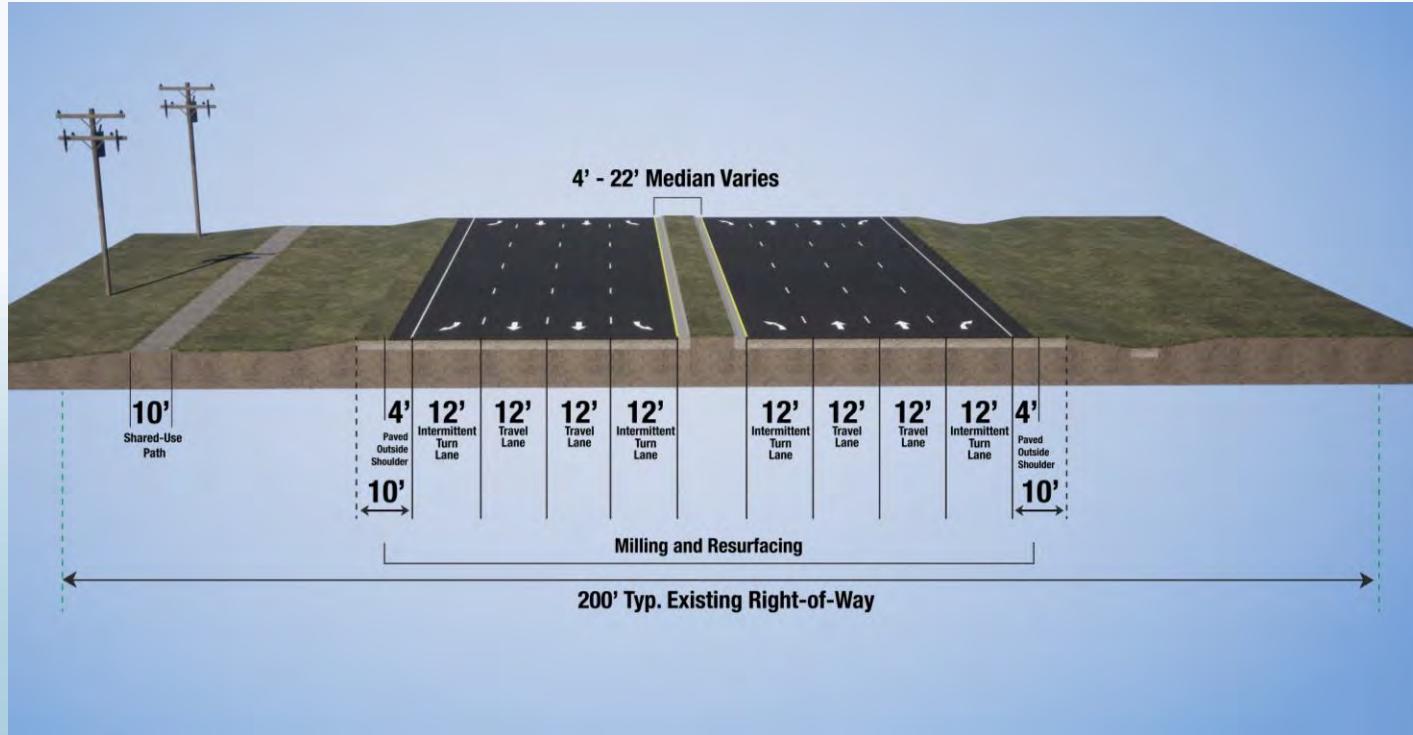
The Preferred Alternative includes several improvements such as:

- Widening S.R. 70 from 2 to 4 lanes throughout the study limits
- Two bridge replacements and five new bridges, each with wildlife crossings
- Improving trail connectivity and recreational access with a shared use path

Roadway design and improvements vary throughout and are broken down into the following sections:

- West of S.R. 31 to West of Southeast Townsend Ave.
- West of Southeast Townsend Ave. to West of Joshua Creek
- East of Joshua Creek to County Road (C.R.) 760
- C.R. 760 to Southeast Highlands County Line Rd.
- Bridge replacements over Whidden Creek and Joshua Creek
- New Bridges at Tiger Bay, Mossy Gully, DCI Canal, Long Point Marsh, and Parker Creek

Preferred Alternative (cont.)



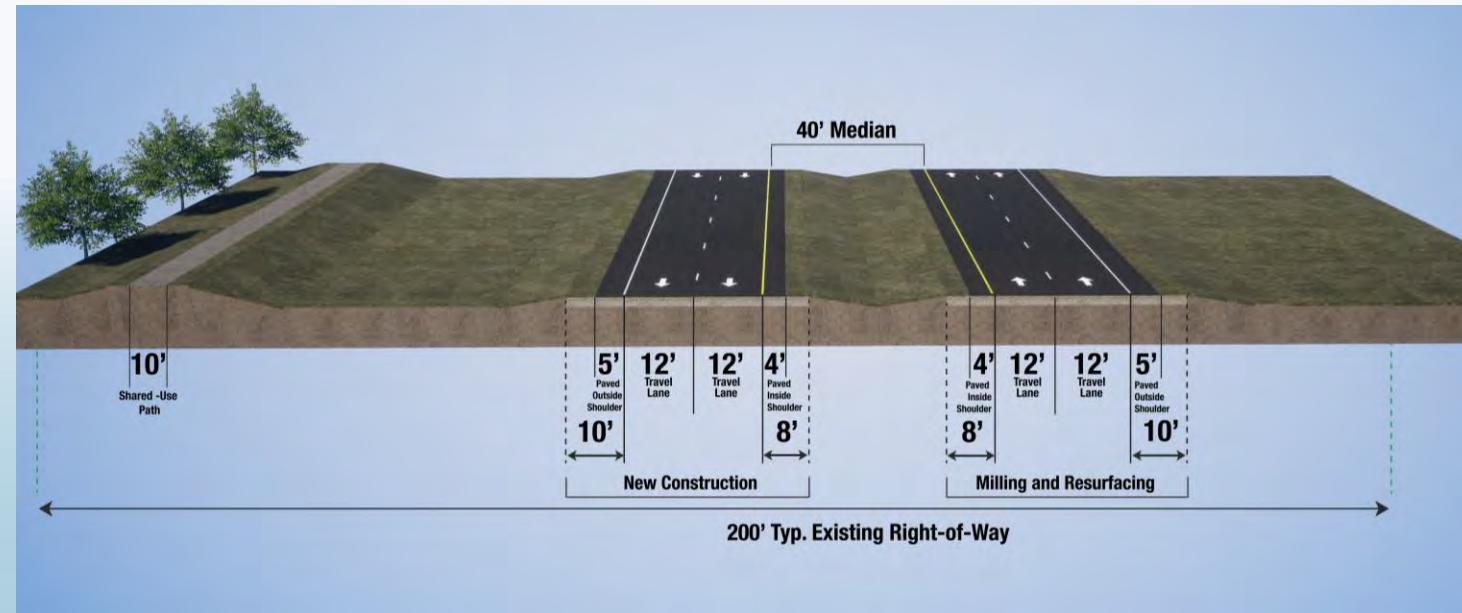
The Preferred Alternative for West of S.R. 31 to West of Southeast Townsend Ave.

- Milling and resurfacing the existing roadway and shared-use path **ONLY**

Preferred Alternative (cont.)

Preferred Alternative from West of Southeast Townsend Ave. to West of Joshua Creek

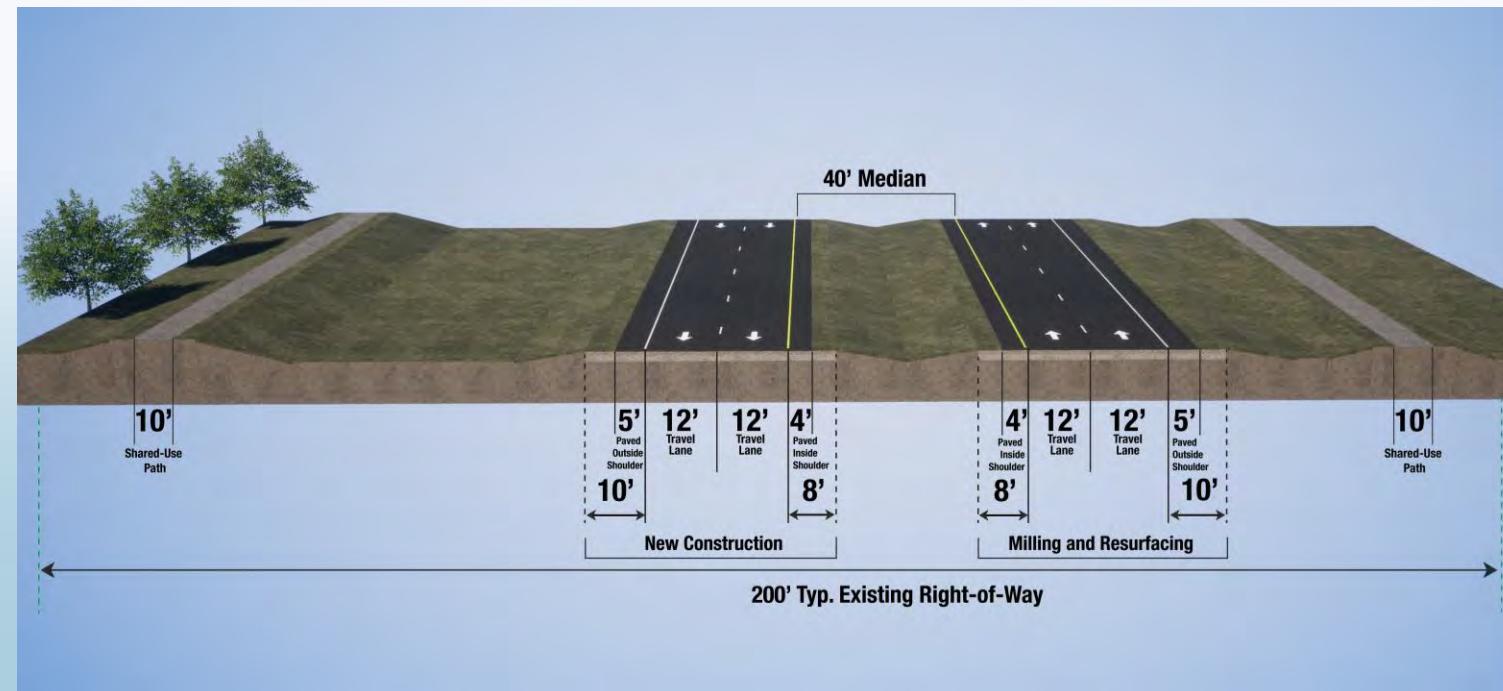
- New westbound lanes to the north of existing lanes consisting of four 12-ft travel lanes
- 40-ft-wide open median including 8-ft inside shoulders (4-ft paved) and 10-ft outside shoulders (5-ft paved)
- One new 10-ft shared-use path between Joshua Creek and C.R. 760



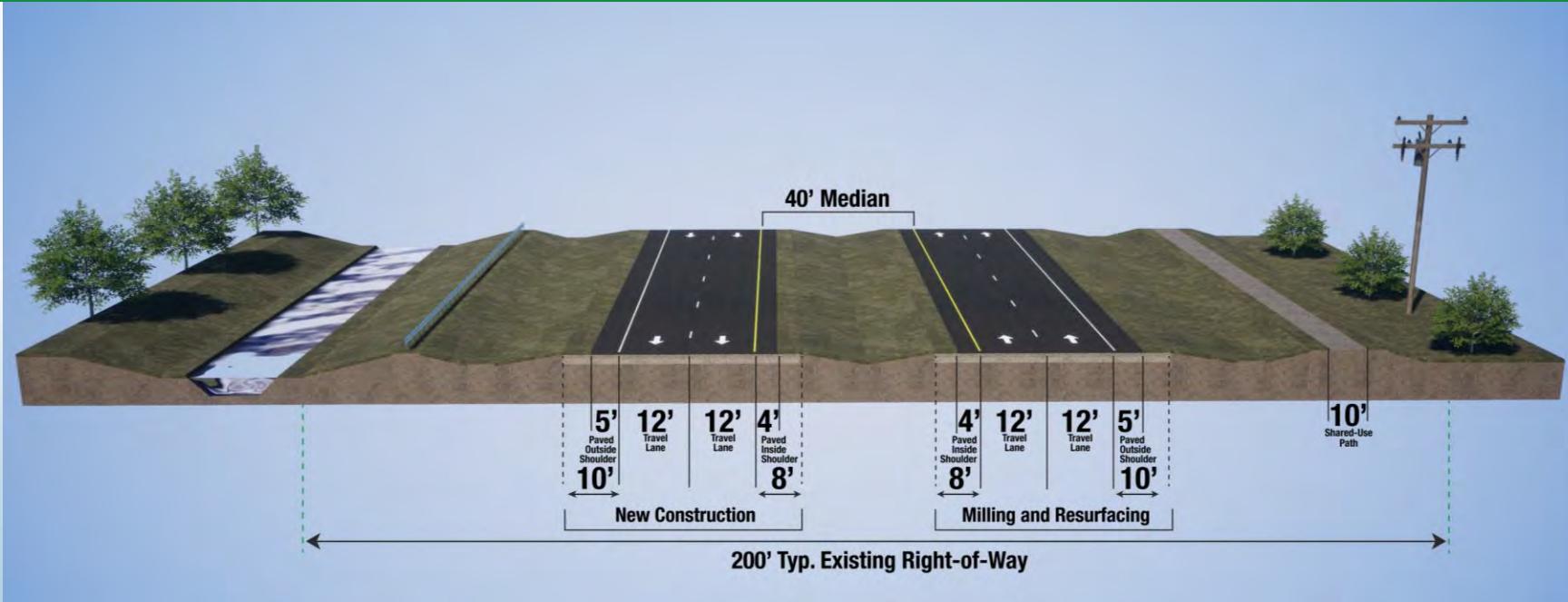
Preferred Alternative (cont.)

Preferred Alternative East of Joshua Creek to County Road (C.R.) 760

- New westbound lanes to the north of existing lanes consisting of four 12-ft travel lanes
- 40-ft-wide open median including 8-ft inside shoulders (4-ft paved) and 10-ft outside shoulders (5-ft paved)
- Two new 10-ft shared-use paths between Joshua Creek and C.R. 760



Preferred Alternative (cont.)



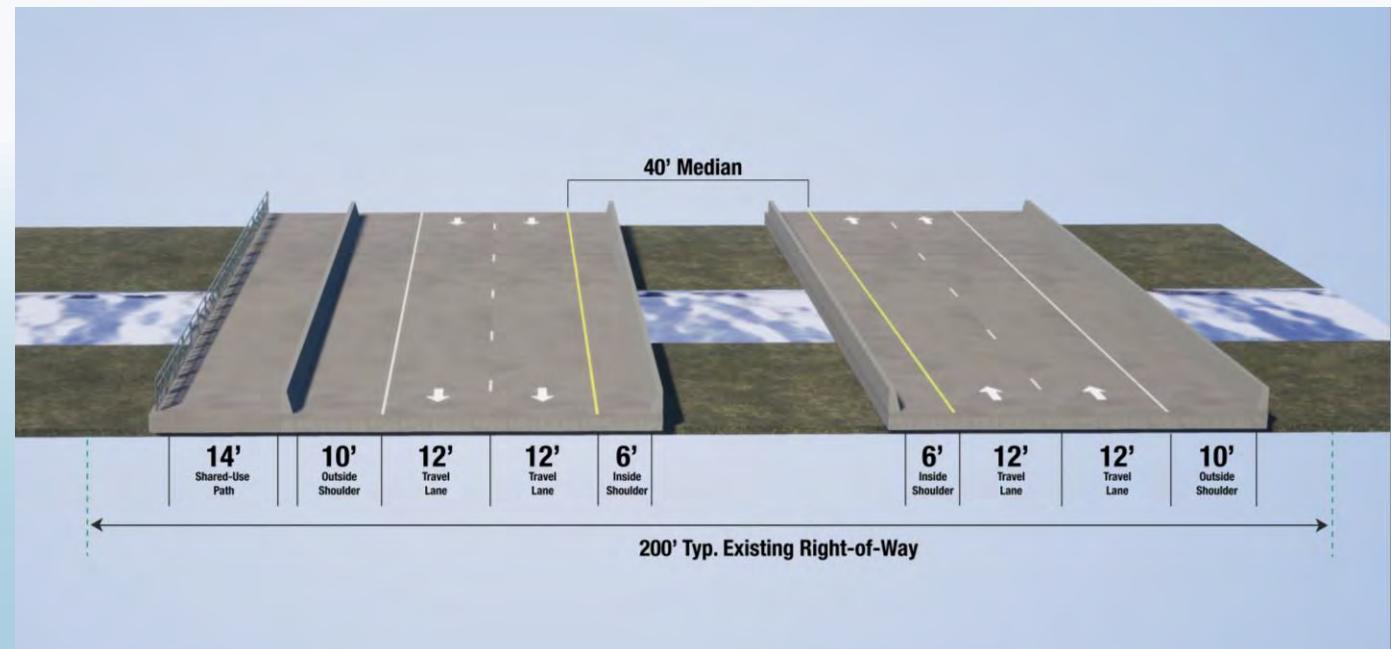
The Preferred Alternative from C.R. 760 to Southeast Highlands County Line Rd.

- New westbound lanes to the north of existing lanes consisting of four 12-ft travel lanes
- 40 ft-wide open median consisting of 8-ft inside shoulders (4-ft paved) and 10-ft outside shoulders (5-ft paved)
- A guardrail will be constructed adjacent to westbound lanes and existing canal

Preferred Alternative (cont.)

Preferred Alternative for the bridge replacements over Whidden Creek and Joshua Creek

- Four 12-ft travel lanes
- 6-ft paved inside shoulders and 10-ft paved outside shoulders
- Concrete barriers on both shoulders
- 14-ft shared use path on westbound bridge with a barrier and railings
 - At Joshua Creek Bridge ONLY - Shared-use path will switch from north to south side of S.R. 70 via bicycle and pedestrian underpass



Preferred Alternative (cont.)



The Preferred Alternative for the new bridges at Tiger Bay, Mossy Gully, D.C.I. Canal, Long Point Marsh, and Parker Creek include:

- Four 12-ft travel lanes with 6-ft paved inside shoulders and 10-ft paved outside shoulders
- Concrete barriers on both shoulders
- 14-ft shared use path with a concrete barrier railings

Preferred Build Alternative

ADVANTAGES

On S.R. 70 the preferred alternative would reduce:

- ✓ Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)
- ✓ Truck AADT volume
- ✓ Predicted crashes
- ✓ Emergency response times

On S.R. 70 the preferred alternative would, increase:

- ✓ Evacuation capacity

DISADVANTAGES

On S.R. 70 the preferred alternative would increase:

- ✗ Property impacts
- ✗ Cost



No-Build Alternative

The “no-build” alternative assumes that no improvements are made, except for routine maintenance

ADVANTAGES

- ✓ No inconveniences to traffic flow due to construction
- ✓ No impact to the natural environment or adjacent properties
- ✓ No right-of-way acquisition, design, or construction costs

DISADVANTAGES

- ✗ No safety improvements
- ✗ No improvement to east-west regional connectivity
- ✗ Would not accommodate growing freight activity



Environmental and Socioeconomic Factors

The evaluation considered:

- Socioeconomic and environmental factors
- Potential right-of-way impacts
- Engineering factors
- Project costs
- Purpose and Need



Federally Protected Species

“May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” the following federally listed threatened or endangered species:

- Everglade snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*) - FE
- Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*) - FE
- Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) - FT
- Wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) - FT
- Florida grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*) - FE



“May affect and is likely to adversely effect” the following federally listed threatened or endangered species:

- Crested caracara (*Caracara plancus*) - FT
- Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*) - FT
- Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridanus*) - FE



State Protected Species (cont.)

“Potential for adverse effect” to the following state listed threatened or endangered species:

- Florida loosestrife (*Lythrum flagellare*) - SE
- Giant airplant (*Tillandsia utriculata*) - SE
- Leafless beaked ladies'-tresses (*Sacoila lanceolata var. lanceolata*) - ST
- Northern needleleaf (*Tillandsia balbisiana*) - ST



SE = State Endangered

ST = State Threatened

State Protected Species

“No adverse effect anticipated” to the following state listed threatened or endangered species:

- Many-flowered grass-pink (*Calopogon multiflorus*) - ST
- Tampa mock vervain (*Glandularia tampensis*) - SE
- Catesby's lily (*Lilium catesbaei*) - ST
- Jameson's waterlily (*Nymphaea jamesoniana*) - SE
- Plume polypody (*Pecluma plumula*) - SE
- Yellow butterwort (*Pinguicula lutea*) - ST
- Yellow fringed orchid (*Platanthera ciliaris*) - ST
- Rose pogonia (*Pogonia ophioglossoides*) - ST
- Cutthroatgrass (*Coleataenia abscissa*) - SE
- Lacelip ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes laciniata*) - ST
- Needleroot airplant orchid (*Dendrophylax porrectus*) - ST
- Toothed lattice-vein fern (*Thelypteris serrata*) - SE
- Cardinal airplant (*Tillandsia fasciculata*) - SE
- Edison's ascyrum (*Hypericum edisonianum*) - SE
- Redmargin zephyrlily (*Zephyranthes simpsonii*) - ST
- Florida pine snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus*) - ST
- Short-tailed snake (*Lampropeltis extenuata*) - ST
- Florida burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia floridana*) - ST
- Florida sandhill crane (*Antigone canadensis pratensis*) - ST
- Least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) - ST
- Little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*) - ST
- Roseate spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*) - ST
- Southeastern American kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*) - ST
- Tricolored heron (*Egretta tricolor*) - ST
- Gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) - ST

SE = State Endangered

ST = State Threatened

Wetlands



- Wetlands and Other Surface Waters (OSW)s within project study area have generally been previously disturbed by agricultural development
- 15.7 acres of total impacts to wetlands
- 5.7 acres of total impacts to OSW

Floodplains

Preferred Alternative is anticipated to require:

- 6.69 acres of drainage/access easements for 13 stormwater management facilities
- 1.97 acres of drainage/access easements for 11 floodplain compensation sites



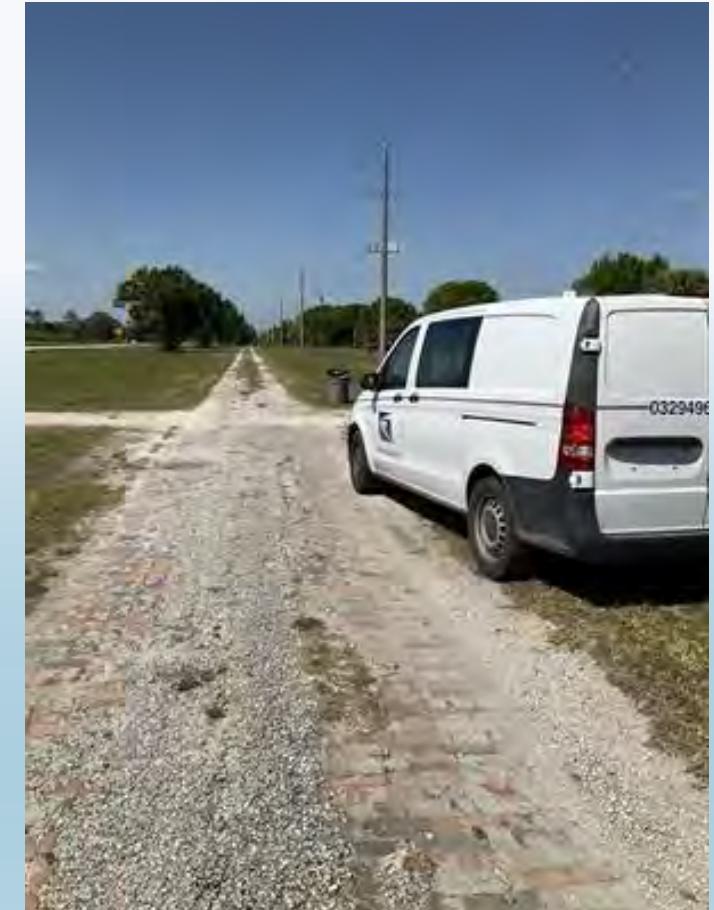
Water Quality

- The project lies within three impaired bodies of water
 - Joshua Creek above Peace River #1950A – impaired for the bacteria *Escherichia coli*
 - Prairie Creek #1962 – impaired for metals/iron
 - Cow Slough #1964 – impaired for nutrients
- All basins except Peace River above Joshua Creek (WBID #1623C) are within reasonable assurance plans
- SMFs will treat runoff so that post-development nutrient loads do not exceed pre-development levels



Contamination

- The regulatory, literature, and field review identified a total of 21 sites as potential contamination sources located within or adjacent to the project corridor
- Of those 21 sites:
 - 12 sites were rated as having a “Medium” potential for contamination impact
 - 2 sites were rated as having a “Low” potential for contamination impact
 - 7 sites were rated as having “No” potential for contamination impact
 - 2 sites may require permitting if construction activities require local dewatering
 - 4 concrete culverts and two bridges within the project corridor potentially requiring asbestos and metal-based coating surveys prior to construction



Air Quality

- Minor air quality impacts may occur as a result of dust from earthwork and unpaved areas
- The project will adhere to the FDOT's *Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction*, along with implementation of Best Management Practices to minimize or eliminate potential construction impacts.



Noise



- For the year 2050 Build condition, noise levels are predicted to meet or exceed the FDOT Noise Abatement Criteria at the following locations within the project limits:
 - 12 residences
 - 0 nonresidential sites
- Project will not cause a substantial noise increase of 15 dB(A) at any residence or Special Land Use
- No feasible solutions available to mitigate the noise impacts at the locations identified

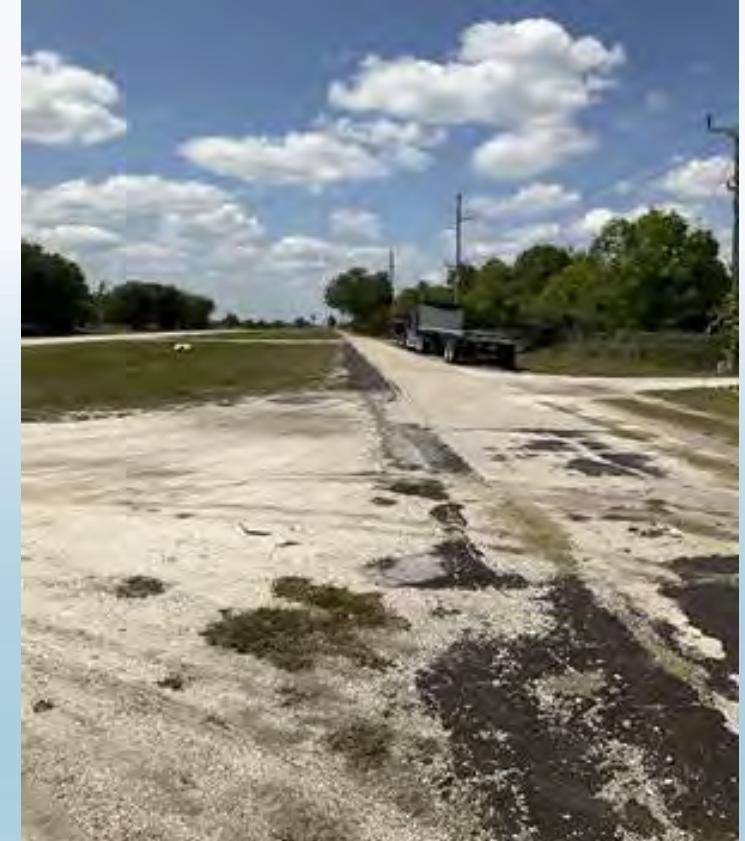
Section 4(f)

- Project area was examined for publicly owned properties that may be affected under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966
- The Old State Road 18/Mahon Avenue (8DE00828) linear path was identified due to its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
- Five alternatives were evaluated to determine which alternative best met the project's purpose while minimizing impacts to the linear path including:
 - No-Build Alternative – No action
 - Avoidance Alternative 1
 - Avoidance Alternative 2
 - Minimization Alternative 3
 - Minimization Alternative 4 – Preferred Build Alternative



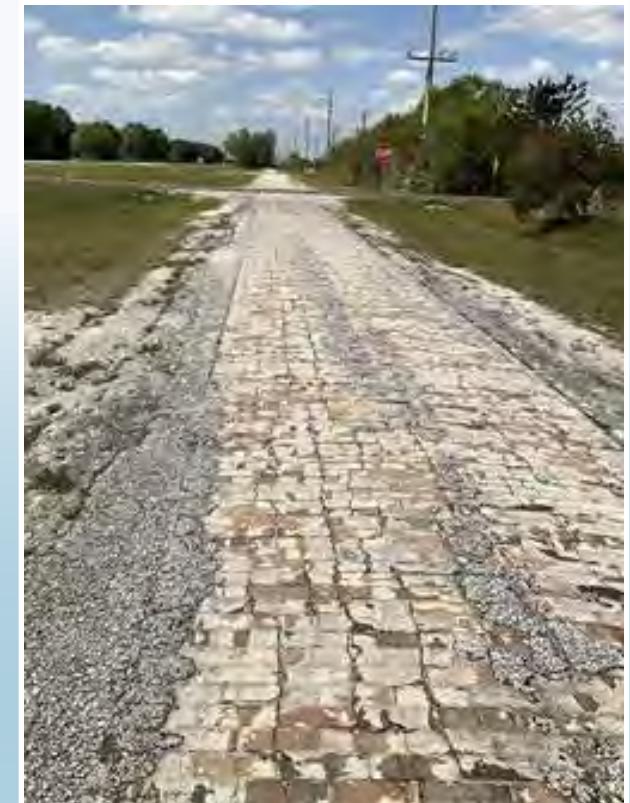
Section 4(f) (cont.)

- Although the Preferred Build Alternative requires demolition of 2.8 miles of the historic linear path, it was chosen as the recommended alternative due to the following:
 - Best meeting the project's purpose and need
 - Replacing the functional use of the path with a 10-ft wide shared-use path
 - Not requiring additional ROW, relocations of residents and businesses, nor impact Florida Gas Transmission facilities
 - Provides net enhancement of functional paved SUP
 - Provides safer facilities and enhances connectivity



Section 106

- Cultural resource assessment was conducted in accordance with National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Florida Statutes
- Old SR 18/Mahon Ave (8DE00828) was identified as the only historic resource and will be adversely affected by the Preferred Alternative
- Old SR 18/Mahon Ave (8DE00828) served as a primary supply route for Dorr Airfield (now DeSoto County Correctional Institution) during WWI and WWII and served as a major transportation facility in central Florida



Section 106 (cont.)



- FDOT has proposed mitigation measures to resolve the adverse effects
- A Section 106 Case Study and Memorandum of Agreement has been prepared which provide recommendations for FDOT's mitigation activities to offset the adverse effects to this resource

Acquisition & Relocations

- Will not require any residential nor business relocations
- Right-of-way acquisition will be conducted in accordance with Florida Statute 339.09 and the federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, commonly known as the Uniform Act



Access Management and Classification



- In accordance with Rule 14-97 of the Florida Administrative Code, the proposed improvements will include a median to control the movements, or access, of turning traffic
- These changes are presented in compliance with Section 335.199 Florida Statutes

Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	No-Build Alternative ¹	Build Alternative
Centerline Length of Improvement		
Length of Improvement (miles)	0	16.7
Purpose and Need Elements		
Improve Traffic Safety Conditions? (Yes/No)	No	Yes
Improve Emergency Evacuation? (Yes/No)	No	Yes
Improve Emergency Response Times? (Yes/No)	No	Yes
Maintain Regional East-West Connectivity? (Yes/No)	Yes ²	Yes
Accommodate Freight Activity? (Yes/No)	Yes ²	Yes
Social and Economic Effects		
Roadway Right-of-Way (ROW)/Easement Impacts (acres)	0 / 0	0 / 0
Stormwater Management Facility (SMF) ROW / Easement Impacts (acres)	0 / 0	49.51 / 1.97
Floodplain Compensation (FPC) Site ROW / Easement Impacts (acres)	0 / 0	168.67 / 6.69
# of Parcels Impacted (#)	0	38
Residential Relocations (#)	0	0
Business Relocations (#)	0	0
Result in Land Use Changes? (Yes/No)	No	Yes
Impacts to Prime Farmlands Soils (acres)	0	139.64

¹ – Assumes no improvements beyond maintenance activities needed to maintain roadway functionality

² – Provided at a reduced capacity relative to the Build Alternative

Evaluation Matrix (cont.)

Evaluation Criteria	No-Build Alternative ¹	Build Alternative
Natural Resource Effects		
Wetlands Impacted (Direct / Secondary acres)	N/A	9.73 / 5.95
Floodplains Impacted (Yes/No)	No	Yes
Regulatory Floodway Involvement (#)	0	2
Impacts to Threatened or Endangered Species (Low / Medium / High)	N/A	High
Physical Resource Effects		
Noise Sensitive Sites Potentially Impacted	0	12
Contaminated Sites Potentially Impacted (High / Medium Risk)	0 / 0	0 / 14
Air Quality Impacts (Low / Medium / High)	None	Low
Water Quality Impacts (Low / Medium / High)	N/A	Low
Impacts to Existing Utilities (Low / Medium / High)	None	Medium

¹ – Assumes no improvements beyond maintenance activities needed to maintain roadway functionality

Project Cost

Evaluation Criteria	No-Build Alternative ¹	Build Alternative
Cost Estimate (\$ Million)		
Final Design Costs ²	\$0	\$28.4M
Estimated Right-of-Way Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$8.7M
Estimated Wetland Mitigation Costs ³	\$0	\$1.7M
Estimated Listed/Protected Species Mitigation Costs	\$0	\$0.2M
Estimated Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI) Costs ⁴	\$0	\$14.2M
Estimated Construction Costs	\$0	\$284.1M
Estimated Total Project Costs	\$0	\$337.3M

¹ – Assumes no improvements

² – Design estimated as 10% of Estimated Construction Costs

³ – Estimated as \$157,114/acre for FY 2027/2028 per FDOT's Work Program Instructions for direct impacts, assume 25% of this cost for secondary impacts

⁴ – CEI Estimated as 5% of Estimated Construction Costs

Schedule



Comments

You can provide comments in several different ways:

1. Fill out a Speaker Card and hand it to anyone with a nametag during the upcoming intermission for formal testimony
2. Provide your comment to the court reporter at the comment table
3. Fill out a comment form at one of the comment boxes during the in-person public hearing
4. Mail comments to:
Design Project Manager, Joe Lauk, PE
801 N. Broadway Ave., MS 1-41, Bartow, FL 33830
5. Email comments to:
Joe.Lauk@dot.state.fl.us
6. Submit through the project website

Project
Website



Comments must be received or postmarked by
January 27, 2026 to be included in the formal meeting record.

Documents for Review

- All hearing materials presented tonight are available to the public on the project webpage and will remain posted for your review
- The technical documents are also available for review in person at the following locations until **January 27, 2026**:

DeSoto County Library

- **Address:** 125 N Hillsborough Ave, Arcadia, FL 34266
- **Phone:** (863) 993-4851
- **Hours of Operation:**

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	9 am – 6 pm
Wednesday	8:30 am – 6 pm
Thursday	9 am – 6 pm
Friday	8:30 am – 6 pm
Saturday	9 am – 2:30 am
Sunday	Closed

District One – FDOT Headquarters

- **Address:** 801 N Broadway Ave, Bartow, FL 33830
- **Phone:** (863) 519-2525
- Contact Project Representative, Joe Lauk, to schedule an appointment

Statutes

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT.

Title VI

The proposed project is being developed in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status.

To express concern(s) relative to the Department's compliance with Title VI, please contact the following:

Cynthia Sykes
District One Title VI Coordinator
Florida Department of Transportation
801 North Broadway Avenue, MS 1-40
Bartow, Florida 33830
(863) 519-2287
Cynthia.Sykes@dot.state.fl.us

Aldrin Sanders, FCCM, CPM
State Title VI Coordinator
Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwanee Street, MS-65
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
(850) 414-4764
Aldrin.Sanders@dot.state.fl.us

FDOT Safety Message



**New Year Resolution:
Drive with kindness.**

Every ride, every time.

Thank you for attending this Public Hearing!

FDOT encourages public participation.

If you have questions regarding the project, please contact the Project Manager on behalf of FDOT by phone, email, or mail.

Joe Lauk, PE

Design Project Manager

Patel, Greene and Associates, LLC (PGA)

GEC Consultant Support for FDOT District One

Florida Department of Transportation

801 North Broadway Avenue, MS 1-41, Bartow, FL 33830

(863) 519-2525 | Joe.Lauk@dot.state.fl.us