



## **LAKE~SUMTER METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

### **SR 44 DESIGN ALTERNATIVE STUDY FOR MULTI-USE PATH**

**APRIL 7, 2009  
EUSTIS CITY HALL**

#### **Attendees:**

Mayor Scott Ales, City of Eustis  
Paul Berg, City Manager, City of Eustis  
Dianne Kramer, Director of Development Services, City of Eustis

Commissioner Linda Stewart, Lake County  
Jim Stivender, Public Works Director, Lake County  
Fred Schneider, Director of Engineering, Lake County

T.J. Fish, Executive Director, Lake~Sumter MPO  
Thomas Burke, Senior Transportation Planner, Lake~Sumter MPO

George Lovett, FDOT, District 5  
Dennisse Zornan, FDOT, District 5  
David Marsh, FDOT, District 5  
Bruno Fiori, Boyle Engineering  
David Gwynn, Boyle Engineering  
Ryan Florence, Boyle Engineering

#### **Meeting Summary:**

George Lovett, Director of Transportation Development for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District 5, gave a brief project background. The segment of SR 44 being considered is approximately two (2) miles in length and bound by US 441 to the south and East Orange Avenue/SR 44 to the north. A Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) Study was conducted roughly ten (10) years ago recommending that the roadway be widened to four (4) lanes. The State and County executed a jurisdictional swap earlier this decade with the County taking maintenance responsibility for East Orange Avenue, into downtown Eustis, and FDOT taking maintenance for CR 44B (to be designated SR 44 from that point forward).

The project gradually moved up in the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) list of priority projects, which is updated each year and used by FDOT to program funds for roadway improvement projects. Funds were made available for the next phase of this project. Design of the four-lane SR 44 is currently underway with three public meetings having already been held.

As a result of these meetings with the public, FDOT was asked to evaluate an alternative three-lane concept for SR 44 and to explore the potential for adding a multi-use path for bicycles, pedestrians and golf carts along the west side of the road. The purpose of the meeting on April 7, 2009 was for FDOT to present their findings.

Based on FDOT's findings, the addition of a ten (10) to twelve (12) foot concrete multi-use path alongside the widened SR 44 would increase the cost for right-of-way and construction of the project by roughly \$20,000,000. See Alternatives 1-9 in the FDOT report, provided separately on the Lake~Sumter MPO website. Discussions incurred about what elements of the typical cross section may be excluded to make up for the additional right-of-way made necessary by the inclusion of the path. Sidewalks, bike lanes, travel lanes and the center median were all evaluated for potential deletion or reduction. It's possible that a variance for one or more of these may be obtained, but highly unlikely as they are generally mandated for safety reasons by Florida Statute. Therefore, additional right-of-way would most likely be required, which would increase the project cost significantly. Keep in mind that prior to current discussions of including a path, FDOT had been able to fit most of the proposed design into an existing 100' right-of-way. Also note that if a path were to connect all the way to the south to US 441, additional right-of-way would definitely be necessary on the southern ¼ mile segment that was widened to four lanes prior. Ultimately, the path would create significant new right-of-way requirements that have significant cost considerations making the cost feasibility questionable.

In addition to the higher project cost, the inclusion of the path would create new design requirements, including retaining walls, guard rails and other not-so-attractive elements. These elements would create a "cage-like" feel to the corridor, which is not in character with what is seen today. It is assumed they would not be looked upon favorably by the residents in the area. Unfortunately, however, they would be required based on design requirements.

FDOT did evaluate a three-lane concept (see Alternative 10 in the FDOT report). Access management and control are negatively affected and level of service standards would not be met. The City's transportation concurrency management system shows that the existing two-lane configuration is at or near capacity. Given committed traffic and future growth, it is clear that the small amount of additional capacity gained by going to a three-lane configuration would not be sufficient to meet the future traffic demand. It should also be noted that the MPO currently has SR 44 as a four lane improvement in its list of priority projects. As mentioned earlier, this list is what FDOT uses to guide development of its own work program. Consequently, at this point in time, FDOT remains focused on a four lane configuration.

The City of Eustis understood the MPO process was a factor with the three-lane configuration, as was concurrency. The City would still rather limit the corridor to four lanes, however. Further discussion is likely to follow. Focus shifted to the northern intersection of SR 44 at East Orange Avenue/SR 44, where the City expressed a strong desire to limit the number of northbound left turn lanes to one (1). Current designs showed dual (2) northbound left turn lanes and a shared through-right. The City does not want East Orange Avenue widened to four lanes, and therefore does not see a need for two turn lanes. Lake County staff expressed a desire to correct several elements of this intersection, including fixing the northbound right turn lane that currently feeds into the convenience store on the southeast corner. Future intersection geometry should include one (1) exclusive left turn lane, one (1) through lane and one (1) exclusive right turn lane.

There was also discussion about the need for two westbound left turn lanes. If SR 44 is, in fact, widened to four lanes, dual westbound left turn lanes may make sense. There was some discussion about the potential for a single westbound left, with an extended length (to meet future demand).

The City expressed concern that the convenience store on the southeast corner of this intersection would lose access from the westbound and southbound traffic, as medians would be installed. These are safety measures, however, as well as means to make traffic flow more efficiently. Some approaching and departing vehicles will have to make a u-turn, or series of u-turns, to access the site.