

MEETING NOTES

No. 1

Date: October 30, 2006

Place: FDOT District IV Auditorium

Project/Purpose: ETAT Workshop for the SFECCTA Draft PEIS

Attendees: Scott Seeburger (FDOT), Ann Broadwell (FDOT), Andrea Agudelo (FDOT), Sharon Rios (FDOT), Elizabeth Rockwell (Miami-Dade MPO), Buffy Sanders (Broward MPO), Patricia Masterman (Palm Beach County MPO), Brodie E. Rich (U.S. Coast Guard,) Alisa Zarbo (USACOE), Steve Lau (FWC), Ron Miedema (EPA), Brandon Howard (NOAA-NMFS), Timothy Gray (FDEP), Bruce Offord (FDEP), Courtney Arena (Stanley Consultants), Rob McMullen (Gannett Fleming), Carlos Cejas (Gannett Fleming), Aaron Quesada (Gannett Fleming)
Conference Call Attendees: Vicki Sharpe (FDOT), Tony Dittmeier (FTA), Madelyn Martinez (NOAA-NMFS),

Notes By: Courtney Arena

The following meeting notes set forth our understanding of the discussions and decisions made at this meeting. If you have any questions, additions, or comments, please contact the writer immediately. If we do not hear from you, we will assume that our understandings are the same. We are proceeding based on the contents of these meeting notes.

1. Opening Remarks (Scott Seeburger): The meeting is for review and comment of the SFECCTA Study Draft PEIS. It is a programmatic Tiered EIS that is currently in Tier 1 review. The intent of the meeting is to identify agency concerns for the proposed Capital Fixed Transit Service on the FEC Railway.
2. Attendees introduced themselves to the audience. Rob McMullen announced the Public Hearings for each county (Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, and Broward) are scheduled for November (8th, 9th & 15th, respectively) 2006. See the www.sfecstudy.com website for more details.
3. Rob McMullen presented a slideshow with background information and project details. He also announced that the Draft PEIS is available for download and review (via an on-line comment form) at http://www.sfecstudy.com/public_comments.html.
4. ETAT Member Feedback:
 - Elizabeth Rockwell (Miami-Dade MPO) stated that the FEC stopped providing public transport service in 1968. Ms. Rockwell inquired if the FEC would be interested in providing that type of service again as a private entity. Scott Seeburger (FDOT) replied that it is unlikely FEC would provide public transportation services again since it is generally not a profitable business. Ms. Rockwell recommended contacting all local community groups and organizations, identify those that may object to the project and work with them to resolve their concerns and issues.

- Buffy Sanders (Broward MPO) was interested in how the quantities for Ridership were calculated. Mr. Sanders inquired about Park & Ride facilities and identified the lack of existing space for parking at some downtown stations. He noted that forecasting did not include parking at every station. Mr. Sanders would like to see a list of the groups that have been notified of the project and the potential impacts implementation will have on local communities and minority groups. Rob McMullen replied that Gannett Fleming would provide a list of groups they have already met with and/or contacted to compare with Broward County's list. This is to confirm that all relative groups have been contacted, notified and are aware of the project and the potential effects to their communities.
- Brandon Howard (NOAA Fisheries) inquired if the project will cross over Biscayne Bay, as it would have impacts to Seagrasses and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). Rob McMullen replied that The Tier 2 Study may include crossing over Biscayne Bay for access to the Port of Miami. Mr. Howard suggested Palm Beach County Environmental Resource Management (ERM) be contacted for any potential impacts to the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge area. He remarked that Palm Beach County ERM has been successful with planning and implementing mitigation projects (including Seagrasses) in the past.
- Alisa Zarbo (USACOE) asked, in terms of the Tiered EIS, what level of detail will be provided to the agencies for wetland impacts and other environmental impact analyses? Ann Broadwell responded by describing that individual PD&E (Project Development & Environment) Studies will be run through the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Environmental Screening Tool (EST). Additionally, the Record of Decision will document details for the transition from Tier 1 to Tier 2 review. Ms. Zarbo inquired if changes from Tier 1 to Tier 2 will be locked in? Scott Seeburger replied that certain aspects would be locked in, such as excluding certain proposed alternatives for design. Tony Dittmeier (conference call) further explained that in Tier 2 review, even without proposed alternatives, they will be able to study multiple technologies and alignments.
- An attendee asked if freight service will be maintained on the FEC Railway. Scott Seeburger replied that double tracking will likely allow for continuing freight transportation.
- Timothy Gray (FDEP) remarked that he was glad to hear that contaminated sites and air quality were addressed as in the PEIS. It was mentioned by Rob McMullen that costs estimates for these impacts will be addressed in the Tier 2 review.
- Bruce Offord (FDEP) discussed that Air Modeling will be required for the project. He remarked that FDEP will review the results of analysis to be conducted by a consultant. Items needed to perform analysis include the subset of intersections, park and ride and any additional planned development to run the air impact models. Mr. Offord recommended a meeting with the agencies to coordinate potential Air Quality impacts (sites to conduct screening analysis "COSCREEN" or full scale Air Quality Modeling), as well as, impacts related to asbestos removal from demolition, dust control mitigation during construction and emissions concerns. Ann Broadwell mentioned using existing air quality monitoring sites in downtown areas along with additional sampling and analysis.

5. Lunch Break

6. Continued ETAT Member Feedback from Presentation and Slideshow:

- Elizabeth Rockwell (Miami-Dade MPO) mentioned that Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) identified two concerns with the implementation of the project. First, there were concerns raised for competition that would be generated with Tri-Rail Services. Second, was funding affects that would occur related to the Counties' and local governments' internal plans for development of public transit.
- Buffy Sanders (Broward MPO) asked about the Ft. Lauderdale Airport Runway Extension and if they were considering it in the scope of the study. Additionally, Mr. Sanders inquired about noise walls along the corridor to provide noise abatement. Scott Seeburger replied that both concerns are being considered as part of the study.
- Madelyn Martinez (NOAA NMFS) commented that in reference to station areas, EFH, water quality and inter-related projects such as People Mover, Port of Miami Tunnel and Ft. Lauderdale Runway Extension must be considered in the project study. Ms. Martinez added that according to current policy, EFH assessment will *not* be necessary for stream-crossings and any potential development that occurs in water levels above tidal control gates.
- Steve Lau (FWC) commented that the northern section of the project corridor is the main concern for environmental impacts. These are likely to result as secondary impacts due to the clustering affect of development around the stations, especially in areas that are not currently developed.
- Brandon Howard (NOAA-NMFS) identified that there are potential impacts to threatened and endangered species habitat, such as the scrub jay, along the project corridor.
- Elizabeth Rockwell and Bruce Offord inquired about including a bike path along the corridor. It was verified that the Miami-Dade and Broward sections of the corridor are or are planned to be Greenways and could qualify for bike paths.
- Buffy Sanders (Broward MPO) remarked about the closeness of proximity to Tri-Rail in certain areas along the corridor, especially downtown West Palm Beach. He raised concerns about the Pompano Beach Station being located in a low-income area. There are concerns that development of this area will bring about increased property values that may result in losses of affordable housing for this community and others like it located along the corridor.
- FDOT staff commented that construction design and costs will not be involved until Tier 2. Separate PD&E Studies will also be part of the Tier 2 review.
- Patricia Masterman (Palm Beach MPO) commented that, for the record, a motion to direct FDOT initiate an Administrative Hearing regarding an at-grade crossing on the FEC Railway for the SR-710 expansion project. Ann Broadwell provided some background on the SR-710 project and the associated FEC RR crossing issues that have been encountered.

7. Additional comments submitted in writing on the Comment Form:

- i. Alisa Zarbo, USACOE
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Alternatives analysis- need to show the most practicable alternative where have environmental impacts (wetlands and waters of the US). As we find out more information in Tier 2 EIS, the Corps may need to evaluate alternative plans/locations/projects that may have less environmental impacts that would still meet the needs of the specific project. We need enough details in Tier 1 to make a permitting decision with respect to alternatives. For example, if an area is selected in Tier 1 for a parking station and has no wetlands, it may be planned without alternatives. If in Tier 2, we find it supports scrub-jays, the Corps may not support the site as the preferred alternative. We need to keep some alternatives open from Tier 1 and Tier 2.

- ii. Brodie Rich, Coast Guard Bridge Branch (Also see attached letter.)

Brickell Plaza Federal Building, Room 432

909 SE 1st Ave.

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- 1. Crossing New River with a fixed bridge has an established guide clearance of 55 feet above mean water vertical clearance.*
- 2. If crossing the Miami River to the MIC, Coast Guard Bridge Permit will be required and an established guide clearance is 75 feet above mean high water for vertical clearance if a fixed bridge crossing.*
- 3. We encourage the perspective applicant to contact waterway users on the waterways, that we (Coast Guard) have previously indicated will require Coast Guard bridge permits, to determine what vertical and horizontal clearances will be necessary at each waterway crossing to meet the reasonable needs of navigation.*
- 4. At New River and Miami River, are bridges going to remain open until a train comes, as it is now?*

- iii. Brandon Howard, NOAA Fisheries

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Areas of concern will be the proposed crossing of Biscayne Bay and the crossing of the Loxahatchee River. The northern half of Biscayne Bay is critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass. In both locations there is the potential to impact listed species under NMFS purview including swimming sea turtles, smalltooth sawfish and Johnson's seagrass. All crossings over the water will impact EFH. The crossing of Biscayne Bay would impact seagrass. If the I-95 corridor is used for the crossing of the Loxahatchee River, seagrass would not be impacted but palustrine wetlands would be which are considered to be EFH. All crossings over water will be reviewed but these two areas will be of particular concern. Palm Beach County Environmental Resource Management has performed successful seagrass mitigation and may be worth contacting or partnering with for impacts in Palm Beach County.